



At the Crossroads of Feudal Tradition and Capitalist Economy: Social Transformation in Ömer Lütfi Akad's *The Bride* (1973)

Betül Sarı Aksakal, Manisa Celal Bayar University, betulllsari@gmail.com

Volume 14.2 (2026) | ISSN 2158-8724 (online) | DOI 10.5195/cinej.2026.741 | <http://cinej.pitt.edu>

Abstract

This article examines how *The Bride* (*Gelin*, 1973), the first film of Ömer Lütfi Akad's Migration Trilogy, represents the coexistence of feudal sociocultural structures and capitalist economic relations within the context of internal migration in Turkey. The film portrays a migrant family from rural Anatolia attempting to establish economic security in Istanbul while preserving hierarchical social relations, patriarchal authority, and cultural practices carried from the countryside. The study combines qualitative content analysis, sociological criticism, and elements of discourse analysis to examine the sociocultural, economic, and religious references embedded in the narrative. Particular attention is also paid to the visual organization of domestic space and family relations to understand how these tensions are conveyed through cinematic form. The analysis shows that the family increasingly adapts to the economic logic of commercial capitalism while continuing to reproduce feudal cultural norms within its internal social structure. Patriarchal authority and women's unpaid labor play a crucial role in sustaining the household economy, while religious symbolism frequently serves as a moral framework legitimizing economic ambition. By highlighting how these different social orders coexist within the migrant family, the article demonstrates how *The Bride* offers a powerful cinematic reflection on the contradictions accompanying Turkey's transition toward an urban capitalist society.

Keywords: Ömer Lütfi Akad; *Gelin* (The Bride, 1973); Turkish cinema; Migration Trilogy; internal migration; rural-urban migration; feudalism and capitalism; patriarchy; women's unpaid labor; cinematic space



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.

Pitt | Open
Library
Publishing

This journal is published by [Pitt Open Library Publishing](http://pittopenlibrarypublishing.com).



At the Crossroads of Feudal Tradition and Capitalist Economy: Social Transformation in Ömer Lütfi Akad's *The Bride* (1973)

Betül Sarı Aksakal

Introduction

Cinema has long developed in close interaction with the social environments in which it is produced. As a cultural form, it does more than present moving images on the screen; it also reflects the historical conditions, social relations, and cultural tensions that shape everyday life. Film narratives frequently transform social conflicts and ideological struggles into visual and narrative structures that audiences can experience through cinematic representation. As scholars of cinema have emphasized, films often function as cultural texts through which societies interpret their own transformations and contradictions (Ryan & Kellner, 1988). For this reason, cinema provides an important medium for examining the relationship between cultural traditions, economic structures, and social change.

Within this broader framework, Turkish cinema offers a particularly rich field for exploring the social consequences of internal migration and urban transformation. Beginning in the 1950s, rapid demographic change, rural–urban migration, and uneven industrialization reshaped Turkey's social structure. These transformations soon became central themes in Turkish cinema, especially in films depicting migrant families' struggles to adapt to the

economic and cultural conditions of urban life (Arslan, 2011; Dönmez-Colin, 2008). Among these works, Ömer Lütfi Akad's Migration Trilogy, *The Bride* (*Gelin*, 1973), *The Wedding* (*Düğün*, 1974), and *The Sacrifice* (*Diyet*, 1975), occupies a particularly important place in the history of Turkish cinema. Through these films, Akad explores the tensions that arise when rural social structures encounter the economic logic of urban capitalism.

This study examines how *The Bride* (1973), the first film in the trilogy, depicts the coexistence of feudal sociocultural patterns and emerging capitalist economic relations in the context of internal migration. The film tells the story of a migrant family from Anatolia as they attempt to establish economic security in Istanbul. While the family gradually adapts to the opportunities and pressures of a capitalist urban economy, it simultaneously preserves hierarchical social structures and cultural practices inherited from rural life. In this sense, the household depicted in the film embodies a hybrid social formation in which patriarchal authority, traditional values, and religious symbolism coexist with the economic motivations of commercial capitalism.

