



Musicological Functions of Silence in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*

Evren İdil YAZAN

¹Akdeniz University, Antalya Conservatoire, Antalya, Türkiye

^aORCID: 0000-0002-7739-6758

✉ Sorumlu Yazar: idylyazan@akdeniz.edu.tr

Geliř tarihi: 06/12/2025

Kabul tarihi: 31/03/2026

Özet: Bu alıřma, Nuri Bilge Ceylan'ın *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da* (2011) filminde sessizliğin iřitsel yapı içindeki konumunu, sahne dzenlemeleriyle iliřkisini ve mzikolojik iřlevlerini incelemektedir. Filmin sınırlı mzik kullanımı, sessizliğin yalnızca bir yokluk olmadığını; aksine, anlatının ritmini, zaman algısını ve meknsal derinlięi řekillendiren kurucu bir unsur olarak iřlev grdđn ortaya koymaktadır. Bu baęlamda alıřma, sessizlięi mzikolojik bir erevede akustik ekoloji, iřitsel nesne, zaman-imge ve anlatsal iřitsellik kavramları zerinden deęerlendirmektedir. Arařtırma, nitel arařtırma yntemlerinden biri olan “rnek olay” modelini kullanmaktadır. Veriler, detaylı sahne zmlenmesi, dokman incelemesi ve ierik analizi yoluyla toplanmıřtır. Analiz srecinde zellikle arama sahneleri, i mekn sahneleri, otopsi blm ve “Allı Turnam” performansının yer aldığı diegetik mzik sahnesi zerinde durulmuřtur. Bu sahneler, sessizliğin ritmik yapısı, meknsal tımsal zellikleri ve karakterlerin psikolojik zmlenmesine katkısı aısından incelenmiřtir. Bulgular, filmde sessizliğin, mzikoloji alanında dramatik ilerlemeyi tařıyan temel bir iřitsel stratejiye dnřtđn gstermektedir. Bu alıřma, *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da* filminde sessizliğin atmosferi belirleyen yzeysel bir bořluk olmadığını; aksine, grntnn estetik yapısını, zamanın ritmini ve karakterler arasındaki gerilimi řekillendiren ok katmanlı bir iřitsel alan olarak kurgulandığına ortaya koymaktadır. Filmde sessizlik, mziğin stlenebileceęi bir ok iřlevi yeniden organize ederek, izleyiciyi meknın kltrel aęırlığına, zamanın yoęunluęuna ve anlatının dřnsel katmanlarına ynlendiren etkili bir anlatı unsuru hline gelmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akustik ekoloji, İřitsel anlatı, Film mzięi, Mzikoloji, Sessizlik, Zaman-imge.

Musicological Functions of Silence in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*

Abstract: This study investigates the position of silence within the auditory structure of Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (2011), its relationship with scene compositions, and the musicological functions it articulates. The film's limited use of music reveals that silence is not merely an absence; rather, it functions as a constitutive element that shapes the rhythm of the narrative, the perception of time, and the spatial depth. In this context, the study evaluates silence through the concepts of acoustic ecology, auditory object, time-image, and narrative aurality within a musicological framework. The research employs the “case study” model, one of the qualitative research methods. Data were gathered through detailed scene analysis, document review, and content analysis. During the analytical process, particular focus was placed on the search sequences, interior scenes, the autopsy section, and the diegetic music scene featuring the performance of “Allı Turnam.” These scenes were examined in terms of the rhythmic structure of silence, the spatial timbral characteristics, and its contribution to the psychological unraveling of the characters. The findings demonstrate that silence in the film evolves into a fundamental auditory strategy that carries the dramatic progression within the field of musicology. This study shows that in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, silence is not a superficial void defining the atmosphere; rather, it is constructed as a multilayered auditory space that shapes the aesthetic structure of the image, the rhythm of time, and the tension among characters. In the film, silence reorganizes many functions that music might otherwise assume, becoming an effective narrative element that directs the viewer toward the cultural weight of the setting, the density of time, and the intellectual layers of the narrative.

Keywords: Acoustic ecology, Aural narrative, Film music, Musicology, Silence, Time-image.

