

An Analysis Of Identities In The Context Of Cultural Encounters

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ABSTRACT *Germany is one of the countries, where conflicting nature of cultural encounters is clearly visible. The aim of the study is to investigate cultural encounters and identity problems in Germany within the framework of Fatih Akın's movie Gegen Die Wand. Film analysis, which will be placed in this context, is important due to the fact that it addresses discursive discussions related to Turkish-German identities and cultural encounters.*

'Gegen Die Wand,' which puts emphasis on cultural encounters and existence of hybrid identities in Germany, issues that attract a great deal of attention in European literature, was analysed with semiotic analysis method. This movie, which, lays emphasis on cultural encounters and hybrid identities, highlights the changing and dynamic sense of identity in Germany. It creates a different point of view in German cinema as an area of conflict and struggle, and provides a new narrative form to German cinema.

Keywords :Cultural encounters, existence of hybrid, semiotic analysis

Kültürel Karşılaşmalar Bağlamında Kimliklerin Analizi

ÖZ *Kültürel karşılaşmaların çatışmalı yapısının en görünür şekilde yaşandığı yerlerden biri Almanya'dır. Araştırmanın amacı, Almanya'da yaşanan kültürel karşılaşmaları ve kimlik sorunlarını, Fatih Akın'ın Duvara Karşı film çerçevesinde incelemektir. Bu bağlamda yer alacak film analizi, Türk-Alman kimlikleriyle ilgili söylemsel tartışmalar ve kültürel karşılaşmalar ekseninde yapılması bakımından önemlidir. Avrupa'da oldukça ilgi gören, Almanya'daki kültürel karşılaşmalar ve melez kimliklerin varlığına vurgu yapan 'Duvara Karşı' filmi göstergebilimsel analiz yöntemiyle irdelenmiştir. Kültürel karşılaşmalar ve melez kimliklere vurgu yapan bu film Almanya'da değişen ve dinamik bir kimlik anlayışını öne çıkarmaktadır. Bu duruşuyla Alman sineması içinde bir çatışma ve mücadele alanı olarak farklı bir bakış açısı oluşturmakta, Alman sinemasına yeni anlatım formu sunmaktadır.*

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kültürel Karşılaşmalar, Melez kimlik, göstergebilimsel analiz

Introduction

Communication and culture influence each other mutually, and determine the cultural values of individuals constituting the society, and how they communicate. With globalization, relations between countries and cultures has developed, thereby increasing the significance of intercultural communication gradually. In this context, cultural encounters draw attention to concepts such as 'foreign/the other.' Migration and its 'hybrid' identities that emerge as a result of the immigration process, underlies cultural encounters. Therefore, it is important to analyse the movies produced by directors who develop their themes on the basis of 'foreign/the other' concepts, in order to understand the ongoing cultural encounters in Germany, which is an immigration country. Today, influence of cinema is gradually increasing in individual and social life. In this context, cultural encounters in Germany were analysed within the framework of a movie. In addition to globalization, interpretation related to the culture concept, cultural encounters and hybrid identities were addressed in this study.

Since ancient times, humankind has been subject to cultural encounter, which take place as a result of several factors including wars, commerce, education etc. As a result of encountering with different cultures, the tension between exclusion and inclusion of 'foreign/other' cultures becomes prominent. The aim of this study is to investigate cultural encounters and identity problems in Germany within the framework of a feature film.

Germany is one of the countries, where conflicting nature of cultural encounters is clearly visible. Because Turkish people constitute the minority group, which has the highest level of population in Germany. The film analysis, which will be placed in this context, is significant in that it addresses issues on the basis of discursive discussions related to Turkish-German identities and cultural encounters. Movies, which represent the ongoing cultural encounters and hybrid identities in Germany, are important means for 'other/foreign' cultures living in Germany to make themselves heard and make their differences visible.

The study is limited to intercultural cinema themes in general sense, which emerge in the context of globalization. In the context of this subject, analysing the Turkish population within the framework of Fatih Akin's film, will bring a holistic approach to the subject. Turkish director Fatih Akin, who lives in Germany, is included to this population. Choosing the movie "Gegen Die Wand" by Fatih Akin, constitutes the target population of the study. In the study, representation forms of immigrants were analysed with semiotic analysis method, by also considering how identity and culture concepts were addressed.

Culture and Globalization

According to its encyclopaedic definition, culture is the set of information, beliefs and behaviours specific to human species, and material objects, which is a part of this cultural entity. It covers all the material and immaterial assets of social life including language, ideas, sign systems, institutions, laws, tools, techniques, art etc. (Adanır, 1998: 23). Culture refers to all the material and moral values created in the process of historical, social development, and set of tools, which are used for creating these values, transmitting them to next generations, and indicate the extent of humankind's dominance over its natural and social environment

(TDK, 2014). It forms intra-community behaviours (family, work, distribution of power and status etc.) and organizations in many ways; in other words, it shapes the social structure. German philosopher Eric Rothacker also suggests that nations don't consist merely of human masses, and it is culture, which turns masses into a nation (Güner, 1997: 382).

In the general sense, sociologists refer to culture as all material and moral common values and institutions that make those masses 'nations.' An individual, who is a member of a nation, carries the culture, language, tastes, beliefs, manners and customs of that nation along with him/her. In this perspective, culture refers to all the values of the society, which go beyond individuals, and give a form, direction and identity to individuals (Adanır, 382).

