Chapter 5
Meta–Narrative of Immigration:
A Study on Migration and the Presentation of Immigration in Fatih Akin's Films

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ABSTRACT

The concept of migration can be defined as physical space changing. Immigration defines the migration act as well as the difficulties encountered in adapting to new worlds. Their children, named as second-generation, adapted more easily than their parents to the new country. These people, described as "hybrid," benefited from the advantages of hybridization, but, at the same time, they experienced the complexity of identity and culture. One of these people is Fatih Akın, who is a child of a family that immigrated to Germany to work. Akın has used his versatility sourced from his immigrant identity and addressed the phenomenon of migration from different perspectives. Akın, who is in an important position in cinema concept described as "cinema of migration," has been awarded many awards in international film festivals. In this study, the concept of migration and immigrants in the Fatih Akın cinema was examined. In the study, firstly concepts such as migration, immigration, migrant cinema were discussed; then the findings were interpreted and finally discussed in the conclusion section.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of immigration which is almost parallel with the beginning of humanity has a feature that has survived to the present day with its content changing over time. Migration is generally in a close relationship with situations that can be associated with increasing the standard of living such as living in better conditions, earning more financially, maintaining a life in a safer environment if compulsory situations are excluded. Despite all these positive demands, it is not an easy situation for the immigrants

to adapt to their place of immigration. These people who are described as "immigrants" experience a rupture from their own culture and values as a result of this great change in their lives and they cannot be included in a new culture. The phenomenon of immigration which has such a great impact on the private and social lives of individuals is one of the issues addressed by the art of cinema which is an intertwined field with society. Many directors whether they are immigrants themselves or not have conveyed the lives, troubles, experiences and thoughts of immigrants to the audience through the silver screen with an internal or external perspective.

One of the periods in which migration movements have been seen recently coincides with the post-World War II period. With the end of the war, European states fell into a obscurity and decided that they had to quickly restart mass production in order to strengthen their shaken economies. However the loss of life caused by the war caused a great decrease in the male population, especially in European countries and this situation created the need for external demand, especially the physical labor force. Germany which is one of the countries that suffered the most from the war has been one of the countries that used this method in order to improve its weak economic structure. Turkey is one of the most important countries that meet the need of the labor. Workers living in small settlements of Anatolia, especially in villages and towns have constituted a significant part of those who migrated as they were more prone to physical works and they were presented with an important exit ticket like life in Europe. These people were surprised and did not know what to do because of the great cultural change they experienced. The necessity to adapt to a new culture, a new language, and a new way of life forced them a lot but they realized that there was no return from this path they once entered. The second generation which came after these people and their children was born directly into the German culture, took part in their education system and grew up by learning their language. This second generation adapted to this new culture much more easily compared to their parents. However despite all these advantages, there have been some problems they have experienced and encountered in their lives. Some of those who want to tell these experiences from their own perspective wanted to do this through cinema. Fatih Akin is one of these people. Akin reconstructed the phenomenon of immigration through his own films and formed his filmic narratives by adding his own perspectives to concepts such as "nostalgia" and "expatriate". In this study, the phenomenon of immigration in Fatih Akin's cinema was discussed. In the study, concepts such as migration, immigration, immigrant cinema were discussed firstly, then the findings were interpreted and finally discussed in the conclusion section.

IMMIGRATION AND MIGRANT CINEMA

Immigration

The concept of migration is one of the oldest phenomena in human history and has been seen in almost all periods and societies. The concept of migration is briefly defined as "The people living in a certain settlement moving their living areas out of the mentioned area by their own will within a certain period of time" (Tekeli, 2008, p. 42). Another definition is "Permanent movement of individuals or groups, beyond symbolic or political boundaries towards new settlements and societies" (Marshall, 1999, p. 685). The migration movement which is socially and politically defined as a social transfer from one region to another causes fundamental changes in the lives of those who carry out this action. The concept of migration is not a simple one-layered phenomenon; it is dynamic, interactive and multi-layered. It includes

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