1. Introduction

Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* is one of the works in Turkish cinema that distinctly highlights the relationship between sound and silence. Although the film seemingly uses almost no music, this absence does not create an auditory void in the narrative flow; rather, it becomes a fundamental structural element that determines the rhythm and emotional intensity of the scenes. While music is generally regarded in cinema as a device to enhance dramatic effect or guide the narrative, in Ceylan's films it is often replaced by silence and the natural sounds of the environment. This choice transforms the film's soundscape from a purely aesthetic decision into a cultural and emotional framework that shapes the viewer's perception. In this way, silence transforms the soundscape from a stylistic choice into a rich cultural and emotional space that shapes the audience's engagement (Tuna, 2019).

Silence in the film is used not as a constant absence but as a temporal and spatial layer that shapes the sensory structure of each scene. The vastness of the steppe, the slow rhythm of the night, the acoustic character of the locations, and the internal conflicts of the characters become more pronounced as sound diminishes or is entirely withdrawn (Chion, 2019; Magee, 2014). Thus, although the film presents a structure that might traditionally be considered "without music," it produces an audibly rich and multilayered experience. The dramatic function of silence—considering the rhythmic gaps it creates between scenes, its connection to the psychological unraveling of characters, and its role in reorganizing spatial perception—emerges as a unique and profound area of inquiry in film musicology. The main aim of this study is to examine how silence is structured in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, in which scenes it functions in specific ways, and whether this silence contributes to a musical temporal organization within the film. The study adopts a contemporary musicological perspective that extends beyond the mere presence of music to include non-musical sounds and the rhythmic effects of silence. In this way, silence transforms the soundscape from a stylistic choice into a rich cultural and emotional space that shapes the audience's engagement (Chion, 2019; Magee, 2014).

In the analytical process, particular attention is given to the search sequences that take place in the darkness of night, the scene depicting the prosecutor's internal breakdown concerning his wife, the mechanical audibility of the autopsy room, and the diegetic performance scene featuring the folk song "Allı Turnam." These scenes are selected as key moments that reveal how silence acquires meaning on rhythmic, emotional, and spatial levels within the film. The aim of this analysis is to discuss Ceylan's approach to silence, which goes beyond a mere aesthetic choice, from a musicological perspective, and to make the structural organization of the film's auditory world more perceptible (Chion, 2019).

2. Theoretical Approaches to Silence and Film Sound

The theoretical foundation of this study is built on five key approaches that address the relationship between sound and silence in cinema from different perspectives: Michel Chion's concepts of listening modes and the perception of silence, Claudia Gorbman's framework on film music and narrative functions, Pierre Schaeffer's understanding of the auditory object and sound-matter, R. Murray Schafer's acoustic ecology and soundscape concepts, and Gilles Deleuze's time-image and aesthetics of pause. In this section, these theoretical approaches are summarized in a form that will be applied to the analysis of *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*.

Michel Chion (2019): Silence, the Auditory Field, and the Guidance of Perception

Michel Chion approaches sound in cinema not merely as elements that are heard but through different modes of listening, positioning silence as an integral part of this framework. According to Chion, silence is not an absolute absence; rather, it is an active aesthetic strategy that directs the viewer's attention away from the source of the sound and toward its timbral qualities (Chion, 2019). His concept of "reduced listening" refers to perceiving sound independently of its source, focusing instead on characteristics such as timbre, intensity, and duration.

In *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, the wind across the steppe, the low-frequency hum of vehicle engines, distant dog barks, and almost imperceptible rustlings can be interpreted as examples of these

reduced listening experiences, emphasized precisely because there is no music. Silence directs the viewer's auditory attention to these minimal timbres, making the sonic texture of the steppe perceptible.

Chion's concept of "added value," which normally explains the layers of meaning that music contributes to an image, operates inversely in Ceylan's film. Here, the absence of music adds weight and intensity to the visuals; silence, combined with wide panoramic shots, foregrounds the cultural and emotional significance of the space. Thus, within Chion's framework, silence is regarded not as a passive component of meaning-making but as a directly guiding element in the production of auditory meaning.