Although *The Bride* has been examined from different perspectives in previous studies (see Ateş, 2020; Çakır, 2022; Yıldız, 2017; Yiğit, 2022), much of the existing literature has focused primarily on the film's thematic representation of migration and social change. Less

attention has been given to how these tensions are constructed through the film's cinematic form, particularly through the spatial organization of domestic life, the visual arrangement of characters within the frame, and the staging of everyday practices within the migrant household. By focusing on these formal dimensions, the present study seeks to show how the coexistence of feudal cultural structures and capitalist economic relations is not only narrated but also visually articulated through the film's mise-en-scène, spatial composition, and narrative organization.

To explore these issues, the article addresses the following research questions:

- How does *The Bride* represent the coexistence of feudal sociocultural structures and emerging capitalist economic relations within the migrant family?
- How are these tensions communicated through cinematic form, particularly through spatial organization, mise-en-scène, and character positioning within the domestic environment?
- In what ways does the film portray the role of women's labor and patriarchal authority in sustaining both household hierarchy and capitalist accumulation?

By addressing these questions, the article demonstrates how Akad's film visualizes the intersection of cultural tradition and economic transformation through the spatial and narrative organization of everyday life within the migrant household. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing discussions at the intersection of cinema studies, sociology, and political economy, while also highlighting the importance of cinematic form in representing broader processes of social change.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section briefly discusses Ömer Lütfi Akad's position within Turkish cinema and his contribution to socially oriented filmmaking. The following section outlines the historical background of internal migration in Turkey, a process that accelerated after the 1950s and profoundly reshaped the country's social and economic structure. The analytical part of the study then examines the film through three interconnected dimensions, sociocultural relations, economic practices, and religious symbolism, to explore how the tensions between feudal cultural traditions and capitalist economic motivations are represented within the narrative and visual structure of *The Bride*.

Method, Purpose, and Significance of the Study

Cinema often reflects the social tensions and transformations experienced within the societies in which it is produced. As Ryan and Kellner (1988) note, films can encode the discourses of social life and convey them to audiences through narrative and visual representation. For this reason, cinema cannot be understood independently from the social contexts that shape its production and reception (Leslie, 2005, p. 34). Although films present fictional stories, these narratives frequently draw on real social conflicts, social structures, and everyday experiences. In this sense, cinema functions as a cultural form through which economic, political, social, and cultural dynamics become visible.

Within this broader framework, Turkish cinema provides an important field for

examining the social consequences of internal migration and urban transformation. The present study focuses on how *The Bride* (Gelin, 1973) represents the intersection of feudal sociocultural structures and emerging capitalist economic relations. Although the film centers on the experience of internal migration, it also addresses related themes, including patriarchal authority, gender hierarchies, domination, and the expansion of commercial capitalism. In the narrative, many of these dynamics emerge through references to religion and tradition, which often serve as symbolic mechanisms legitimizing existing power relations within the family structure.

The primary purpose of this study is therefore to analyze how the tensions between sociocultural continuity and economic transformation are represented within the film's narrative and visual structure. More specifically, the article examines how patriarchal family relations, women's labor, religious symbolism, and economic ambitions intersect within the migrant household and how these tensions are communicated through cinematic representation.

Methodologically, the study primarily employs qualitative content analysis to identify recurring thematic patterns in the film. Qualitative content analysis allows researchers to examine how social values, conflicts, and symbolic meanings are represented within narrative texts (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). In this study, the approach traces how themes of internal

migration, patriarchal family organization, economic transformation, religious symbolism, and gender relations emerge throughout the film's narrative structure.

However, the analysis does not rely solely on thematic interpretation. To examine how these social dynamics are constructed within the cinematic medium, the study also incorporates elements of film-form analysis. As Bordwell and Thompson emphasize, cinematic meaning is produced not only through narrative content but also through stylistic elements such as mise-en-scène, framing, spatial organization, and character positioning within the frame (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013). These stylistic elements guide the viewer's perception of social relations and contribute to the film's visual articulation of hierarchy, authority, and conflict.

Particular attention is therefore given to mise-en-scène and staging. As Gibbs argues, the arrangement of bodies, objects, and spatial relations within the frame plays a crucial role in shaping interpretation and revealing the power structures embedded in the film's narrative world (Gibbs, 2002). In *The Bride*, spatial arrangements within domestic settings, especially the courtyard where the extended family lives, visually reinforce patriarchal authority and economic hierarchy within the migrant household. The positioning of characters, the use of confined domestic space, and the collective staging of family members frequently emphasize the persistence of traditional authority structures even within an urban environment.