When ethnological roots of culture is traced, it is seen that the word 'culture' originated from 'Cultura,' which means agriculture in Latin. The equivalence of this word, which was later used as "Culture" in Western languages, is the word "hars" in Ottoman. The concept of culture is mostly understood as the set of social values, which brings unity to a human society's emotions, ideas and judgements. This implication of culture covers all the values of the society including traditions, customs, intellectual and artistic values (Kemeş, 1998: 17-18).

Bozkurt Güvenç defines culture as follows "Culture or civilization is a complex whole, which includes all the information, traditions, customers and similar skills, abilities and habits humankind has learnt (acquired) as a member of society (Güvenç, 1999: 102).

Suggesting that "culture" is an abstract word which refers to concepts such as "civilization" - "a specific society", "a series of social processes" and "theory of people and society," Bozkurt Güven states that culture is also used in four different meanings (1999: 95-98):

In scientific terms, culture is civilization.

In the field of humanities, culture is the product of education process.

In the field of aesthetics, culture is fine arts.

In the material and biological fields, culture is production, agriculture, crop, reproduction and cultivation.

Culture covers all the aspects under the subjects and categories list such as social organization, religion and economy. Culture refers to adapting to the environment and solving problems related to cohabitation. Culture is also a concept, which is shared, learned, and symbolic, transferred from one generation to the other, accustomed and integrated (Erdoğan, Alemdar, 2005: 215-216).

The concept of culture, which is generally used to characterize the aspects of human behaviour based on intellectual and symbolic expression, has been explained through structures, to which a primary and determinant role is attributed. As a research object, culture has generally been understood in its connection to "non-cultural concepts," and a secondary role was

attributed to its function with regard to the production and reproduction of social structure. By 1980's, culture was relieved from its secondary position, and declared its independence by gaining a status which is incomparable to its previous position understanding the 'social.' As the concept gained predominance in social sciences in this way, new concept also emerged 1990's in connection with culture. Global Culture The concept of culture also came into the focus of globalization debates, and made global culture concept an item of the social agenda (Ayhan, 1996: 180).

As a concept, while the meaning of the word "global" originates back to 400 years ago, "globalization" is quite a new concept. The concept of globalization, which first emerged in 1960's, become a concept used frequently after 1980's. Bu 1990's, it became a key word, significance of which was accepted by scientists (Gerbier, 1999- 105).

Globalization is a concept, which has three dimensions, namely, political, economic and cultural. Cultural aspect of globalization points to two separate results, which are different, even in contrast to each other. The first result emerged in the form of "micro nationalism." Globalization promotes an understanding, which emphasizes even the smallest cultural difference, brings it to the attention of world public opinion through media, and in political terms, regards the principle of protecting cultural diversity as an essential part of democratic rights and freedoms. Second result globalization's cultural aspect is, the fact that globalization paved the way for a cultural assimilation especially by influencing consumer behaviours on a global scale. Globalization is a process, a phenomenon. Its pros and cons bay be discussed, but is inevitability is quite obvious. Within this framework, estimating the results of this formation, which affects the whole world, and acting accordingly, appears as a prerequisite of modernity and actuality (Kongar, 2010: http://www.kongar.org/makaleler/mak_ku.php).

Globalization is the circulation of commodities, capital and information on a global scale and in a momentary process. As a result of this, it can be suggested that communication facilities generated by globalization and technology, removed the borders between societies and assimilated them.

One of the principal claims of globalization, which challenges different life styles with every new day, is that a global world culture will be established and this culture will dominate the world. In economic terms, speaking of a global world economy and presence of certain supranational global political organizations in the context of globalization seems to be possible. In the "global village" which is created by globalization, consumption patterns, institutions and groups assimilate with each other. Globalization threatens the basic values within the collective lives of people, poses the danger of breaching from collective beliefs and social institutions and disintegration of social cohesion as a result of the prevalence of competition over solidarity, extreme individualism and solitude over socialization, and preferring immoderation to norms. The global culture presented to the masses is produced entirely based on consumption principles, severs the ties between people, and, in a sense, justifies Hobbes' "homo homini lupus" (man is a wolf to man) principle (Lull, 2001: 206).

One of the most significant areas dominated by globalization is culture. In this context, various questions can be brought forward. Does globalization represent a cultural homogeneity? Will

culturally advanced societies be suppressed by global products, media, ideas and institutions or find themselves under such threats? One of the reflexes local people show when they confront with the forces of global culture, is "resistance," the other is "approval." Therefore, the society will either show "reaction," or "approve" and adopt. However, accepting the global culture simply as it is presented to people, is not the typical response of societies. The society itself may also attribute different meanings to global culture, which enters local community through goods and services, ideas and technology; so, different subcultures may interpret global culture differently. If it is accepted that global culture is a reference system, which organizes different cultures in the world, an intercommunal "collective" consciousness is created as global culture starts to represent certain universal categories and standards (Büyükuslu, 2000: 122-123).

Identity Concept and Types of Identity

In the most simple term, identity is the answers given by persons, groups, societies and communities when questions "who are you, which group do you belong to?" are asked to them. Not only the features and characteristics that distinguish us from others, but also values and principles with others play a role in determining one's identity. In fact, when we express the group of people we belong to or whom we favour, we also express whom we don't belong to or whom we are against. In short identity is also known with whom one is against (Güvenç, 1993:3). Identity is the meaning and experience source of people. It is constructed on the basis of meaning's cultural characteristics. Identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves and they are constructed by them in the process individualization. While identities may originate from dominant ruling institutions, they become identities when social actors interiorise them and organize their own meanings around this interiorization. Indeed, it may also correspond to certain self-definitions, social roles; for instance, being a father could be the most important self-definition according to the perspective of social actor. However, when the self-construction and individualization processes they involve are considered, identities are stronger sources of meaning compared to the roles. To speak in simple terms, 'identities organize meaning, while roles organize functions (Castells, 2006: 12-13).