Claudia Gorbman (1987): Musical Narrative, Diegesis, and the Strategic Role of Silence

Claudia Gorbman defines the fundamental functions of film music in classical narrative cinema, particularly through the distinction between nondiegetic (external) and diegetic (internal) music (Gorbman, 1987). Nondiegetic music functions as an invisible narrative tool that establishes the emotional framework of the story and directs the viewer's perception in specific ways. In *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, the near-total absence of nondiegetic music can be read as a deliberate choice that places silence at the center of the narrative.

The functions Gorbman attributes to music "emotional framing" and "narrative guidance"—are largely assumed by silence in Ceylan's film. During the search sequences that unfold over the night, in car dialogues conveying the prosecutor's internal conflict, or in the autopsy room, dramatic intensity is built not through music but through the emptiness and sense of anticipation created by silence.

Diegetic music appears only briefly and exceptionally in the "Allı Turnam" scene, making the dominant role of silence even more apparent. From Gorbman's perspective, this scene functions as a "narrative exception" in which the silence-centered auditory structure is momentarily interrupted but immediately restored. In this way, the film subverts conventional music usage, positioning silence as the primary carrier of the narrative.

Pierre Schaeffer (2006): Sound-Matter, Auditory Object, and Mechanical Rhythms

Pierre Schaeffer argues that sound acquires a material existence independent of its source and is transformed into an "auditory object" (*objet sonore*) through its recurring rhythmic and timbral properties (Schaeffer, 2006). This approach provides a useful framework for understanding why a strong musical perception emerges in scenes without actual music in the film.

In *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, the autopsy scene, in particular, exemplifies a structure that can be interpreted through Schaeffer's concept of sound-matter. The scalpel's friction on tissue, the opening and closing of scissors, the ringing of metal surfaces against one another, and the rustling of paper constitute the scene's primary auditory elements. Although the sources of these sounds are clearly visible on screen, over time they are perceived as rhythmic auditory objects emerging from within the silence.

In this context, silence functions not merely as a background but as a contrasting surface that enhances the sharpness and tactility of these mechanical timbres. The rhythmic repetition of mechanical sounds organizes the flow of the scene, demonstrating that silence becomes a regulating element that determines the scene's dramatic tone.

R. Murray Schafer (1994): Acoustic Ecology, Soundscape, and the Sonic Identity of Space

R. Murray Schafer's approach to acoustic ecology posits that every space has a unique auditory identity, established through environmental timbres, frequency distributions, and spatial sound flows (Schafer, 1994). The concept of the soundscape provides a fundamental theoretical framework for understanding the steppe environment in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*. In this study, the term "acoustic

structure” is used to refer to an auditory layer encompassing the soundscape characteristics of a space, including frequency distribution, reverberation, environmental timbres, and spatial sound flow.

Throughout the film, the vast Anatolian steppe, low reverberation, wide frequency gaps, and the still acoustic surface of the night create a powerful soundscape. Sounds such as the wind, engine hum, distant animal calls, and occasional human noises both fill and define this surface of silence. Thus, silence becomes, in Schafer’s terms, a timbral foundation that carries the cultural and geographical weight of the space.

In the search sequences, the acoustic identity of the steppe does more than establish atmosphere; it deepens the characters’ feelings of loneliness, helplessness, and uncertainty. Through silence, the space transforms into both a physical and psychological space.

Gilles Deleuze (1989): Time-Image, Pause, and the Rhythmic Structure of Silence

Gilles Deleuze argues that in modern cinema, time is experienced not only through the succession of events but also through the arrangement of images and sounds; within this framework, the “time-image” is defined through pause, emptiness, and rhythmic interruptions (Deleuze, 1989). *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* provides a highly suitable structure for this type of temporal experience.

Long moments of waiting, silent intervals in the vehicle, pauses between the prosecutor’s and doctor’s dialogues, and the motionless imagery of the steppe create spaces that Deleuze refers to as “optical-acoustic situations.” In these moments, silence functions not as a break that stops the flow of time but as a rhythmic layer that intensifies temporal density.

In scenes where the camera remains still, characters do not speak, or sentences are left incomplete, silence allows the viewer to detach from the linear narrative flow and enter a reflective mental space. Deleuze’s conceptualization of “emptiness” resonates both spatially and psychologically in the film: the Anatolian steppe becomes a broad internal void that mirrors the characters’ inner states. In this context, silence serves as a rhythmic tool that slows, compresses, and reorganizes time in the film. The audience’s engagement is shaped less by linear plot progression and more by the experience of these time-image structures woven through silence.