From a spatial perspective, the analysis also draws on Lefebvre's concept of the social production of space. Lefebvre argues that social spaces are not neutral containers but are produced through the interaction of economic structures, social practices, and symbolic meanings (Lefebvre, 1991). In the film, spaces such as the courtyard, the grocery shop, and the urban marketplace function as socially produced environments in which patriarchal relations, economic ambitions, and everyday practices intersect. Through these spatial settings, the film visually illustrates how traditional social structures continue to shape the lives of migrant families within the context of urban capitalism.

The selection of scenes for detailed analysis follows a purposive sampling strategy. Key sequences were chosen because they concentrate the central tensions examined in the study. These include courtyard scenes depicting domestic labor and family hierarchy, marketplace scenes illustrating the family's economic ambitions, the sacrificial sequence involving Osman, and the final factory scene that suggests an alternative social and economic trajectory. Through close reading of these sequences, the study analyzes how economic, religious, and sociocultural references are articulated both narratively and visually.

In addition to thematic and formal analysis, the study is informed by a sociological criticism perspective. This approach emphasizes examining films in relation to the social and

historical conditions in which they are produced and interpreting cinematic narratives as cultural texts that reflect broader social structures (Özden, 2004, pp. 153–154). From this perspective, *The Bride* provides an important case for understanding how patriarchal family relations and gender hierarchies are reproduced within the context of migration and urban transformation in Turkey.

Finally, elements of discourse analysis are used to examine how ideological meanings are articulated through dialogue, symbolic practices, and narrative situations. Discourse analysis enables exploration of how language structures particular interpretations of social reality and how these meanings become embedded in cinematic storytelling (Van Dijk, 1988). Within this framework, key dialogues and narrative interactions in the film are analyzed in relation to the thematic patterns identified through content analysis.

Taken together, these methodological approaches allow the study to connect thematic interpretation, cinematic form, sociological context, and discursive meaning. In this way, the analysis seeks to understand not only what kinds of social tensions the film portrays, but also how these tensions are visually and narratively constructed through cinematic form, spatial organization, and everyday practices within the migrant household.

Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on Ömer Lütfi Akad's film *The Bride* (*Gelin*, 1973) to examine how the narrative represents the coexistence of capitalist economic dynamics and feudal sociocultural patterns within a migrant family. Through the story of a rural family attempting to establish economic security in Istanbul, the film offers a revealing case study of how patriarchal authority, religious symbolism, and economic ambition intersect in everyday life. In this sense, the film offers a valuable narrative framework for analyzing the tensions between traditional social structures and emerging capitalist relations in the context of internal migration.

The film was selected through purposive sampling, a commonly used qualitative research strategy in which cases are chosen because they provide particularly relevant insights into the research problem (Maxwell, 2013, p. 99). As the first film of Akad's Migration Trilogy, *The Bride* occupies a central place in Turkish cinema's representation of rural–urban migration and its social consequences.

Within the scope of the analysis, particular attention is given to key scenes that concentrate the study's central tensions, including courtyard scenes depicting domestic labor and family hierarchy, marketplace scenes illustrating economic ambitions, the sacrificial sequence involving Osman, and the final factory scene.

The main limitation of the study lies in its focus on a single film. Since the analysis is limited to *The Bride*, other films that address similar themes of migration and social transformation are outside the scope of this research.

The Bride: Plot and Storyline

The Bride (Gelin, 1973) is the first film of Ömer Lütfi Akad's Migration Trilogy, which also includes *The Wedding* (Düğün, 1974) and *The Sacrifice* (Diyet, 1975). Across these three films, Akad explores the social consequences of internal migration to large cities and examines how rural families adapt to the economic and cultural conditions of urban life.



Figure 1: Movie Poster.

