



A RYÛSUKE HAMAGUCHI MOVIE: 'WALDEN'ⁱ

Simber Atayⁱⁱ

Dokuz Eylül University,
Turkey

Abstract:

Ryûsuke Hamaguchi (1978) is one of the most important directors of contemporary cinema. He has won many awards with his films at the world's major film festivals such as Berlin, Cannes, and Venice and he received the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film in 2022 with his movie *'Drive My Car'*. Hamaguchi's *'Walden'* (2022) is one of Hamaguchi's recent movies. *'Walden'* is a co-production of Austria, and Japan, premiered at The Festival Viennale (2022). Within Hamaguchi's relatively mainstream cinema poetics, the movie *'Walden'* is an experimental work that invites the spectator to a deep contemplation. The film is a 2-minute, almost monochrome record of a water surface with reflections of trees, raindrops, vibration waves, water rings, bird songs, swarming insects, several sounds of nature, a floating leaf, etc. In addition to the sounds of nature, the film includes a female voice excerpt with music from Douglas Sirk's *'All That Heaven Allows'* (1955). Jean Wyman who is the protagonist "Cary Scott" of *'All That Heaven Allows'*, reads some lines from Henry David Thoreau's book *Walden* (1854). This movie at the same time is a documentary record of a water surface; a free cinematographic adaptation of Henry David Thoreau's autobiographical book *'Walden'*, a deep romantic landscape through continuous and random visual variations occurring on the surface and a crystallization of Hamaguchi's style. Hamaguchi's *'Walden'* surface also becomes an interface where Hamaguchi the artist, and the spectator meet temporally to explore the noema of existence, nature, and cinema within a Heideggerian-verse. Besides the 2- minute durée of the film and its surface subject indicates a continuous oscillation between Kronos and Aion in the Deleuzian sense.

Keywords: Ryûsuke Hamaguchi, *'Walden'*, surface, Henry David Thoreau, Douglas Sirk

ⁱ This article was presented in part at WOCICO 2023 The II World Cinema International Conference (Cinema of Japan) organized by The University of Complutense of Madrid (Spain) September 28th-29th, 2023.

ⁱⁱ Correspondence: email simber.atay@gmail.com, simber.atay@deu.edu.tr

1. Introduction

古池や 蛙飛び込む 水の音

The old pond
A frog leaps in.
Sound of the water (Bashō)

Ryūsuke Hamaguchi (1978) is one of the most important directors of contemporary cinema. He graduated from the University of Tokyo with a Bachelor of Art in Aesthetics in 2003, and he obtained a Master's degree in Film in 2008 with his film *'Passion'*. During this period he worked as an assistant director in the film and TV industry. Then, he began his cinema career extremely successful as a director. He won many international film awards including an Oscar with his *'Drive My Car'* (2022).

"Hamaguchi is the second Japanese director, following the legendary Akira Kurosawa, to win official awards at all three of the world's major film festivals--the Berlin International Film Festival, the Cannes International Film Festival, and the Venice International Film Festival"
(Ohara, 2023, para.1).

Films of Hamaguchi are: *'Go to the Movies'* (2001); *'Like Nothing Happened'* (2003); *'Beginning'* (2005) (short); *'Friend of the Night'* (2005) (short film); *'Scent of Memories'* (2006) (short film); *'Attack'* (2006) (short film); *'Solaris'* (2007); *'Passion'* (2008) (selected for competition at the San Sebastian International Film Festival and Tokyo Filmex); *'I Love Thee for Good'* (2009); *'The Depths'* (2010); *'Intimacies'* (2012); *'The Sound of Waves'* (2012); *'Voices from the Waves: Shinchimachi'* (2013); *'Voices from the Waves: Kesenuma'* (2013); *'Storytellers'* (2013); *'Touching the Skin of Eeriness'* (2013); *'Happy Hour'* (2015) (premiered at the 68th Locarno International Film Festival); *'Heaven Is Still Far Away'* (2016) (short film); *'Asako I & II'* (2018) (selected for competition at 71st Cannes Film Festival; 40th Yokohama Film Festival Best Film, Best Director, Best Cinematographer, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Newcomer Awards); *'Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy'* (2021) (The Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize at the 71st Berlin International Film Festival); *'Drive My Car'* (2021) (The Best Screenplay Award at the 74th Cannes International Film Festival; the FIPRESCI International Critics' Prize; Ecumenical Jury Prize; The best film at the 14th APSA 2022; The best film as Non-English Speaking Movie at the 75th BAFTA awards; four Academy Award nominations, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay and won the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film in 2022; *'Walden'* (2022); (premiered at The 60th Festival Viennale); *'Evil Does Not Exist'* (2023) (The Silver Lion Award at the 80th Venice International Film Festival).

In Criterion, a cyber-cinémathèque environment, on Jan 19 2022, Hamaguchi selected his Top 10 favorite films as follows: Jean Renoir's *'The Golden Coach'* (1952); Jean Grémillon's *'Lumière d'été'* (1943); Jacques Becker's *'Casque d'Or'* (1952); Roberto Rossellini's *'Stromboli'* (1950); Douglas Sirk's *'All That Heaven Allows'* (1955); Kenji Mizoguchi's *'Women of the Night'* (1948); Mikio Naruse's films (from the 1930s to 1960s); *'Josef von Sternberg's Underworld'* (1927), *'The Last*

Command' (1928), *The Docks of New York*' (1928); George Cukor's *'Holiday*' (1938); Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *'Flowers of Shanghai*' (1998). This choice of favorite films creates a map of Hamaguchi's gusto and style as a cinephile and a director.