When addressed on a cultural and political level, identity problem seems to be related to formations before and after French Revolution. Phenomena such as industrialization, colonisation, nationalism, cosmopolitanism take an importance place in these formations, and they seem to be in connection with two historical movement of thought, which emerged and crystallised over the course of these processes. First of these, nostalgia for the universal, is the universalist movement, which develops along the lines of a monotype social organization, assimilation of the universe, and creating a standard world consisting of the same or similar elements. Free market economy and western style democracy appear as the basic targets of this movement, and this process also implicates "westernization" in a sense. The second, differentiation is the differentialist movement, which develops based on the idea of forming small groups instead of a global humanity. This movement may take the form of favouring nationalism against cosmopolitanism, regionalism against centralization, specific culture against mass culture, decolonisation or independence against colonisation. Phenomena such

as ethnocentrism, religious fundamentalism, communitarianism can also be addressed within this framework (Bilgin, 1995: 4).

Factors, which play a role in the formation of identity are essentially categorized as objective and subjective factors. Objective factors refer to material and moral factualities, which are shared by individuals that internalize the identity. Religion, language, ethnic origin, history, land/country, symbols, myths or traditions are factors that may be characterised as the concrete products of identity. Subjective aspect of identities comes into play in the process of the internalization of objective components by the community or members of the community. While a set of historical or daily common values underlie the identity, this identity can be adopted or internalised by individuals only when they comprehend them. In other words, identity is essentially based on a common and continues awareness about belonging to a community and community's shared values. And this is realized through a common belief and idea of unity (Erdenir, 2005: 41-42). In his work (2005: 26), Erdenir lists the qualities and functions of identities by quoting from Delgado-Moreira, and suggests that they produce moral communities, construct historical continuity, they are based on a morale, have practical purposes, distinguish communities from other communities, provide behavioural and belief patterns, and have a public existence.

In his study "Turkish Identity," Bozkurt Güvenç (1993: 4) categorizes different types of identity as follows:

Individual Identities: There are individual identities which are assigned by institutions in order to distinguish a person from others. Everyone has work identity they receive from their company, driver's license from traffic police and credit cards received from the bank. They are shortly called "Individual identity."

Personal Identities: There are also psychosocial or personal identities, which indicate their voluntary, emotional or vocational relations with institutions and organizations, associations, clubs and schools, which they are affiliated with. This type of identities are called "Personal identity" in order to distinguish them from individual identities. Such identities don't have to be supported with an official document (card/evidence).

National-Cultural Identities: We also have identities registered to the state records, which indicates a person's family relations, name, surname, gender, marriage status, military service and criminal information together. Passport, which we have to receive and use when we go abroad, is an official and national identity. We call this identity "National identity" to distinguish it from the others.

They are all different types of identity. While they have certain similarities, each has a specific function. People's relation, distance and proximity to this type of identities are quite different. Apart from those mentioned above, a person has more than one identities such as one's social personalities, roles and status.

Cultural Encounters and Birth of Hybrid Identities

Considering the fact that the most important and transformative physical movements behind encounters is immigration, the nature of concepts like 'immigration' and 'immigrant' become prominent in these discussions. When culture's structure, which is transformed under the influence of encounters, is defined, *postcolonial cultural structures'* also become prominent. Meyda Yeğenoğlu's article, in which she investigates the postcolonial immigrant identity, has significant references on the subject: One of the descriptive characteristics of contemporary immigrant identity is that, it expresses the conflicts and tensions of cultural, economic and political map during the postcolonial era due to the fact that it is positioned between old and new, colonial and post-colonial era, global and local, West and East, inside and outside. Immigration points to the emergence of another identity, which subverts the era's dualistic logic based on inside and outside, city and village, metropolis and colony, centre and periphery antagonisms. Immigrant identity is neither archaic nor modern; belongs neither to the past, nor to the present; it is both at the same (Yeğenoğlu, 1995: 80).

Hybridization concept suggested by Hannerz has a series of components. For instance, it conflicts with 19th century nationalism's general acceptances related to culture; it points to the fact that like languages, cultures may also inherently have complicated origins rather than being pure and homogeneous historically. In other words, "Hybridization symbolizes the intertwined and heterogeneous nature of different phenomena such as nature-society, which are separated and conceptualized by classical social theory as homogeneous and pure entities within themselves" (Diken, 1997: 74). The most fundamental aspect of the idea of hybridity is simply mixture, that is, intertwinement. Hannerz suggests a series of mobilizing variants instead of homogenization and degeneration: A suggestion which puts aside the distinction between global cultural production- local reproduction, and brings a produced heterogeneity and synthesis in the context of transformative nature of mutual cultural flow. "Hannerz's formulation has a significant - though not theoretical - practical superiority in terms of decentralizing the strong centre-periphery formulation, which establishes world systems in the form of unidirectional penetration from centre to periphery, from strong to weak, aggressive to passive" (Abou-el-Haj^{1998: 176}). According to Hannerz, culture is an area of struggle and transformation. Decentralization discourse in Hannerz's hypotheses poses a potential challenge to the utopias of globalization. In the 'zeitgeist' of today, which Pierre Andre Taguieff calls "Bougisme," an utopia, which is characterised by the 'people of mobility,' who don't have any heritage and affiliation, a memory and history, but who are extremely mobile, contaminant beyond measure and adaptive at the highest level possible, prevails. This person, who has neither a family origin or a future, is responsible for his/her own speed and flexibility. He/she only has a temporary and volatile identity, and prefers changing his/her at every turn. In today's advertisement discourse, individual idealizes himself/herself as an 'immigrant,' a 'cross-breed' and hails himself/herself as a 'hybrid' who is constantly on the move " (Firat, 2003: 80).