(Source: <https://www.movieposterdb.com/gelin-i70099/16b967fd#&gid=1&pid=1>)

The narrative of *The Bride* follows a family from Yozgat who migrate to Istanbul to expand their small grocery business. The film opens with the arrival of Veli, his wife, Meryem, and their young son, Osman, at Haydarpaşa Station, where they join the extended family led by

Hacı İlyas. Years earlier, Hacı İlyas had moved to the city with his eldest son, Hıdır, and established a modest grocery store. Hoping to improve their economic position, the family plans to expand their commercial activities by opening a larger shop. (for film Information see <https://www.sinematurk.com/film/1079-gelin>)

As the family becomes increasingly focused on economic advancement, the illness of Veli and Meryem's son Osman emerges as the central dramatic conflict. Although the child urgently requires surgery, the family repeatedly postpones the operation to invest their financial resources in the expansion of the business. The narrative gradually exposes how economic ambition begins to dominate moral and familial responsibilities.

When Osman eventually dies due to the delayed medical treatment, the tragedy triggers a profound rupture within the family. Meryem leaves the household and begins working in a factory, rejecting the patriarchal authority that had previously structured her life. Hacı İlyas interprets this decision as a threat to family honor and pressures Veli to restore authority by killing her. Instead, Veli refuses his father's command and chooses to follow Meryem by becoming a factory worker himself.

Although the film is framed around the theme of internal migration, it simultaneously addresses broader social issues, including patriarchal family structures, the commodification of

social relations, gender hierarchies, and the tension between feudal sociocultural traditions and the economic logic of capitalist commerce.

Findings and Interpretation

Several recurring elements in *The Bride* point to the coexistence of sociocultural forms associated with feudal relations and economic practices shaped by capitalist logic. The analysis suggests that the family portrayed in the film increasingly operates within capitalist economic relations while simultaneously maintaining social practices rooted in traditional hierarchies.

This dual structure becomes visible through sociocultural, economic, and religious references embedded in the narrative. At the same time, patriarchal authority plays a central role in organizing family relations. The film shows how patriarchal structures both support and complicate the pursuit of economic advancement, revealing the complex interaction between patriarchy and capitalist economic practices within the migrant family.

A Panoramic Overview of Ömer Lütfi Akad's Cinema

Before turning to the analysis of *The Bride*, it is useful to briefly consider the cinema of Ömer Lütfi Akad, often described as one of the key figures in the development of modern Turkish cinema. Akad is widely regarded as a director who played a decisive role in moving Turkish cinema away from the theatrical conventions that had dominated earlier decades and toward a more distinctly cinematic language (Özön, 1968; Onaran, 1994). Through his films,

he contributed to the emergence of a style that emphasized visual storytelling, social realism, and the representation of everyday life.

Born in Istanbul in 1916, Akad entered the film industry in the mid-1940s and, after working as a production manager, directed his first feature film, *Damga* (1947). His early success with *Vurun Kahpeye* (1949), an adaptation of Halide Edip Adıvar's novel, established him as an important new director in the emerging Turkish film industry (Akad, 2004, pp. 11, 107; Onaran, 1994, p. 54). This period coincided with a broader transformation in Turkish cinema. Following the reduction of cinema ticket taxes in 1948, the number of private production companies increased rapidly, and the foundations of the Yeşilçam film industry were gradually established (Kaplan, 1996).

During the 1950s, Turkish cinema began to move away from the theatrical style associated with Muhsin Ertuğrul and gradually developed a more cinematic approach to storytelling (Nazik, 2024, pp. 175–177). Akad played an important role in this transformation. Films such as *Kanun Namına* (*In the Name of the Law*, 1952) introduced a more dynamic visual style and a stronger engagement with urban reality. Based on a real criminal case, the film is often regarded as a turning point in Turkish cinema and the beginning of what some historians describe as the “Filmmakers’ Period” (Özön, 1968, p. 24; Onaran, 1994, p. 53; Gürmen, 2007,

p. 27). By using location shooting and mobile camera work to depict the streets of Istanbul, Akad expanded the visual possibilities of Turkish cinema (Gündoğdu, 2020, p. 20).