Contemporary scholarship further expands the understanding of cinematic sound by emphasizing its multisensory and experiential dimensions. As Altman (1992) suggests, film sound should be understood not merely as an accompaniment to the image but as a complex system that structures perception and meaning. Within this framework, silence emerges not as a simple absence but as a constitutive element that shapes how sound is perceived in relation to space and narrative. Similarly, Marks (2020) highlights the nature of cinematic experience and argues that sensory elements such as sound texture and rhythm engage the viewer on a tactile and affective level. These perspectives reinforce the idea that silence operates as a perceptual experience that intensifies the viewer’s engagement with the film’s auditory and spatial elements.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to evaluate the function of silence in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* from a musicological perspective. A single-film case study model was employed to examine the role of silence in the film. Descriptive analysis and content analysis techniques were utilized, with the position and function of silence in each scene addressed through a scene-focused analytical approach. Using a qualitative research approach and purposeful sampling method, the analyzed scenes were selected to represent situations where silence narratively assumes a distinct function. In these scenes, dialogues are limited, time slows down, the distance between characters is perceived, the auditory field is restricted, and silence fulfills multiple distinct communicative roles.

In *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, silence interacts with minimal dialogue and environmental sounds to produce a multilayered auditory experience that conveys psychological tension, spatial perception, and emotional resonance. To illustrate, rhythmic and spatial effects function as a cultural and narrative mediator within the analysis within the story. Silence then becomes an interpretive research tool that allows viewers to perceive cultural and affective dimensions that are embedded in the film's soundscape (Bull, 2007; Kulezic-Wilson, 2015; Lacey, 2013).

For this purpose, the search sequences, the prosecutor's narrative in the car, the mechanical timbres in the autopsy section, and the diegetic performance of "Allı Turnam" were analyzed. Each scene was evaluated along three axes:

1. **Auditory structure and timbre analysis:** The role of silence in the texture of the scene, auditory objects, environmental sounds, and the diegetic–nondiegetic distinction were examined.
2. **Spatial acoustics:** The acoustic characteristics of different environments, such as the steppe, interior spaces, and the autopsy room, were assessed within Schafer's soundscape framework.
3. **Temporal structure:** The study investigated how silence shapes the rhythm of the scene, moments of waiting, dramatic pauses, and its relationship with Deleuze's concept of the time-image.

4. Findings

3.1. Night Search Scene: Steppe Silence, Acoustic Surface, and the Rhythm of the Narrative

From the opening of the film, the night-long search sequences constitute one of the fundamental structures defining the auditory atmosphere of *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*. The vastness of the steppe, the horizon-darkening night, and the intermittently visible headlights create a pronounced sense of "emptiness" not only visually but also sonically. However, this emptiness is not mere silence; it is an acoustic surface that carries continuity and shapes the rhythm of the scene. The low-frequency hum of the vehicle engine, the texture of the wheels against the soil, the occasional friction of the wind, and distant dog barks emerge from within the silence as timbres that inhabit the scene.

In these sequences, dialogues are sparse and often focus on everyday details; the surrounding silence does not create a dramatic gap but rather forms intervals where tension intensifies. The viewer is guided to perceive the rhythm of the scene, the heavy passage of time, and the emotional intensity rather than merely the flow of information. The repeating sound of the engine, the irregular presence of the wind, and intermittent environmental timbres produce a kind of musical sense of time at the scene's internal rhythm, with silence acting as a metric unit for this rhythm (Yazan & Paşaoğlu, 2024).

The acoustic character of the steppe also emerges as a key determinant of the scene's emotional tone. In such a wide area, low reverberation causes sounds to decay quickly, turning silence into a denser layer. When the search team reaches high points to observe distant village lights, spatial distance is experienced not only visually but also auditorily. The limited propagation of sound deepens the prevailing feelings of loneliness and helplessness.