Türkoğlu (2004: 61-62) states that globalization is experienced as a bitter form of acceptance, which Bauman characterizes with the idiom 'if you can't beat them, join them,' rather than an universality to be proud of, despite all the glorifications attributed to global-cultural hybridity as a liberating condition. Türkoğlu (2004: 61-62) states that globalization is experienced as a

bitter form of acceptance, which Bauman characterizes with the idiom 'if you can't beat them, join them,' rather than a universality to be proud of, despite all the glorifications attributed to global-cultural hybridity as a liberating condition. As Türkoğlu emphasizes, experiencing hybridity, which gained momentum as a result of globalization, as a 'bitter form of acceptance' goes in line with the realities of political and cultural acceptance processes. As cultural forms become, protecting the diversities that define the boundaries between various social and cultural belongings (class, ethnic, religious, national etc.) is becoming a sharper and more visible power struggle. In this respect, discussions on hybridity and hybridization also point to the fact that these social facts also have a capacity to resist to the current social and cultural categories. It should be emphasized that cultural politics of hybridization is closely associated with determining the boundaries of foreign/other cultures against one's own culture and different acceptance processes of different immigrant generations.

Intercultural Cinema

In her book "The Skin of the Film," Laura Marks suggests using the term "Intercultural Cinema" instead of relevant terms such as "hybrid," "post-colonial," "marginal," "anti-racist", "cinema in the middle," and "Third Cinema." Marks' suggestion is based on the concept of "Intercultural." The state of being "Intercultural" refers to a journey, movement from one culture to another. This journey and movement implicates transformation and polyphony. Rather than representing a single culture, it connects at least two cultures and acts as the common path between two different directions. It ensures that a dynamic relationship is established between the guest culture and host culture. Host culture is generally the white and European culture. Mark expands the content of the meaning and explains the reason why she chose this concept (Marks: 2003: 9): *The term "intercultural" is not associated only with the connection between two cultures. It is also associated with the relations between racial minorities and Euro-centrist national representation. Therefore, it also implies other definitions such as nation, nationalism, national borders. The way culture concept is influenced from external factors and enter a transformation process is more dynamic than the influences on the concept of nation. The movement takes place on an international scale, but the change is intercultural. The concept 'intercultural' is relevant for this social picture. Considering the fact that cinema is one of the important tools to keep up with these changes in the cultures and performing an intercultural exchange, we understand why using "Intercultural" definition is more appropriate. The term "Intercultural Cinema" implies an art form, which is not specific to a single culture, which connects at least two cultures and acts as a mediator for establishing relations between these cultures. The dialogue of different cultures within the same country also develops a nation's dialogue with the foreign cultures in the country.*

Intercultural Cinema is a movement, through which displaced, hybridized persons, who went through different cultural encounters, express the experiences they gained in Western civilization with a political and ideological infrastructure. Therefore, it is fed from new cultural forms, which emerged as a result of immigration, exile and diaspora experiences in Western metropolis. Most of the artists, who produce movies in this category, live in the minority regions of Western countries. These film-makers generally consist of immigrant generations from Asia, Middle-East, Latin America and Africa. Intercultural filmmakers represent the hidden lives of immigrants, exiles, hybridized identities that live in diaspora. In this sense,

they assume an activist role. Their historical infrastructure is strong. They reveal a history that is not written, and play an important role in the process of creating a new collective memory and identity (Marks: 2003: 13). Defining intercultural cinema, Marks determines the fact that, unlike other cinema forms which are defined as a result of cultural encounters, cultural memory is refreshed with the arousal of tactile memories. Senses are the most important means for creating a cultural heritage and formation of memory. Intercultural Cinema is also an important tool for depicting various cultural components of these senses.

Different cultures, the number of which is increasing in Germany, the prominent representative of Europe and European cinema, push the cinematic boundaries of intercultural dialogue.

Cultural Encounters in German Cinema

Having emerged in Germany, Turkish-German cinema's main source of inspiration is historical and economic events. After Germany declared that the national economy of the country needed foreign workers, 'Workers' Exchange Treaty' was signed between two countries on September 1, 1961. This treaty led to a migration wave from Turkey to Germany, which continued for a period of 15-20 years. The aim of these workers was to save enough money to increase their quality of life in Turkey, and return to their homelands afterwards. Workers in Germany had been defined as "guest workers" since the beginning of immigration process, and the process of immigrants' acceptance to German society was problematic. Derya Firat interprets this process as follows "Having accepted Turkish immigrants temporarily until recently, Germany regarded them only as guest workers within the framework of a specific labour contract. Therefore, although Turkish immigrant community living in Germany, were recognized as a community and benefited from communitarian rights, it was quite difficult for these immigrants to obtain citizenship status. As a result, Turkish people in Germany have the right to leave as a community outside German nation, they are even condemned to such a life " (Firat, 2003: 9). However, the form of "visit" changed over the course of time and "guest worker immigration" turned into "chain migration" as the relatives, friends from the same region joined the migration wave "Nearly two million people going from Turkey to Germany were influenced by the conditions in both Germany and Turkey, and had an effect on the changing of these conditions." As a result, Turkish people, whose population increased gradually over the course of time, become a debatable issue in Germany's cultural structure. The will to go back to the homeland was the basic starting point of immigrant strategies developed by first generation of immigrants as a defence mechanism based on citizenship and kinship. This tendency was supported by laws, which promote and encourage foreign individuals to go back to their own country, just like in other immigrant-receiving European countries. However, return to the homeland was hindered to a large extent due to various conditions. Intolerant attitudes towards the guest workers and immigrants, which was prevalent in 1980's and 1990's, was also observed in Germany. At this point, the poor conditions that Turkish people went through in Germany (racist citizenship law, institutional racism, structural exclusion, gradual disappearance of return to homeland discourse etc.) caused diasporic Turkish people to develop collective identity and culture strategies. Kaya defined this process with the term 'Minority Strategy' (Genç, 2004: 53).