Within Hamaguchi's relatively mainstream cinema poetics, the movie *'Walden*' is a particularly impressive work. *'Walden*' (2022) is an experimental film that profoundly invites the spectator to contemplation. The film is a 2-minute, almost monochrome record of a water surface with reflections of trees, raindrops, vibration waves, water rings, bird songs, swarming insects, several sounds of nature, a floating leaf, etc.

In addition to the sounds of nature, the film includes a female voice excerpt with music from Douglas Sirk's *'All That Heaven Allows*' (1955). Jean Wyman who is the protagonist "Cary Scott" of *'All That Heaven Allows*', reads the following lines from Henry David Thoreau's book *'Walden*' (1854):

"-The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed?

-If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it's because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

Then she also adds her comment:

"-It's beautiful" (the movie scene between 28.47- and 29.18 minutes; Thoreau, 2017, pp.7;288).

In this context, the cinema of Douglas Sirk is also an important source of inspiration for Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's poetica as a director and a cinephile. Douglas Sirk influenced not only Hamaguchi but also many other directors who love and appreciate melodrama from Rainer-Werner Fassbinder to Pedro Almodovar, with his cinematography and original style.

The basis of his style is the concept of surface in real and metaphorical contexts. The bright and saturated colored surfaces and mirrors in the interior environments where Sirk's heroes live are effective decor elements with multiple, layered meanings potential. Sirk makes the following determination regarding his style: *"The surface isn't the surface but rather a manifestation of the depths. It's better to read the meaning, or allegory, or symbols on the surface than to dig down to dark depths and fool around down there"* (Sirk, as cited in Jay, 2022, para.6). On the other hand, in Sirk's movies, exteriors and nature landscapes also have a closed-circuit postcard aesthetic; perfect and almost kitsch.

Sirk narrates generally the stories of female protagonists. *"The split character is indeed at the core of many Sirk films which are filled with people trying to reconcile romantic passion or sexual desire with societal obligations and the boundaries imposed by class, race, and gender"* (Gemünden, 1999, p.1).

When we study Sirk's life story and career, we see that he has had an extraordinary journey from UFA to Hollywood. This journey is also a personalized 20th Century Cinema History with all its cultural and historical extensions. As a film director, he is sometimes a surrealist, sometimes an expressionist in narrative and iconographic-pictorial contexts (Sirk, as

cited in Harvey, 1978, p.56), and sometimes experimental in Vilem Flusser's Apparatus and Homo Ludens way. For this reason, the existence of a phenomenon called 'Douglas Sirk's Effect' could be mentioned throughout the history of contemporary cinema.

'Walden' is a co-production of Austria, and Japan, and premiered at The Festival Viennale (2022). The Vienna International Film Festival, or Viennale, is a film festival taking place every October, since 1960 in Vienna, Austria; it is a non-competitive film festival and the festival program mainly consists of films participating by invitation (<https://festagent.com/en/festivals/viennale>).

In addition to being dedicated to the art of cinema, as its name suggests, the Viennale title also resembles an art festival like Viennale/biennale, and indeed it has an experimental character.

This movie has the following features:

- it's a documentary record of a water surface at first impression,
- it's a free cinematographic adaptation of Henri David Thoreau's autobiographical book 'Walden',
- it's a deep romantic landscape through continuous and random visual variations occurring on the surface,
- it's a crystallization of Hamaguchi's style.

In addition, 'Walden' is also a turning point in the evolution of Hamaguchi's style. The ecological concerns and environmentalist vision that exist in the movie 'Evil Does Not Exist' (2023), realized recently, overlap with the phenomenon of immersion in nature represented by the movie Walden and eventually by Thoreau.

'Walden' (1854) is one of world literature's most popular cult books. Henri David Thoreau (1817 – 1862) settled in Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, between 1845 and 1847, where in this natural environment he experienced a solo, simple, self-sufficient, minimalist, and alternative life outside the social system. As a sophisticated intellectual and a classical mind, he observed nature and seasons, examined rural conditions and agricultural methods on a macro and micro scale, and criticized the unhappiness of modern man and the contemporary human condition. Furthermore, he also underlines how boring, limited, and arduous life in Concord is, and even states that the people living here pay penance in this way (Thoreau, 2017, p.4). Then he compiled all of these into a book in an autobiographical manner. This classical and eventually always contemporary text is a critique of capitalist culture and an environmentalist manifesto.

The surface of Thoreau's 'Walden' Pond became Hamaguchi's 'Walden' surface and vice versa. Therefore the subject of the movie is a water surface – 'Walden' Pond's surface-. This deep, pure, and transparent surface (Thoreau, 2017, p.159) also becomes an interface where Hamaguchi the artist, and the spectator meet temporally to explore the noema of existence, nature, and cinema within a Heideggerian-verse. The interface mentioned here is an openness/a drawing-apart created by artwork to reveal what Truth/Aletheia is.

The 2-minute durée of the film and its surface subject indicates a continuous oscillation between Kronos and Aion in the Deleuzian sense.

Hamaguchi's melodramas narrate highly individual but also complicated human-condition stories in a cool, even de-dramatic, and transparent way. This paradoxical narration as a cinematographic strategy is also encountered in the cinema of Yasujirō Ozu and

Michelangelo Antonioni. Hamaguchi defines a peculiar, cool melodrama genre by combining the phenomena of love, passionate relationships, exaggerated emotions, disappointments, betrayal, separation, dramatic situations, and juxtaposed loneliness, which are specific to conventional melodrama, with contemporary existential boredom and meaninglessness.