Akad later described the films he directed before 1967 as a period of experimentation and learning, noting that each film functioned as preparation for later work (Gündoğdu, 2020, p. 57). His mature period is often associated with *Hudutların Kanunu* (*The Law of the Border*, 1967), a film widely considered one of the most important examples of social realism in Turkish cinema. This period also included the so-called Anatolian Trilogy, which explored the lives of individuals struggling within rural social structures (Akad, 2004, p. 244).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Akad increasingly focused on the social consequences of rapid economic and cultural transformation in Turkey. This interest culminated in what is often described as the Migration Trilogy: *The Bride* (Gelin, 1973), *The Wedding* (Düğün, 1974), and *The Sacrifice* (Diyet, 1975) (Sim, 2020, p. 129). These films examine the experiences of families migrating from rural Anatolia to major cities and explore the tensions that emerge as traditional social structures encounter the economic logic of urban capitalism. Focusing on *Diyet*, the final film of the trilogy, Yüksel (2020, pp. 173–174) places the emergence of urban labor within this broader process of rural–urban migration and urbanization. Among these works, *The Bride* occupies a particularly central place. The film

depicts a migrant family from Yozgat attempting to expand its commercial activities in Istanbul while maintaining patriarchal authority and traditional cultural practices. Through this narrative, Akad portrays the coexistence of feudal sociocultural structures and emerging capitalist economic relations within the context of internal migration.

As many scholars have noted, Akad's films are deeply rooted in the everyday realities of Turkish society and often function as cinematic reflections on broader processes of social transformation (Onaran, 2001, p. 5; Gündoğdu, 2020, p. 13). The Migration Trilogy, in particular, has frequently been described as both a series of artistic works and a sociological exploration of the tensions produced by modernization and migration in Turkey (Kayalı, 1994, pp. 134–135).

Within this broader context, *The Bride* provides a particularly revealing case for examining how the interaction between traditional sociocultural structures and capitalist economic dynamics is represented through cinematic narrative and visual form. The following sections, therefore, focus on the film's representation of sociocultural relations, economic practices, and religious symbolism within the migrant family.

Economic, Political, and Sociocultural Aspects of Internal Migration, Industrialization, and Urbanization in Turkey

Since one of the central themes of *The Bride* is internal migration, it is necessary to briefly

outline the historical, economic, and political dynamics that shaped this phenomenon in Turkey, particularly from the 1950s onward.

Migration has long been considered one of the most significant sociological processes shaping societies. It involves the geographical and sociocultural movement of individuals or groups from one place to another for economic, political, or personal reasons, whether temporarily or permanently. Throughout history, people have migrated for a variety of reasons. In some cases, migration occurs out of necessity, while in others it reflects a desire to improve living conditions. For this reason, migration is closely linked to a wide range of social, political, economic, and cultural factors (Oral & Çetinkaya, 2017, p. 2). In general terms, migration is classified as internal migration when population movements occur within the borders of a country and as external migration when individuals move from one country to another (Osmanoğlu, 2016, p. 79).

Migration involves not only spatial displacement but also transformations in the symbolic and cultural worlds of individuals and communities. In this sense, migration may lead to significant changes in systems of meaning and everyday practices (Ekici & Tuncel, 2015, p. 10). Ulubay and Önal describe migration as a form of alienation and separation from existential values, emphasizing that it cannot be understood solely as a physical relocation (Ulubay &

Önal, 2022, p. 271). When individuals leave the geographical space they belong to, they leave behind many tangible elements of their environment while simultaneously carrying their social practices and cultural memories with them (Ulubay & Önal, 2022, p. 269). As a result, migration often produces tensions between traditional value systems and the social norms of urban life (Osmanoğlu, 2016, p. 89).

In Turkey, internal migration accelerated significantly beginning in the 1950s, largely linked to structural transformations in agriculture and the broader process of capitalist development in rural areas. The Republic of Turkey, founded in 1923 following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, was governed under a single-party system for many years. After the Second World War, however, the political system gradually shifted toward multiparty democracy. The year 1946 marked an important turning point in both politics and the economy (Güneş & Akdağ, 2013, p. 185). The Democratic Party, founded in 1946, came to power in the 1950 elections, and the introduction of Marshall Aid in 1948 further accelerated economic transformation.

