

Shared Experience of Migration in German-Turkish and Turkish Films

Migration is a sociocultural process of change – one that not only affects the culture of those leaving their homeland for another country, but of all the citizens in the destination country. Expanding on this assumption, the project asks how a ‘shared experience of migration’ can be possible and thus examines numerous film productions dealing with the topic of migration to Germany and remigration to Turkey.

Few people in Turkey are aware of the wide range of film productions for television and cinema in Germany dealing with the topic of migration. At the same time, very little is known in Germany about Turkish films that address primarily remigration. These films have a significant impact in Germany and Turkey, as they shape the image of the other country. Through strategies of emotionalisation, cinema and television films allow for a particular ‘shared experience of migration’. The audience does not only observe the story from an outside position, but also enters the world created by the film through their own imagination. The force of the film’s emotional impact on the audience lends validity to this created reality. Even though most of the spectators may not have experienced migration for themselves, the fact of their participation is extremely important for the formation of a transcultural memory. Processes of social change and upheaval, including their far-reaching implications for societal cooperation, need to be expressed via various artistic portrayals in order to become a ‘shared experience’.

This project analyses the potential of German-Turkish and Turkish films to make possible an experience of emotional witnessing, one which permits a rapprochement or even identification with the ‘other side’. From this angle a monograph is being written (for the first time) on the history of German Turkish and Turkish films. Strategies of emotionalisation, patterns in genre, subject, and plot, as well as narratives of migration and remigration are examined in light of

sociopolitical as well as cinematic developments in both Germany and Turkey. Additionally, a lexicon is developed in cooperation with our colleague Ersel Kayaoğlu from Istanbul University in relation to German-Turkish and Turkish migration film. The migration and remigration narratives as seen in the various productions are presented according to categories such as 'experiences of violence', 'coping with trauma' or 'attempts at integration'. Furthermore, Turkey, as a part of social reality in Germany, shall come into focus through an exhibition based on these film analyses. In presenting the research findings to a non-university public, this project aims to strengthen the competency to interpret film narratives. It also seeks interpretive access to Turkey as an increasingly important and integral part of German inter-culture.