1.1. Thoreau's Concord Adventure and Walden Pond

Thoreau's Walden adventure begins with the following sentence: *"When I wrote the following pages or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labour of my hands only"* (Thoreau, 2017, p.3). Then it ends with this sentence: *"Thus was my first year's life in the woods completed; and the second year was similar to it. I finally left Walden September 6th, 1847"* (Thoreau, 2017, p.282).

In these two years, Thoreau, as a modern individual, searches for the lost Arcadian harmony in Concord, Massachusetts. It is an existential experience in-between on the edge of civilization. Like a video game *Stardew Valley's* protagonist, alone in nature, built a simple living environment per se and he realizes agricultural or fishing activities in the mode of self-sufficiency. After this physical and moral experience, Thoreau makes the following statement: *"At present, I am a sojourner in civilized life again"* (Thoreau, 2017, p.3). But, Thoreau was also a sojourner in the rural area. Because, ecological consciousness and minimalist lifestyle awareness are developing through a paradox that industrialized and capitalist civilization and wild nature create together, despite each other.

However, regardless of the environment, truth is defined always according to classical culture and mythology by Thoreau. Eventually, Thoreau is a modern mind and he has a typical humanist rhetoric. At every step of his presence and work in Concord, he is in fusion with Classical Greek and Classical Latin language and culture. For example, according to him, bean farming is small Herculean labor and again bean farming strengthens him like Antaeus (Thoreau, 2017, p.138). The visit of a Canadian wood chopper to his tiny house becomes a Homeric pretext for reading the dialogue about sadness between Achilles and Patroclus (Thoreau, 2017, p.129). According to him: *"There was never yet such a storm, but it was Æolian music to a healthy and innocent ear"* (Thoreau, 2017, p.117). Then, he uses the metaphor of the Styx River to describe the lake, based on the people in that region who believe in the bottomlessness of Walden Pond (Thoreau, 2017, p.254).

Besides, in the text, a myriad of contemporary scientists, philosophers, poets, artists, mythological heroes and figures, mythological symbols and places, sacred texts, parable stories, books, quotations, local archive information, details from ancient civilizations, and sceneries from distant geographies, and related historical events are mentioned or quoted. Thoreau, himself, his experience, and his book exist through the elements mentioned above, and reciprocally these elements acquire particular meanings -always renewed, regenerated, and alive- throughout Thoreau, himself, his experience, and his book. This phenomenon evolves and repeats itself over generations for each reader who reads *'Walden'* in different coordinates of time and space. Thus the universe becomes Walden or Walden becomes the universe.

Thoreau underlines this issue as follows: *"Who shall say what prospect life offers to another? Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant? We should*

live in all the ages of the World in an hour; ay, in all the worlds of the ages. History, Poetry, Mythology!" (Thoreau, 2017, pp.9-10).

This is a literary identification design as well as a philosophical and scientific one. For instance, Jorge Luis Borges's story *The Library of Babel* (1941) begins as follows: "*The universe (which others call the Library)...*" (Borges, 2015, p.112). Therefore, *Walden* could be described as a hypertext both in the sense of cyberculture and in the context of the Borgesian style.

Meanwhile, the first text of *The New Media Reader* (2003) book is the story of *The Garden of Forking Paths* by Jorge Luis Borges and the second one is *As We May Think* of Vannevar Bush. According to Murray: "*His (Borges) fiction evokes a sense of flickering focus of an individual consciousness constantly reforming itself, of an utterance constantly in the process of translation*" (Murray, 2003, p.3). Manovich, one of the authors of the same book, makes also the following statement: "*To prove the existence of historical parallelism, New Media Reader systematically positions next to each the key texts by modern art that articulate certain ideas and the key texts by modern computer scientists which articulate similar ideas in relation to software and hardware design. Thus we find next to each the story by Jorge Borges (1941) and the article by Vannevar Bush (1945)*" (Manovich, 2003, p.15).

Therefore, in the context of science-fiction and in a way reminiscent of Jules Verne, the paths of literature and cybernetics intersect once again. This story of Borges and his stories, in general, are pre-design of hypertext concepts. In the story *The Garden of Forking Paths*, Ts'ui Pên, one of the heroes of the story, is described as follows: "*He believed in an infinite series of times, in a dizzily growing, ever spreading network of diverging, converging and parallel times. This web of time - the strands of which approach one another, bifurcate, intersect or ignore each other through the centuries - embraces every possibility*" (Borges, 2003, p.34).

The same mobility can be adapted also to '*Walden*'. Thoreau says: "*No wonder that Alexander carried the Iliad with him on his expeditions in a precious casket. A written word is the choicest of relics... The symbol of an ancient man's thought becomes a modern man's speech*" (Thoreau, 2017, p.91). Books and the knowledge they contain and represent become common universal cultural codes that nourish the imagination over time because the creative mind has a perpetual function. Sometimes Thoreau's cultural codes become appropriated memory records and he perceives the world through this mnemonic energy: "*In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta... I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! There I meet the servant of the Bramin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water jug... The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges*" (Thoreau, 2017, p.264).

Thoreau's *Walden* and his book shape an environment in which there is no cultural uncertainty, no moral relativity, and no cynical ambiguity. *Walden*, with all its intertextual splendor, is a threshold that guides the utopian search for truth.

By the way, Thoreau describes the geography, features, the creatures -with their Latin names of course- that live there, and visual variations of *Walden Pond* in great detail: "*The scenery of Walden is on a humble scale...yet this pond is so remarkable for its depth and purity as to merit a particular description. It is a clear and deep green well, half a mile long and a mile and three-quarters in circumference, and contains about sixty-one and a-half acres... Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the*

color of both...like that of most ponds, imparts to the body of one bathing in it a yellowish tinge; but this water is of such crystalline purity that the body of the bather appears of an alabaster whiteness...making fit studies for a Michael Angelo" (Thoreau, 2017, pp.157-159).