As Kaya emphasized, in cases where minority status was felt strongly and acceptance processes were problematic, like other immigrants/minority group who went through the same process, Turkish people also looked for ways to represent/express their "stuck in the middle" condition, and their experiences. This search was also a way of belonging to the society in which they lived in, through different means. Turkish people living in Germany expressed themselves by means of artistic and culturalist products ranging from literature, cinema, to music and plastic arts. Tunç Okan, Erden Kral, Tuncel Kurtiz, Yılmaz Arslan, Enis Günay, Rasim Konyar, Tevfik Baser, Yüksel Yavuz and Fatih Akın are some of these filmmakers. Differences between generations play a significant role in their contextual and formal expression. Because the extension of the process paved the way for "a change in the psychology, moral values and cultural infrastructures of people. This manifested itself as the second generation, which is also called 'Lost Generation' came into play. This generation attempted to add new things to the culture brought by their parents in the middle of another culture (Bozdemir, 2004: 40).

Turkish People constitute 2.5% of German population and the largest foreign population in Germany. Complicated exile stories of this population, their adaptation problems, segregation and encounters not based on tolerance were the starting point of the movies of second generation. To put it more clearly, Second Generation is used to characterize the directors, who were born in Germany after their parents immigrated to this country, grew up there, were at the ages of 20-30 and who put themselves in a position different from that of their parents (Bozdemir, 2004 40). Journey is still maintained as one of the main themes in the movies of these directors Characters have hybrid cultural characteristics, like other characters who are subjects of cultural encounters. They belong to guest worker group, which is a part of labour migration. Despite the fact that they were born and grew up here, they don't have the German identity or identity of a guest, whose presence is welcome from the perspective of German citizens. While representing the conflicts and problematic acceptance processes they experience, they re-question views related to national and cultural identity. In this context, while some characters resist to hybridity (-characters who mainly represent the first generation-), others have an attitude, which accepts hybridity and receives cultural encounters positively (--characters that mainly represent the second generation-). Traditional resistance to hybridity is common in the first generation, who came to Germany with labour immigration. However, second and third generations were inevitably influenced by German culture and they are represented by characters, who are more open to cultural encounters with their hybrid identity. This conflict, which is presented in movies through characters, is developed in the artwork based on the tension between the logic, which positions cultures in a pure and homogeneous context, and discourses which are open to cultural dialogue (Firat, 2003, : 12).

As a result, these movies, which are influenced by constantly changing cultural and identity discourses, and which also shape these discourses, gained legitimacy in European and World Cinema. These movies, which were deemed worthy of various awards at international festivals from the beginning of 2000's, were embraced by producer companies. Because these movies bring new critical dimensions to the culture of directors' own culture and relationship forms of minority culture.

Semiotic Analysis of the Movie "Gegen Die Wand"

Scope and Significance of the Research

Germany is one of the countries, where conflicting nature of cultural encounters is clearly visible. The aim of the study is to investigate cultural encounters and identity problems in Germany within the framework of Fatih Akin's movie *Gegen Die Wand*. Film analysis, which will be placed in this context, is important due to the fact that it addresses discursive discussions related to Turkish-German identities and cultural encounters.

Fatih Akin's movie "*Gegen Die Wand*," which received "Golden Bear" award in 54th Berlin Film Festival in Germany, attracted a great deal of attention in Europe. It is doubtful whether the movie created a positive Turkish on the part of Turkey. However, the movie's black humour should not be forgotten, because German characters in the movie are not kind of personalities that audience could associate themselves with. Contextually, although the movie is not presented with positive characters, it narrates a social problem of citizens in Germany, therefore a problem in our country. It was received with a great deal of attention and received awards in many countries. Other awards that the movie received are: 'German Film Awards', '2004 The Best European Film Award' of European Film Academy, 'Goya Award,' which is regarded as the Oscar of Spain, in The Best European Film category; the film was also included to 'best 10 films of 2005' list by Newsweek Magazine in Unites States, and was named 'The Best Film of 2005' by Time Out NY.

As a result, analysis of the movie '*Gegen Die Wand*,' which puts emphasis on cultural encounters and hybrid identities in Germany as issues that attract a great deal of attention in Europe, is significant for the subject of this study.