In these scenes, silence functions not as a dramatic absence but as an invisible structure that carries the continuity of the narrative. The "unity" function defined by Gorbman for classical narrative seems to be re-established in Ceylan's film through silence; the small continuous sounds between scene transitions and the silent intervals regulate the inner rhythm of the narrative. Thus, the night search scenes serve as a primary example of how silence operates throughout the film: it makes the heaviness of time, the growing distance between characters, and the steppe's desolation perceptible.

3.2. The Prosecutor's Narrative in the Car: Confined Acoustic Space, Psychological Function of Silence, and Traumatic Time

One of the most striking sequences in which silence acquires psychological intensity is the scene where the prosecutor recounts the death of his wife. In the car moving through the night, the prosecutor and the doctor sit side by side in the front seats, and the conversation gradually shifts into a personal, intimate space. The car's confined interior creates a visually and acoustically enclosed, compressed atmosphere; unlike the vastness of the steppe outside, there is no echoing space for sound. The hum of the engine persists as a low-level background sound, while the characters' voices are short, muffled, and low in volume (Chion, 2019).

The extended pauses between the prosecutor's sentences are not merely moments to think; they are experienced as necessary interruptions where traumatic memory is reconstructed. As the narrative progresses, his speech slows, some sentences remain incomplete, and his gaze fixes on the windshield. Here, silence is not a gap created by the absence of speech but a carrier of unexpressed emotions; what is left unsaid emerges precisely in these moments of silence. The doctor's listening, often restrained and non-intervening, also becomes part of this auditory structure; his silence frames the prosecutor's narrative like an invisible contour (Gorbman, 1987).

The absence of music in this scene intensifies emotional intensity rather than diminishing it. Any melodic structure would soften the weight of the events being recounted; instead, the scene becomes a direct space of contact between the prosecutor and the viewer. Even as the prosecutor attempts to regulate his emotions while describing his wife's death, silence exposes the moments where this control breaks down. Short pauses before and after sentences reveal the character's internal conflict over time; in this way, silence functions as a rhythmic field where traumatic weight is distributed across the scene (Schaeffer, 2006; Deleuze, 1989).

The car's acoustic properties are particularly significant in this scene. The confined interior, combined with the engine's hum and occasional external sounds, conveys a constant sense of compression to the viewer. The darkness beyond the windows creates the impression of a closed universe in which what is spoken inside does not escape outside. The prosecutor's story unfolds within this enclosed acoustic space, interspersed with silence; by the end of the scene, the audience remembers the weight of the silences more than the words themselves. Thus, silence becomes the primary medium through which the character confronts his conscience and past (Schafer, 1994).

This sequence demonstrates that silence gains meaning not only in outdoor atmospheres but also through character psychology. Silence transforms into a narrative surface that makes visible the vulnerability, internal tension, and emotional burden in the prosecutor's story. This use underscores that silence is one of the principal elements supporting psychological intensity in the film.

3.3. Autopsy Scene: Mechanical Sounds, Corporeal Materiality, and the Auditory Representation of Death

This scene is one of the clearest examples of how silence interacts with mechanical timbres in the film. While the morgue environment presents a largely neutral and cold aesthetic visually, it is foregrounded auditorily by sounds emphasizing the materiality of the body. The cutting of tissue with a scalpel, the opening and closing of scissors, the clinking of metal surfaces, the rustling of papers, and the small clicks of measurement instruments constitute the main auditory elements of the scene (Schaeffer, 2006). These sounds are presented in a manner that aligns with Schaeffer's concept of the *objet sonore*. Even though the image always reveals the source, the sounds eventually begin to be perceived independently of their source, as "material timbres" with their own rhythm. The intervening silences make these mechanical sounds sharper, harder, and more distinct.

Silence here does not diminish the intensity of sound; on the contrary, it amplifies it. Each new sound emerges from the silence and returns as an auditory accent. The rhythm of the scene is determined by the frequency of these mechanical sounds and the intervals of silence. The movements of the doctor performing the autopsy, the accompanying actions of the assistant, and the occasional brief, neutral dialogues create subtle accents within the scene's rhythmic flow. However, the overall atmosphere conveys not emotional dramatization but a sense of routine and professional procedure. This imparts the ordinariness of death as a bureaucratic process, with silence functioning as a surface carrying the weight beneath this ordinariness (Schafer, 1994).