Agricultural mechanization expanded rapidly during the 1950s. The number of tractors in Turkey increased from 16,585 in 1950 to 42,135 in 1960, significantly boosting agricultural productivity (Sungur, 2016, p. 7). Similarly, the number of harvesters rose from 994 in 1948 to

6,592 in 1958 (Kanbolat, 1963, pp. 19–20). While the introduction of modern agricultural machinery expanded cultivated land and increased production, it also reduced the need for manual labor. As a consequence, rural populations increasingly migrated to urban centers in search of employment opportunities (Köymen, 2009, p. 29). The economic policies implemented by the Democratic Party government between 1950 and 1960, particularly its support for large landowners and the agrarian bourgeoisie, played an important role in accelerating these transformations.

These structural changes were clearly reflected in migration statistics. In 1950, approximately 75 percent of the population lived in rural areas. By 1960, this figure had declined to 68.1 percent, while the proportion of the population living in urban areas increased from 25 percent to 31.9 percent (Şenses, 2021, p. 26). Migration flows also intensified rapidly. While migration between 1945 and 1950 involved approximately 214,000 people, the number increased to 904,000 between 1950 and 1955 (Alpay & Alkin, 2022, p. 99). Improvements in transportation infrastructure and road networks after 1950 further facilitated mobility and accelerated internal migration. Major cities such as Istanbul, İzmir, Ankara, Adana, and Bursa became the primary destinations for migrants (Alpay & Alkin, 2022, p. 99). Among these cities, Istanbul attracted the largest share of migrants, creating new pressures on the city's social and economic structure (Adıgüzel, 2020, p. 51).

Internal migration soon became one of the central forces shaping the urbanization process in Turkey. Unlike many Western countries, where urbanization occurred primarily as a consequence of industrialization, urbanization in Turkey was largely driven by transformations in rural areas. Changes in land ownership patterns, the fragmentation of agricultural land through inheritance, and rising rural unemployment all contributed to the migration of rural populations toward cities (Bahar & Bingöl, 2010, p. 45). By the 1970s, the pace of urbanization had accelerated even further.

Istanbul emerged as the most prominent destination for this wave of migration. The city's population grew from 983,000 in 1950 to 1,466,000 in 1960, 2,132,000 in 1970, and 2,772,000 in 1980. By 1985, the population had reached 5,475,000, and according to the 1990 census, it had risen to approximately 7,200,000 (Kuyucak Esen, 2019, p. 93). This rapid population growth created severe housing shortages and placed considerable pressure on urban infrastructure. As a result, unplanned urbanization, squatter settlements, and new forms of spatial inequality emerged. One of the key reasons for these developments was that urbanization in Turkey occurred amid relatively late and limited industrialization. Between 1960 and 1970, the urbanization rate reached approximately 18 percent, while the industrialization rate remained around 7 percent (Yerasimos, 1980, p. 855). Consequently, cities experienced a rapid

population increase that far exceeded their capacity to generate employment or provide adequate social services.

Housing, therefore, became one of the most pressing problems faced by newly arrived migrants. Since most migrants lacked the financial resources required to purchase housing in urban areas, many began constructing informal dwellings, commonly known as squatter settlements, on public land (Kongar, 1982, p. 24). According to Keleş (1996, p. 386), Turkey had approximately 50,000 squatter houses and 250,000 squatters in 1950. By 1965, the number of squatter houses had increased to 430,000, and the number of squatters to 2,150,000. By 1980, there were approximately 1,150,000 squatter houses and 5,750,000 squatters. By 1995, the number of squatter houses had reached nearly two million, and almost ten million people, approximately 35 percent of the urban population, lived in these settlements.

The emergence of squatter settlements reshaped the spatial organization of cities and produced new social landscapes. In many urban areas, high-rise apartment buildings inhabited by relatively affluent social groups developed alongside neighborhoods that retained many rural characteristics. Within these environments, traditional institutions, social practices, and cultural values often persisted. These contrasting patterns created a fragmented urban structure in which modern and traditional forms coexisted, bringing the cultures of the urban center and the rural

periphery into a visible, and sometimes tense, interaction (Kirel, 2005, pp. 242–245).