Walden Pond is one of many lakes in that area. According to Thoreau (2017): "A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye, looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his nature" (p.166). However, Thoreau reveals also the dramatic truth about Walden Pond that the railway destroyed forests on the shores of the lake- as sacred as the Ganges River- just like the Trojan horse (Thoreau, 2017, p.172).

Thoreau observes, explores, fishes there, contemplates the cosmos of the pond, and transcendently identifies with Walden Pond. He is a performer of contemplation. The contemplation, from the beginning, is a method that realizes the desire to reach beauty, wisdom, and truth. In this context, Erhat (2021) makes the following statement regarding Plato's Symposium: "While Phaidros, Pausanias, Eryksimachus, Aristophanes, and Agathon enumerate the types of love in this dialogue, Socrates appears before them with the praise of a single love: The love of wisdom. Socrates' guide on this path is a woman; A stranger from Mantinea named Diotima" (p.VI).

"This above all others, my dear Socrates," the woman from Mantinea continued, "is the region where a man's life should be spent, in the contemplation of absolute beauty... What may we suppose to be the felicity of the man who sees absolute beauty in its essence, pure and unalloyed, who, instead of a beauty tainted by human flesh and color and a mass of perishable rubbish, is able to apprehend divine beauty where it exists apart and alone?... Do you not see that in that region alone where he sees beauty with the faculty capable of seeing it, will he be able to bring forth not mere reflected images of goodness but true goodness, because he will be in contact not with a reflection but with the truth?" (Plato, 1956, pp.94-95; 211d-212a)

It is best naturally to read Plato in his original Greek following Heideggerian linguistic sensibility. However, regarding this section, we also quote Azra Erhat & Sabahattin Eyüboğlu's Turkish translation here, with your permission; we think that Erhat & Eyüboğlu's translation represents the spirit of Plato very passionately.

"İnsanın salt güzellikle karşı karşıya geldiği an yok mu, sevgili Sokrates işte yalnız o an için insan hayatı yaşanmaya değer! dedi Mantineialı yabancı kadın...Düşün ne olur, bir görebilirse insan güzelliğin kendini; herşeyden soyunmuş, arınmış, katıksız! İnsanın tenine, bedenine, rengine, daha bir sürü ıvır zıvırına bulanmış güzelliği değil, bir tek görünüşüyle Tanrı güzelliğini!.. Ancak orada güzele yalnız güzeli göreceğ gözle bakan, erdem taslakları değil, gerçek erdemler yaratabilir. Çünkü taslaklara değil gerçeğin ta kendisine bağlanmıştır." (Platon, 2021, p.56, 211d-212a)

Thus, in the light of Diotima's words, the following determination could be made: Thoreau as a contemplator of Walden Pond becomes an inspiration source and then Hamaguchi's 'Walden' is a conceptual cinematographical representation of Platonic contemplation, first of all.

1.2. The Surface of 'Walden' Movie

1.2.1. Becoming Surface

In his book *'The Logic of Sense'*, Deleuze (1990) talks about a platonic debate between ideas and their simulacra. However, later, following the Stoic approach, things/simulacres that escape from ideas rise from the bottom to the surface through the process of becoming. These are also causal consequences, audio-visual, and linguistic effects. Therefore, things that rise to the surface or the incorporeal limit begin to represent ideality, and by the way, a paradox occurs in which the surface becomes depth and depth becomes surface (pp.7-8).

In 'Walden', the camera is static, but everything else recorded is mobilistic. 'Walden's' cinematographic present time is a 2-minute Kronos time. But the unlimited present time represented by 'Walden' is Aion time. According to Deleuze, the time of things rising from the bottom to the surface is Aion. In this mode of time: "*each present is divided into past and future, ad infinitum*" (Deleuze, 1990, pp.61-62); therefore there is not the usual past-present-future chronology, but a time design based on the equivalence of present and eternity.

On the other hand, watching the movie 'Walden' is also a 2-minute performance of contemplation. However, conventionally, contemplation is a spiritual activity performed over long periods. But this 2-minute time is so intense that an unlimited durée of contemplation is felt.

1.2.2. Drawing-apart or Interface

The existence of an artwork establishes a world, then locates itself on Earth and preserves its existence by concealing itself. The existence of an artwork is an original, and creative performance as well as a relative and variable multiplicity in terms of meaning and representation artistically, culturally, historically, and mnemonically. Therefore, the artwork cannot be defined or analyzed holistically and precisely through simple artistic or critical methods.

The world and earth belong to each other, and they are two essential elements related to being in the existence of the artwork. However, the artwork initiates a constant strife between the world and the earth. In the context of the artwork, this strife aims to reveal the Truth/Aletheia of being throughout a dialectical design process.

This strife sometimes creates a drawing-apart and the openness of the world. Through this drawing-apart or some kind of interface in a cyber context, the openness of the world and the concealment of the earth are articulated by each other. Then the existence of the artwork is revealed, even if only for a while, and Aletheia is this openness (Heidegger, 2006, pp.31-34; 2011, pp.40-44).

The artwork, with its form and existence, is a resource that responds to the need and desire for the definition and revelation of the truth of Being in any context. In Heidegger's words: "*Art reveals the truth.*" (2011, p.73).

'Walden' is Hamaguchi's symposium. On the surface of the water and in the depths of the water are reunited Thoreau, Sirk, Hamaguchi himself, and all the relevant emancipated lecturers and spectators. This harmonious unity is the meaning of the film and the truth of Being it reveals.