Method

Semiotic analysis method was used in the research. Works of Saussure, Charles S. Peirce and French philosopher Barthes, who made significant contributions to semiology in the later period had an effect on adapting semiotic analysis method. Semiology is the discipline, which deals with verbal and non-verbal sign systems and the roles of these systems in the production and re-production of meaning (Mutlu, 1994: 78)

Semiotic analysis is about the meanings in the texts and this meaning is inferred from relations, and particularly relations between the signs. A sign consists of 'signifier' and 'signified.' While signifier is the meaningful sounds and signs, that is, the object, form, light, colour, movement etc. projected to the screen; and signified is our thoughts and the meanings we attribute to signifier when we construct the signifier. Although a picture's name bears the characteristics of a signifier; there is a signified in the whole picture and it joins the formation of meaning by being articulated to visual units (Kurtuluş, 2000: 71-72). Like the distinction between signifier and signified, while signifier gives the literal meaning (denotation), signified gives the connotational semiotic system in the literal-connotational meaning distinction. A single signifier can mostly include several signifieds. In other words, each viewer may interpret a signifier with different signifieds. Moreover, a single signifier may have a basic literal meaning

for most viewers, but different connotational meanings for each viewer. This suggests that different viewers may infer different connotational meanings.

Film's General Information

Film's Original Name: Gegen Die Wand

Film's English Name: Head-on

Director: Fatih Akın

Scenario: Fatih Akın

Director of Photography: Rainer Klausmann

Soundtrack: Klaus Maeck

Actors/Actresses: Birol Ünel (Cahit), Sibel Kekilli (Sibel), Catrin Striebeck(Maren), Güven Kıraç (Şeref), Meltem Cumbul (Selma), Hermann Lause (Psychiatrist), Cem Akın, Demir Gökçöl, Aysel İşcan, Mehmet Kurtuluş

Producer Countries: Germany, Turkey

Production Year and Screen Time: 2004, 120 minutes

Language: German, Turkish, English

Summary of the Film

Receiving psychiatric treatment after committing suicide Cahit is 40 year old, alcoholic and drug addict German citizen with Turkish origin. When his doctor tells him that "Suicide is not the only way to end your life," he realizes that he must start his life again. Sibel, who is also Turkish, is a young and beautiful girl and pressures of her conservative family also pushed her to commit suicide. Sibel, finds another way of salvation instead of attempting to die, and asks Cahit, whom she just met, to marry her. Wanting to help Sibel, Cahit marries her. Starting to live in the same house, Sibel and Cahit soon fall in love with each other; but Sibel's insistence on continuing her free sexual life, causes Cahit to kill his friend Niko as a result of a fit of jealousy. Cahit is sent to prison, and Sibel becomes obliged to go to her cousin Selma in İstanbul. Feeling herself very lonely in İstanbul, Sibel indulges herself in the world of drugs and violence; finally, when she is attacked by three men one night, she is saved by Cem. She has a child from Cem. Cahit, on the other hand, gets out of the prison, and goes to İstanbul to be with Sibel; his aim is to take Sibel and go to his hometown, Mersin. But Sibel doesn't want to take her son away from her father; so Cahit has to go to Mersin alone.

Semiotic Analysis of the Film

'*Gegen Die Wand*' opens with a woman, who sings in a traditional costume at a shore by the Golden Horn, with musicians accompanying her. The shore is covered with Turkish carpets. Behind them comes the sound of ferries passing by, and an İstanbul landscape full of mosques is seen. These images and songs, which frequently interrupts movie's story, become a part of

the narrative. In this sequence, İstanbul gives the feeling of an image, which is a distant memory in the past, a dream image. With a presentation that reminds one of the postcards, this city, in which half of the film takes place, is characterized as a city, which is both very familiar, and a foreign place at the same time. Such an opening not only positions İstanbul as a contrary figure to Hamburg, the other city in the cinematographic universe, but also presents İstanbul like a tale land, which conveys strong emotions. This narrative presents an imaginary city, constantly reminds the audience of the fact that they are in a fictional narrative, thereby decreasing the intensity level of the story.

This image and song is interrupted by a German song. Throughout the film, the music plays an important role in drawing the boundaries of the story. It helps to define the current location; as the location changes, transitions from hard rock to pop music, from pop music to rap music draw attention, and most of the songs used in the film are Turkish pop music. German song in the first scene reminds the audience that it takes place in Germany-Hamburg. Cahit (Birol Ünel), collects empty bottles at a rock pub; he is a middle aged man in who makes his living by this occupation, uses drugs, and lives on the edge. After leaving the pub, he drives his car to the wall. From his interview with the doctor at the hospital, we understand that he is an immigrant from Mersin. He is not satisfied with his identity; he is angry to both Turkish and German identities; he doesn't feel like he belongs to a culture; but he doesn't complain about this, he doesn't seek anywhere to belong. In this short dialogue, we are again reminded about the importance of accent and names in films. Cahit's accent and name are presented to us as the most obvious codes that reveal his identity. Cahit meets Sibel (Sibel Kekilli) at the hospital. Sibel is a young and attractive woman, who also attempted to kill herself. In this meeting, Sibel proposes marriage to Cahit. She has no other option to choose for breaking down the boundaries drawn by her father and elder brother. Her brother broke her nose because he saw her holding hands with a man. Her father is no different from her brother. In this sense, Sibel's family is the representative of a traditional and isolated identity. They can't cross the pure and static boundaries of their identity and culture. The primary reason why Sibel chooses Cahit is the fact that her family allows her to get married only with a Turkish man. On the other hand, Cahit's marginal life style wouldn't restrict Sibel, provide her a free space to live her life as she wishes. Sibel explains these to Cahit in a bus. By coincidence, the bus driver, who hears these statements, turns out to be Turkish. He throws out both of them exclaiming: 'You impious heathens, get out of my bus!' These dialogues distorts the audience's sense of space; makes them forget that events take place in the centre of Europe. Multilingual, multicultural encounters presented throughout the film, are accompanied by irony and sense of humour. After all the discussions between Sibel and Cahit, Sibel convinces Cahit to get married with her.