Visually, the body's divisibility and materiality are emphasized, while auditorily, this materiality gains a tactile quality. The audience experiences the body's dismemberment not only visually but also sonically. Silence intensifies this experience; each mechanical timbre resonates from within the silence, establishing the scene's emotional tone. This scene holds a special place in the film, demonstrating that a strong dramatic structure can be achieved through timbre and rhythm without the use of music (Chion, 2019; Schaeffer, 2006).

3.4. "Allı Turnam" Scene: Diegetic Music Inside the Car, Breaking Silence, and Cultural Timbre

The scene featuring the song "*Allı Turnam*" serves as a brief but impactful auditory rupture following the night-long search sequences dominated by silence. Inside the car, where the police officers, prosecutor, doctor, and suspect travel together, the song is heard diegetically through the car radio, performed by Neşet Ertaş. This detail demonstrates that the music is not only diegetic but also activates cultural memory directly (Gorbman, 1987). Up until this scene, the film's auditory texture is largely constructed from steppe silence, the hum of the car engine, brief dialogues, and environmental sounds.

The moment "*Allı Turnam*" is heard, it introduces an unexpected layer of timbre into this silence-centered soundscape. However, the music is not positioned as a dominant force filling the scene; it resonates within the confined car space as a limited timbral surface. With the car windows fogged, occasional operation of windshield wipers, and the characters appearing tired and introspective, the song emerges from within the silence rather than fully replacing it. The selection of Neşet Ertaş's performance strengthens the cultural dimension of the scene. The song does not function merely as background music; it points to the geographical and emotional context shared by the characters.

Yet, the scene is designed less as an emotional communal moment and more as a transitional space where each character remains alone with their inner silence. The characters' restrained emotional reaction to the song does not lessen the scene's dramatic weight; rather, it highlights the song's solitary presence within the overarching silence. Here, the relationship between silence and music encapsulates the film's general auditory strategy. The song functions not to erase silence but as a brief timbral intervention that recalls its intensity. When the piece ends, the engine hum, tire friction, and night silence regain prominence; the music departs like a temporary guest. In this way, the film does not employ music as a constant narrative carrier but uses it as a short auditory accent that further emphasizes the silence-centered structure.

The "*Allı Turnam*" scene thus demonstrates that silence in the film is structured not merely as absence but as a potential field of timbre. Diegetic music in the car evokes the cultural memory of the film's geographic setting, while the returning silence continues to bear the weight of that memory. The tension between silence and music becomes one of the central axes of the film's auditory structure (Chion, 2019; Gorbman, 1987).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study demonstrates that in the film *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, silence is constructed not merely as the absence of sound but as a multilayered strategy that shapes the aural, spatial, and temporal

structure. The findings reveal that silence functions as an active narrative element in the film, forming a framework that determines rhythm, emotional intensity, the acoustic identity of space, and the psychological states of the characters. At this point, silence gains a deeper meaning when considered alongside the theoretical approaches of Chion, Gorbman, Schafer, Schaeffer, and Deleuze.

Chion's (2019) concept of reduced listening plays a central role in understanding the functioning of silence in the film. Ceylan's wide steppe scenes and prolonged waits inside the car direct the viewer's attention not to the source of sound but to its texture; minimal auditory elements such as wind, breath, footsteps, and engine hums turn into timbral focal points that gain dramatic intensity. The concept of added value operates in the opposite manner in this context: the absence of music adds additional weight, cultural depth, and a sense of rhythmic void to the visuals. This transforms silence into a fundamental mechanism for meaning-making within the film.

Gorbman's (1987) approach to the narrative functions of music is reinterpreted in the film through the absence of music. While nondiegetic music would normally guide dramatic tension, in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* this guiding function is transferred to silence. Particularly in the night search scenes, the lack of nondiegetic music establishes a "dramaturgy of emptiness" that directly exposes the characters' psychological conflicts to the viewer. Gorbman's emotional framing function is entirely delegated to silence; silence does not reduce tension but rather becomes its primary carrier. The diegetic use of the song "Allı Turnam," on the other hand, acts as a brief exception that interrupts the dominant sonic structure shaped by silence, making the power of silence even more apparent.