1.3. 'All That Heaven Allows' (1955)

All That Heaven Allows is one of the four Sirkian masterpieces: 'All That Heaven Allows' (1955), 'Written On The Wind' (1956), 'The Tarnished Angels' (1957), and 'Imitation Of Life' (1959). (McCourt, 1975, p.19).

The plot of the movie is briefly as follows: Cary Scott (Jane Wyman) is a wealthy widow living in New England suburban, Syoningham. She has two adult children. One day, Cary falls in love with a young man called Ron Kirby (Rock Hudson) who comes to prune a tree in her garden. Ron is an advertiser from New York, but he escaped from there and came to live and work in a natural environment. However, their relationship was interrupted after a while due to the pressure of the conservative small-town society and the age difference between them. Then Ron falls in the snow and is seriously injured. Cary hears the accident, and immediately runs to the man she loves then stays with him. However, the end of the movie is not a total happy end, it is just an ending where a happy end is hoped for.

In one scene of the movie, Cary and Ron go to visit the house of his friends, Alita and Mick Anderson, who, like Ron, have come to the same place for a simple pastoral life. There, Cary performs her famous reading of Walden. At this moment Alita states to Cary that Walden is her husband Mick's Bible but Ron may not have read it, because he lives it.

Douglas Sirk's 'All That Heaven Allows' (1955) is a sophisticated melodrama and an impressive love story. However, it is also a social realist and psychological critique of small-town American society. social class problems, moral codes, daily living standards, intertwined human relations, the love problems between a mature woman and a young man, the loneliness of a widow in a conservative society, and the artificial boundaries of a small town in the middle of nature are displayed. Therefore, Cary's reading summarizes the conditions of this discordant environment and the text spontaneously becomes a critical discourse.

Cary's reading of Walden, Ron's escape from civilization and taking refuge in nature, the large window of Ron's cabin representing unity with nature, and Rock Hudson/Ron Kirby's extraordinary handsomeness, reminiscent of Thoreau's wood-chopper/Patroclus are the main connecting factors between movie and book.

All That Heaven Allows is adapted by Peg Fenwick from the novel of Edna and Harry Lee but "Lee's novel never mentions Walden" (Metz, 1993, p.14). Sirk makes the following statement regarding the issue: "One of the first of all American literary impacts on my thinking, when I was 13 or 14, was a book my father gave me. Walden by Thoreau. This is ultimately what the film was about no one recognized it" (Halliday as cited in Metz, 1993, p.14).

Ron's love allows Cary to realize how alienated she is. In addition, the television element in the film is a sign of alienation. Eventually, mass media is not a solution to the loneliness of modern people. Sirk's formalist explanation is illuminating on this point: "Certain scripts you get, of course, you just feel hopeless. So you must try to do something with lighting, acting, décor, pace...all those elements. Or else the material is too usual, so you try to find an element of strangeness. In All That Heaven Allows, that scene where Jane Wyman sees herself in the TV set" (Sirk, as cited in Harvey, 1978, p.55).

Despite the Thoreau quote, according to Sirk: "The picture is about the antithesis of Thoreau's qualified Rousseauism and established American society" (Sirk, as cited in McCourt, 1975, p.19) Then,

in this instance, Thoreau's 'Walden' is the thesis, 'All That Heaven' is the antithesis and finally Hamaguchi's 'Walden' is synthesis.

Hamaguchi is a cinephile and Douglas Sirk's cinema is a great source of inspiration for him. He presented 'All That Heaven Allows' at the American Cinematheque in Los Angeles on March 18, 2022. Moreover, he describes Sirk's style in a precedent interview as follows: "Take a look at Douglas Sirk. He's the perfect example of the melodrama master. You hate his films while loving them... But for the people at that time, he managed to resonate with them, as he presented something that they could identify with, something highly important... Melodrama is, in fact, something in between. This ambiguity offers a vast amount of crankiness. The in-betweenness of melodrama is something I'm particularly fond of. For me, the foolishness of melodrama becomes its actual seriousness because it enables the filmmaker to grasp the essence of the time..., I consider life as melodramatic" (Hamaguchi, as cited in Mankowski, 2021, para.18)

Thus, beyond the common performance of the melodrama genre, through movies, Douglas Sirk becomes an alter ego of Hamaguchi.

On the other hand, Hamaguchi's 'Walden' is an homage to Douglas Sirk's cinema.

1.4. Douglas Sirk's Effect

Douglas Sirk represents the revolutionary, innovative, experimental, multilingual, multicultural, cosmopolitan, sometimes decadent, avant-garde, dadaist, expressionist, sometimes new-objectivist, and eventually Kafkaesque and Brechtian European culture and art that developed during the Weimar Republic period (1919-1933). He represents also the cinema of UFA (Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft) which covers all these cultural and artistic features.

Sirk, who was deterritorialized due to the fear and misery of the Third Reich as Brecht expresses compactly with his play of the same name, reterritorialized in Hollywood Cinema, and there has developed a characteristic cinematographic discourse.

Throughout this discourse, German Cinema and Weimar Intellectualism are articulated with Hollywood Cinema and Mass-Entertainment Culture. Sirk, however, is practically an outsider. This situation gives him a mobilistic and critical estrangement advantage. Because the USA is no longer the victorious, enthusiastic, self-confident country of 1945. In The USA of the 1950s, American people don't hide their joylessness, they are repressed by MacCarthyian obsessive communist hostility, the problem of racial discrimination continues, and conformist social systematics are strong. Regarding the topic: "In 1954, the year after 'All That Heaven Allows' was published and a year before the film was released, Walden certainly had a particular resonance with the culture. The U.S. Information Service banned Walden from libraries because it was "downright socialistic" (Metz, 1993, pp.14-15 qtd. in French 97).