After asking for the girl's hand in marriage, a marriage ceremony at a wedding saloon, all the formal procedures to be fulfilled at the wedding and successive traditional rituals, Cahit and Sibel get married. Cultural codes and traditional presentation of this process, makes the audience forget that the film takes place in Germany. The most visible identity code that reminds of the location, are the characters speaking with accent.

Sibel, who reaches to freedom by getting married, goes to night clubs with Cahit treating him like her friend, and sleeps with man whom she finds attractive. In other words, she pushes the limits of both her cultural identity and her sexual identity. In this process, Cahit and Sibel pretend to be husband and wife, who get on well with each other, to Sibel's family. Sibel's family and relatives represent a traditional life style, which is contrary to the life Sibel is living. Generation gap come into play in these relations, too. While first generation immigrants live life within identity and cultural patterns, second generation immigrants generally put forward their hybrid identities and push the limits of these identities positively. This process can be addressed within the framework of hybrid identities. In other words, we can characterise immigrants as 'stuck in the middle' instead of characterising them as only 'Turkish' or 'foreigner.'

During the marriage process, Cahit's house, which was like a dump site before, is put into order by the hands of a woman, Turkish raki is drunk and stuffed green peppers are cooked. Sensory references, which also make a reference to Laura Marks' cultural codes, the way raki is mixed with water, smell of stuffed pepper, remind the audience of an imaginary and foreign city, because it is both familiar and far away like in the postcards, and activate the senses. Over the course of time, the desire growing between Cahit and Sibel, faces a traditional obstacle. If Sibel sleeps with Cahit, she will be His husband for real this time. Sibel doesn't want her freedom to be restricted. However, this freedom lived by a Turkish couple in Germany, also pushes the boundaries of the image drawn by Germans about Turkish people. This life lived by a married Turkish woman is almost beyond their imagination. Ultimately, Cahit kills Niko, one of the men that Sibel slept with, after his provocative statements. And Sibel realizes how much she is in love with Cahit in that 'last look.' Visiting Cahit at the prison, Sibel says, 'I will wait for you...' Her family rejects Sibel, her brother attempts to kill Her to restore their honour. Surrounded by the limits of Turkish culture and identity in Germany, Sibel goes to her cousin Selma (Meltem Cumbul) in İstanbul. The 'journey' concept again comes into play in the turning point of the story. Sibel starts to work as room clerk at the hotel in İstanbul, where Selma is also working. In this process, letters play an important role. In one of the letters she writes to Cahit, Sibel explains what a vibrant city İstanbul is. Just like characters, the letter is also multilingual. (It is written in German-Turkish.)

'*Gegen Die Wand*' started in Hamburg with a dark rebellion, passed through the romantic stages of a love story, and challenged cultural and social limits. In Istanbul, on the other hand, it is now Sibel's turn to live her life against the wall. With her very short hair, masculine cloths, Sibel doesn't fit into the patterns in the streets of İstanbul, she reveals her hybrid identity with her accent, she is raped, beaten, and comes to the brink of death.... Cahit gets out of the prison, this time he certainly knows where he wants to go; he wants to return to Mersin, lands where his roots belong. But his first stop is İstanbul. The Turkish sentence Sibel uttered to him, 'I will wait for you,' determines his destination.

After arriving in İstanbul, Cahit tells to the driver of the first taxi he takes that he doesn't know where to go. His accent reveals Cahit's identity. Taxi driver asks Cahit where he came from. After learning that Cahit came from Hamburg, he starts to talk to him in Turkish. He explains Cahit that he lived in Germany for years in German. This short dialogue remind the audience

of the implications of the dialogue with the Turkish bus driver in Germany. Both scenes, which take place in multilingual and multicultural geographies, draw attention to issues related to belonging and location.

Cahit finally settles in room with a view at a hotel in the centre of İstanbul. He finds Sibel with the help of her cousin Selma. Sibel now has a life of her own in İstanbul, she has a boyfriend and a child. During the two days they lived together in the hotel room, Cahit invites Sibel to take her child and go to Mersin with him. Cahit waits for Sibel, but Sibel doesn't go. Although she is not happy with the limits of the life she made for herself, she seems to be resigned. Cahit sets out on a journey to his home town on his own. In the last frame of the film, the same woman sings at an imaginary İstanbul shore and musicians accompany her. When the song ends, the woman and musicians greet the audience ironically.

'*Gegen Die Wand*' questions authentic and hybrid cultural identity elements through various cultural encounters. Dialogue in Turkish with the Turkish driver in Germany, and dialogue in German with the Turkish taxi driver in Turkey are important examples which address complicated identity representations in public space. Another dialogue, which questions belonging through language and space is between Cahit and Sibel's cousin Selma. Cahit visits Selma at the hotel she is working in order to find Sibel. When Selma seems to be reluctant about giving Sibel's address, Cahit tries to express his feelings in Turkish. But Cahit understands that his Turkish is insufficient to represent his emotions. Cahit explains his feelings in English, a language which is foreign to both him and Selma. But in his mind, he has Sibel's words in Turkish: 'I will wait for you.' The language also brings about space and order phenomenon along with it. Such encounters also reveal the complicated structure of metropolis like Germany and İstanbul, woven with the traditions, memories, myths and symbols of racial and ethnic minorities. This complicated structure makes the audience forget in which geography the film take place in some scenes.