Schafer's (1994) concepts of acoustic ecology and soundscape provide a critical framework for explaining the film's spatial sound structure. The steppe's wide frequency void, low reverberation rate, and static acoustic surface determine how silence interacts with space in the film. This surface of silence is both filled with environmental tones and serves as a background that makes these tones more distinguishable. Thus, silence creates an auditory spatiality that transforms the physical properties of the environment into a sensory identity.

Schaeffer's (2006) concept of the sound object is illuminating for understanding the dramatic rhythm of the autopsy scene. The friction of the scalpel, the contact of metal surfaces, the sounds of scissors and paper become rhythmic objects that rise from within the silence. These mechanical tones gain a material tactility thanks to the contrast provided by silence. Here, silence does not function as a void but as an active ground that highlights sound-matter.

Deleuze's (1989) concepts of the time-image, pause, and optical-sound situations explain how moments of waiting are transformed in the film. Lengthened gazes, unfinished sentences, static camera positions, and stillness inside the car create moments in which time is intensified and suspended. Silence reinforces these pauses and allows time to be perceived as a sensory experience. In this sense, silence serves as a structural element in the film's rhythmic organization, enabling time to be slowed down, compressed, and rearranged.

Within this theoretical framework, the main contribution of the study is defining silence not through the absence of music but as an active musicological function and discussing it as a multilayered auditory strategy. Silence in the film is positioned as the central axis that determines the dramatic organization of rhythm, timbre, space, and time. Thus, silence establishes a strong intersection between musicology and film theory.

The limitation of this study is that its analysis is conducted through specific scenes and does not include broader comparisons with the film musicology literature. Future research may expand the scope by comparing Ceylan's use of silence in his other films, or by examining the cultural, sociological, or poetic dimensions of silence in broader contexts.

Once Upon a Time in Anatolia is an original cinematic example in which silence operates as a musical structure, transforms rhythm and time, reveals the cultural weight of space, and weaves dramatic tension through silence. By using silence not merely as a reduction but as a meaning-producing auditory narrative strategy, the film presents a striking model within contemporary cinema.

Etik Beyan

Etik izin gerektiren bir çalışma değildir.

Finansal Destek

“Bu araştırma herhangi bir fon sağlayan kurumdan / sektörden hibe almadı”

Açıklama

Çalışma bir tezden türetilmemiştir veya bilimsel toplantılarda sunulmamıştır.

References

- Altman, R. (Ed.). (1992). *Sound theory, sound practice*. Routledge.
- Bull, M. (2007). *Sound moves: iPod culture and urban experience*. Routledge.
- Chion, M. (2019). *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen*. Columbia University Press.
- Ceylan, N. B. (Yönetmen). (2011). *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu’da* [Film]. Zeynofilm.
- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The time-image* (H. Tomlinson & R. Galeta, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Gorbman, C. (1987). *Unheard melodies: Narrative film music*. Indiana University Press.
- Kulezic-Wilson, D. (2015). *Film, sound and the multisensory experience: Sound, listening and voice in screen practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lacey, K. (2013). *Listening publics: The politics and experience of listening in the media age*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Magee, G. S. (2014). *Robert Altman’s Soundtracks: Film, Music, and Sound from M*A*S*H to A Prairie Home Companion*. Oxford University Press.
- Marks, L. U., & Polan, D. (2020). *The skin of the film: Intercultural cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. Duke University Press.
- Schaeffer, P. (2006). *Traité des objets musicaux* (J. Dack, Trans.). University of California Press. (Orijinal eser 1966)
- Schafer, R. M. (1994). *The soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*. Destiny Books.
- Tuna, Y. (2019). *Büyük Sır: Sessizlik, Sinema ve Modernizm* [The Great Secret: Silence, Cinema and Modernism]. *sinecine: Sinema Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5(1), 115–127.
- Yazan, E. İ., & Paşaoğlu, S. (2024). Gelişmesiz Sonat Formu Örneği Olarak F. Schubert’in Op. 100 No: 2 Mi Bemol Majör Piyanolu Triosunun İncelenmesi. *Korkut Ata Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (15), 1346-1361.