The male and female heroes of Sirk are people who reflect the psychology of the environment in question, who strive in daily life but are vaguely alienated. Therefore, melodrama, which is sometimes the symbol of mediocrity becomes a sophisticated social realist strategy of criticism.

"My pictures are critical of a certain class of American- whom I do not like. The American in transition from a little guy to a not-yet-big guy, so to speak; the small-town, country club

Americans- the ones you find in All That Heaven Allows, for example." (Sirk, as cited in Harvey, 1978, p.59)

"Auteur and ideological critics of the early 1970s who published in mass-media papers and academic journals found in Sirk one of the great practitioners of Brechtian distancing. Because he had staged Brecht plays while in Germany in the 1920s, these critics argued, Sirk was able to transform the material presented to him by his studio into highly self-reflexive, modernist works that subtextually challenged the bourgeois Eisenhower climate of which they were a part." (Metz, 1993, p.4)

In addition, Sirk's criticism is a contribution to the tradition of self-criticism specific to American culture.

Thus, Sirk created a cinematographic paradigm that continues to be a contemporary inspiration source, and we can describe this phenomenon in the context of the evolution of the cinematographic language as *Douglas Sirk's Effect*.

1.5. Features of Hamaguchi's style

"Hamaguchi is the second Japanese director, following the legendary Akira Kurosawa, to win official awards at all three of the world's major film festivals--the Berlin International Film Festival, the Cannes International Film Festival, and the Venice International Film Festival" (Ohara, 2023, para.1)

Hamaguchi's films or his melodramas are not ostentatious Zeitgeist discourses. They are ordinary people's stories. The heroes, who have dramatic and sometimes even tragic pasts, quietly go about their daily lives. The general formula of this subject belongs to Anton Chekhov's Sonia: *"What can we do? We must live our lives. Yes, we shall live, Uncle Vanya..."* as was cited in *Drive My Car* (2022) (Atay, 2022, p.141).

This is not just a feature of content, but also a formalist method peculiar to Hamaguchi reminiscent of Ozu's cinema. *"Ozu modifies the meaning of the procedure, which now shows the absence of plot: the action-image disappears in favor of the purely visual image of what a character is, and the sound image of what he (or she) says, completely banal nature and conservation constituting the essentials of the script"* (Deleuze, 1997, pp.13-14).

Besides in Antonioni's cinema: *"The drama is there, and appears at times behind the impassive faces of the characters"*. Meanwhile, the de-dramatization of Antonioni is a modern narrative style strategy seen in writers such as Virginia Woolf, Joyce, and Proust, *"absolutely nothing happens in their novels"* (Chatman, 1985, p.21) but eventually many things happen.

But on the other hand isn't art already the process of transforming the banal or ordinary into the exceptional one in a de-dramatic way? Yes, it could be, but transforming the ordinary and banal into artwork as a defined, particular, and categorical creative strategy also belongs to 20th Century Avant-Garde and pop art. Eventually, this transforming process has experimental quality.

Danto (2019) gives two artists as examples in this context. One is Marcel Duchamp, who miraculously transformed the ordinary objects of the *Lebenswelt* into artworks. The other is Andy Warhol with his ordinary-looking Brillo boxes, which cannot be defined with conventional

philosophical, aesthetic, and artistic references; however, the meaning of this artwork derives from its indefinability (pp.14-15).

In the Postmodern Era, in addition to this aforementioned creative strategy, sometimes, artworks, movies, and literary texts, which are considered relatively banal or ordinary, are re-evaluated as a hypotext with various intellectual and cultural speculations in anachronistic art expeditions.

Meanwhile, if desired, the cinephilia approach could be a suitable environment for the policy of discovering the wisdom of the banal. In the cyber age, global streaming platforms such as MUBI, social platforms dedicated to the cinema such as Letterboxd, and liberal movements such as Project: New Cinephilia have created a global cinèmatheque. For example, according to Baumbach and Plunkert (2012): *"The New Cinephilia is a cinephilia for the age of iPhones, blogs and YouTube"* (p.51). In a certain way, this is a realized cultural utopia. Any discriminatory discourse no longer has any meaning for the banal or ordinary. On the contrary, the banal and ordinary continue to be a source of cinematographical inspiration. In this context, it could be argued that Hamaguchi's cinephilia gives him an emancipated vision.

Probability is a crucial key to his cinematographic narrative. The results that have happened, are predicted to have happened, and are imagined to have happened are sometimes edited sequentially as a variation of probabilities. This palpable uncertainty can be observed concretely. In *Asako I-II* (2018), there are two lovers of Asako but both Baku and Ryohei are lover probabilities. At the end of the first part of *Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy* (2021), there is probably a scandal of a love triangle but have all the secrets been revealed or not? At the end of the film, *Evil Does Not Exist* (2023), there are two murders, but how was the first one committed? What do these murders have to do with each other?

Coincidence is another crucial key to his cinematographic narrative. According to Hamaguchi (2021): *"When I try to capture a moment of chance with a camera, I feel like I have captured a very special moment that will never come back again"* (as cited in Uçar, para. 2).

Brechtian alienation is also a strategy occasionally used by Hamaguchi. In the second part of *Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy* (2021), a professor reads some pornographic pages of his novel monotonously and with a neutral expression. In *Drive My Car* (2022), Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* is interpreted independently in a multilingual way by several actors speaking different languages – Japanese, English, Chinese, Tagalog, Bahasa, Korean, and Korean Sign Language-. At the beginning of *Evil Does Not Exist* (2023), some ostranenical shots in the film remind us of Rodchenko's vertical nature photographs.