'*Gegen Die Wand*' shuttles between cultural codes. Main characters are Turkish people, who grew up in Germany. Since they have the cultures of both countries, they transmit the German and Turkish cultural codes. They don't represent the state of belonging to both cultures, that is, state of hybridity, problematically, but make use of their multicultural characteristics and develop new identities. Therefore, they distinguish themselves from the first generation that immigrated to Germany. This generation has different experiences, their return to Turkey doesn't stem from 'homesickness' (nostalgia for their homeland). Their return takes place as a result of their wish to push the limits of their individual identities, as an obligation because of their stance against static identities. In this context, it points to the change in the images and narratives related to Turkey and Germany.

Also a member of second generation immigrant group like the main characters of the film, Fatih Akın states that, in this film, he didn't aim to represent the Turkish minority living in Germany. However, Sibel and Cahit belong to second generation immigrant group. It's this social and cultural reality that brought them together. Their relations with other people that they encounter, is also defined through this identity. They form a starting point for each other. They both strive to re-define their identities, they seek a new identity, a new life for themselves. In this quest, their journey between Turkey and Germany, their encounters and

gains from different cultural codes play an important role. Instead of restraining their identities within static codes, they experience them as an advantage or their lives and derive new identities from this condition; they also transform the identities of people they encounter. They also pay the prices of this troubling process of identity and cultural transformations. Because it will not be easy to push the envelope and act beyond the existing dominant definitions.

Conclusion and Discussion

Since the onset of globalization, cultural encounters increased on a global scale. In this context, new interpretations related to the contextual meaning of culture concept show parallelism with globalisation debates. Hybrid identities, which develop through cultural differences as well as cultural identities, have emerged. Hybrid identities draw attention to the solutions that could be produced by cultural encounters. Criticisms to intercultural communication and hybrid identity concepts, are driven by the feedback between excluding the 'other' and accepting it.

Various cultural discussions come to the forefront in the process of defining Germany. Germany, where cultural encounters are experienced heavily, cannot be thought merely within the context of the cultural traditions of the Western world. In this regard, cultural encounters draw attention to the fact that it is necessary to move beyond a Eurocentric identity and encourage intercultural communication. Culture becomes an important aspect in the process of re-defining Germany's identity. The essential characteristic of the process is the discussions on the acceptance relations to be developed with other cultures, cultural recognition policies and forms of cultural representation. The number of immigrants, who are the subjects of cultural encounter processes, is gradually increasing in Germany. Therefore, Germany looks for the ways to come to terms with 'foreign/other' identities, and integration possibilities.

A post-modern identity approach, which regards identity as a constantly changing process, an on-going structure was adapted instead of an essentialist approach. In today's world, when transboundary nature of image transfer through people, capital, commodities, technology and media is considered, life styles and cultural identities, which cross the boundaries of nation states, emerge. Today, many people feel that they belong to several countries. Post-modernism, which brings pluralism to the front and emphasize the fact that weight of the dominant culture is disappearing, is quite an appropriate method to explain the identity of a director, who adopts the contextualities of both cultures in his works. Post-modernism challenge sub-culture upper culture distinctions and emphasize the fact that individual identities cannot be perceived as stable, natural, static and cumulative phenomena anymore. In this context, it is appropriate to define diasporic individuals, who live through two cultures at the same time with rich reference points with regard to the formation of identity, with post-modern pluralistic concepts. They appear to us not only as Turkish or German, but as hybrid identities that act beyond both of them.

Having transformed itself in cultural terms, Germany also changed in the field of German cinema. Culture and identity crisis, which has become more of an issue with globalization, has also become a widely debated subject within the context of German cinema. In this context, one of the criticisms directed to German cinema is its tendency to ignore, exclude or omit certain aspects in the representation of 'the other.' However, different cultures in Germany, is an indisputable reality for the country. Conflicts between these cultures and drawbacks in the representation of cultures, point to the fact that there is an incoherence in the way Germany represents itself. At this point, 'hybrid' identities, which emerge as a result of cultural encounters in Germany, and their representation, is important.

Films produced by the foreign population living in Germany bring an integrated approach to the subject and discussions within the framework of culture, Germany and German cinema concepts. These films, the number of which is increasing gradually, paved the ground for the emergence of concepts such as 'intercultural cinema', 'exile cinema' because their common characteristics, thereby starting the process in which such films are analysed under different categories. The most important feature of these films is the fact that they make the hybridizing structure of Germany visible. Therefore, cultural structure is revealed as it is, and also re-structured. As a sub-culture, hybridized entity, foreign/other, re-defines the two cultures that constitute it, its former homeland and Germany, the country in which it is living, from its own perspective.

Films, which represent the ongoing cultural encounters and hybrid identities in Germany, are important means for 'other' cultures living in Germany to make themselves heard and make their differences visible. They emphasize the problematic cultural acceptance processes that immigrants experience with European society. They also draw attention to changes in the cultural and social structures of immigrants over the course of time. Characters in the films are subjects of different culture and identity discourses. Some accept hybrid identities, while others resist to hybridity within the traditional patterns.

As a result, living in Germany, Fatih Akin is also one of the directors, who make the hybridizing structure of Germany visible. Akin received many awards with the movie '*Gegen Die Wand*' and made a name for himself in Europe. This movie, which, lays emphasis on cultural encounters and hybrid identities, highlights the changing and dynamic sense of identity in Germany. It creates a different point of view in German cinema as an area of conflict and struggle, and provides a new narrative form to German cinema. The success of the film was embraced by both Europe and Germany, and Turkey, director's own homeland. This is also another indicator of the multiple identities concept, which is emphasized in the film.

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