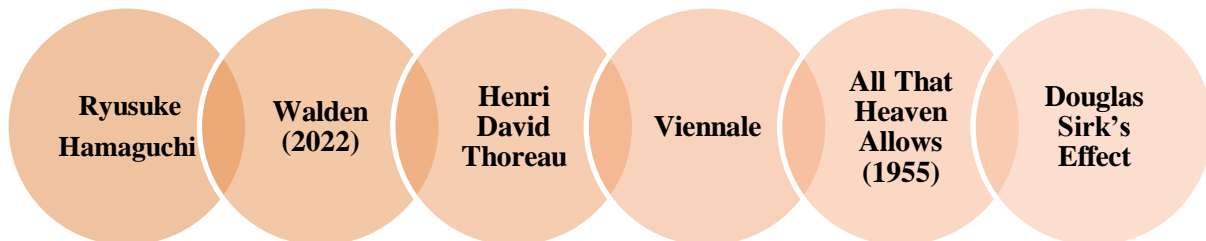
2. Objectives

The objectives of this article are:

- Reviewing Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's *'Walden'* (2022) movie;
- Since the movie *'Walden'* is an experimental literary adaptation, to define the characteristics of Henry David Thoreau's book *'Walden'* (1854) and to research its connections with the movie;
- Identifying Hamaguchi's connection with Douglas Sirk and his melodrama cinema due to the quote *'All That Heaven Allows'* (1955) in the movie *'Walden'*;

- Defining the film using the relevant terminology of Heidegger and Deleuze, since 'Walden' is a surface film and has a durée of two minutes;
- To describe features of Hamaguchi's style (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The objectives of "A Ryūsuke Hamaguchi Movie: Walden" article. © Simber Atay 2023



3. Methodology

The methodology of this article is as follows:

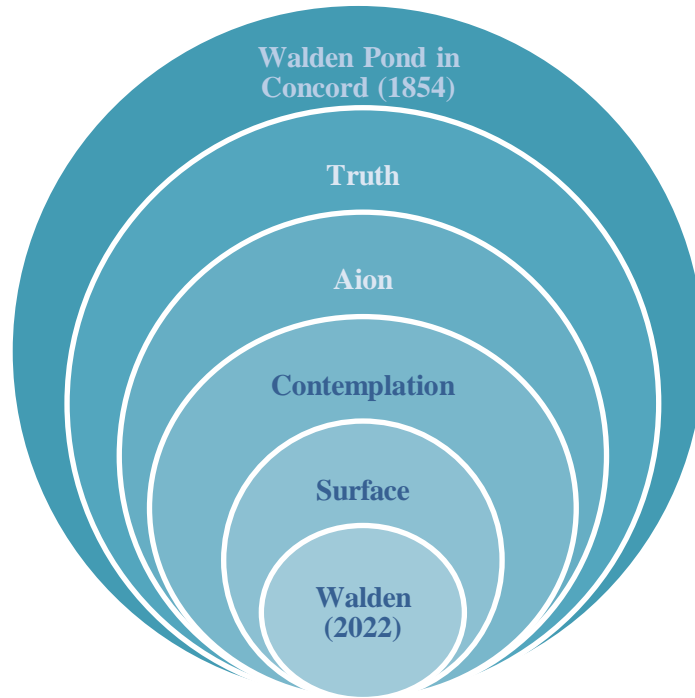
- Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's 'Walden' (2022) film is analyzed by mapping the following components in the light of Gilles Deleuze's 'The Logic of Meaning' and Heidegger's 'The Origin of the Work of Art': Thoreau's 'Concord Adventure' and 'Walden Pond', The Surface of 'Walden' Movie, 'All That Heaven Allows', Douglas Sirk's Effect, and Features of Hamaguchi's Style.
- Besides, the descriptive method was used.

4. Results

The results of this article are as follows:

- Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's 'Walden' movie (2022) is an important turning point in the director's poetics.
- Hamaguchi has made a new and original experimental interpretation in the context of literary adaptation in cinema.
- As a source of the film, Thoreau's book 'Walden' is a hypertext that remains always contemporary
- Intertextually of 'Walden' is articulated to Thoreau on the one hand and to Sirk on the other.
- The movie 'Walden' is a Heideggerian search for Truth and a Deleuzian depiction of Aion (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The components of "A Ryûsuke Hamaguchi Movie: 'Walden'" article. © Simber Atay 2023



5. Discussion and Conclusions

The discussion and conclusions of this article are as follows:

- The history of Cinema is also the history of the evolution of cinematographic language. Therefore, Hamaguchi has developed a new, original, and de-dramatic, cool style with his poetics, especially in the context of melodrama.
- Hamaguchi is a multi-faceted director as a mainstream filmmaker, an experimental artist, and a passionate cinephile.
- Hamaguchi's cinema will continue to be an important subject of discussion and research in the context of cinema studies, intertextuality theory, and postmodern cinema culture into the future.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Prof. Dr. Simber Atay works at The Dokuz Eylül University, Fine Arts Faculty. Her research interests are Theories of Photography, Postmodern Cinema, Intertextuality and Visual Arts, Cyber-Culture, and Philosophy of Open Education.

ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0003-1512-9627

References

- Atay, S. (2022). Drive My Car, Bir Haritalandırma Çalışması, In E. Esen (Ed.), *Türkiye'de Japonya-Japonya'da Türkiye Alanlarında Akademik Çalışmalar Kotodama İstanbul academia 2*, (pp.136-144), EFEAKADEMİ Yayınları.
- Baumbach, N. & Plunkert, D. (2012). All That Heaven Allows. *Film Comment*,48(2), 45-53, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43459917>
- Borges, J.L. (2015). The Library of Babel. <https://sites.evergreen.edu/politicalshakespeares/wp-content/uploads/sites/226/2015/12/Borges-The-Library-of-Babel.pdf>
- Borges, J.L. (2003). The Garden of Forking Paths, In N.Wardrip-Fruin&N.Montfort (Eds.) *The New Media Reader*, pp.29-34, The MIT Press. [https://monoskop.org/images/4/4c/Wardrip-Fruin Noah Montfort Nick eds The New Media Reader.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/4/4c/Wardrip-Fruin%20Noah%20Montfort%20Nick%20eds%20The%20New%20Media%20Reader.pdf)
- Chatman, S. (1985). Le innovazioni narrative di Michelangelo Antonioni, In G.Tinazzi (Ed.), *Michelangelo Antonioni Identificazione di un autore Forma e racconto nel cinema di Antonioni*, (pp.19-30), Comune di Ferrara Ufficio Cinema Pratiche Editrice.
- Danto, A.C. (2019). *Sıradan Olanın Başkalaşımı*, (Trans. E.Berktaş&Ö.Ejder), Ayrıntı.
- Deleuze, G. (1990). *The Logic of Sense*, (Trans. M. Lester & C. Stivale), The Athlone Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1997). *Cinema 2 The Time-Image* (Trans. H. Tomlinson & R. Caleta), University of Minnesota Press. [https://monoskop.org/images/6/68/Deleuze Gilles Cinema 2 Time-Image.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/6/68/Deleuze%20Gilles%20Cinema%20Time-Image.pdf)
- Erhat, A. (2021). "Şölen" Üstüne Birkaç Söz, In S.Eyüpoğlu&A.Erhat (Eds. And Translators), *Platon Şölen-Dostluk*, (pp. V-XI), Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları.
- Gemünden, G. (1999). Introduction, *Film Criticism*, 23(2/3), Special Issue on Douglas Sirk /Detlef Sierck, pp.1-13, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44018968>
- Hamaguchi, R. (Jan 19, 2022), Ryûsuke Hamaguchi's Top 10, *The Criterion Collection*, <https://www.criterion.com/current/top-10-lists/393-Ryûsuke-hamaguchi-s-top-10>.
- Hamaguchi, R. (2022), *Walden*, Austria, Japan Co-production, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aH8kXRnuAE>
- Harvey, J. (1978). Sirkumstantial Evidence, *Film Comment*, 14(4), pp.52-59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43451398>
- Heidegger, M. (2006). *The Origin of The Work of Art*, (Trans. R. Berkowitz and P. Nonet), <https://www.academia.edu/2083177/The-Origin-of-the-Work-of-Art-by-Martin-Heidegger>
- Heidegger, M. (2011). *Sanat Eserinin Kökeni*, (Trans. F. Tepebaşılı), DE Kİ.
- Jay (Jun 14, 2022). 102. All That Heaven Allows, 1955 Sublime, visually lush, emotional melodrama at its most piercing. Watch The Best Of Classic Cinema Jay's Classic Movie Blog <https://www.jaysclassicmovieblog.com/post/102-all-that-heaven-allows-1955>
- Mankowski, L. (15 Oct 2021). Notebook Interview A Wonderful World of What-ifs: A Conversation with Ryûsuke Hamaguchi. The director discusses his film "Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy," and his approach to rehearsals, melodrama, comedy, and trauma in his work. <https://mubi.com/en/notebook/posts/a-wonderful-world-of-what-ifs-a-conversation-with-Ryûsuke-hamaguchi>

- Manovich, L. (2003). New Media from Borges to HTML, In N.Wardrip-Fruin&N.Montfort (Eds.) The New Media Reader, pp.13-25, The MIT Press.
https://monoskop.org/images/4/4c/Wardrip-Fruin_Noah_Montfort_Nick_eds_The_New_Media_Reader.pdf
- McCourt, J. (1975). Douglas Sirk Melo Maestro, Film Comment, 11(6), pp.18-21,
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43753015>
- Metz, C.W. (1993). Pomp(Ous) Sirk-Umstance: Intertextuality, Adaptation, And All That Heaven Allows, Journal of Film and Video, 45(4), 2-21.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20688015>
- Murray, J.H. (2003). Inventing the Medium , In N.Wardrip-Fruin&N.Montfort (Eds.) The New Media Reader, pp.3-11, The MIT Press.
https://monoskop.org/images/4/4c/Wardrip-Fruin_Noah_Montfort_Nick_eds_The_New_Media_Reader.pdf
- O'Connor, K. (2021). All That Heaven Allows (1955), The ThoreauSociety Bulletin, No.312, pp.10-11, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48617190>
- Ohara, A. (September 12, 2023 at 18:41 JST). Hamaguchi says Venice award inspires him to keep working, at The Asahi Shimbun. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/15003679>
- Plato (1956). *The Symposium*, (Trans. W.Hamilton), Penguin Books,
<https://www.bard.edu/library/arendt/pdfs/Plato-Symposium.pdf>
- Platon (2021). *Şölen-Dostluk*,(Trans. S. Eyüboğlu&A. Erhat), Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları.
- Sirk, D. (Director). (1955). All That Heaven Allows, (Producer R.Hunter), Universal Pictures.
<https://archive.org/details/all-that-heaven-allows-1955-director-douglas-sirk>
- Thoreau, H.D.(2017). *Walden*, Vintage.
- Uçar, Z.P. (10/03/2021). Ryūsuke Hamaguchi ile Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy Üzerine,
<https://filmloverss.com/Ryūsuke-hamaguchi-ile-wheel-of-fortune-and-fantasy-uzerine/>

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). and European Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).