The phenomenon of internal migration, which transformed Turkey’s social, economic, and cultural structure, had far-reaching consequences for population distribution, labor markets, and social relations. These transformations inevitably found expression in artistic production, including cinema. For this reason, the causes and consequences of internal migration can also be examined through films that engage directly with these social processes. In this respect, *The Bride* offers an important cinematic narrative through which the social tensions arising from migration, urbanization, and economic transformation become visible.

Cinematic Representations of Internal Migration in Turkey

Migration has long held an important place in Turkish cinema and served as a significant indicator of broader social and economic transformations in Turkish society (Akyüz & Dabak, 2017). Internal migration, which intensified in the 1950s alongside processes of urbanization, industrialization, and social change, has remained a recurring theme in Turkish cinema across periods (Agocuk et al., 2017). In the social realist cinema of the 1960s, this concern was reflected in films dealing with migration to large cities, unemployment, exploitation, unplanned urbanization, gecekondu settlements, and class differences (Sarı Aksakal, 2023, p. 277). Halit Refiğ’s *Gurbet Kuşları* (*Birds of Exile*, 1964) is generally considered the first film in Turkish cinema to address in detail the problems faced by people migrating from rural areas to the city.

The film centers on internal migration and examines the phenomenon through its social dimensions (Güçhan, 1992, p. 98). In the 1960s, several other films also explored migration to the city, including *Bitmeyen Yol* (*The Never Ending Road*, Duygu Sağıroğlu, 1965), *Altın Şehir* (*Golden City*, Orhan Elmas, 1965), *Ah Güzel İstanbul* (*Oh, Beautiful İstanbul*, Atıf Yılmaz, 1966), and *Gecekondü Peşinde* (*In Pursuit of Shantytown*, Feyzi Tuna, 1967).

During the 1970s, films dealing with internal migration became even more prominent. Ömer Lütfi Akad's Migration Trilogy, along with films such as *Fatma Bacı* (Halit Refiğ, 1972) and *Sultan* (Kartal Tibet, 1978), depicted migrants' lives, the tensions between rural and urban values, and the emergence of squatter settlements as an increasingly visible part of urban social life. These films also provide important insights into the historical, sociological, and economic conditions of the period in which they were produced.

At the same time, some films offer a particularly rich framework for analyzing the complex social and cultural relations that emerge during periods of transformation. Ömer Lütfi Akad's Migration Trilogy is among the rare examples that allow such a multidimensional analysis. In these films, Akad addresses internal migration, the urbanization process it generated, and the emergence of squatter settlements while examining their broader social

implications. In this sense, the trilogy offers works that are also valuable from a sociological perspective (Kayalı, 1994, p. 123).

Internal migration represents one of the major processes of social transformation in modern Turkey. However, many films that deal with migration tend to focus primarily on the visible consequences of this process while leaving aside the deeper social dynamics that produce it. Issues such as class mobility, economic ambition, and the gradual erosion of traditional value systems are often addressed only partially. In contrast, Ömer Lütfi Akad, particularly in *The Bride*, examines these dynamics more closely. While internal migration forms the narrative background of the film, the story foregrounds themes such as social backwardness, feudal relations, illiteracy, the tensions between village and city life, the social position of women, and the instrumentalization of religion.

Sociocultural References: The Feudalism-Capitalism Conflict, Women's Labor, and the Reproduction of Capitalism through Feudal Habitus

In *The Bride*, several social and cultural elements reveal how the family portrayed in the film simultaneously embodies the economic logic of capitalism and the sociocultural patterns associated with feudal relations. These elements become particularly visible in the gendered division of labour within the household and in the ways women's labor contributes to the

reproduction of both patriarchal authority and capitalist economic practices. Within the narrative, women's labor is largely confined within the symbolic boundaries of religion and tradition, which function as mechanisms of domination within the family structure. In this way, the exploitation of women's labour becomes one of the conditions through which the family's economic ambitions are sustained.

Before examining these dynamics in the film, it is useful to briefly clarify the concept of *habitus*, which provides an important analytical framework for understanding the social patterns depicted in the narrative. Habitus refers to the systems of dispositions that individuals internalize through socialization and that shape their perceptions, judgments, and everyday practices (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78). Although habitus varies with living conditions, individuals occupying similar social positions tend to develop comparable dispositions. This makes it possible to speak of different forms of class-based habitus, such as labor habitus, bourgeois habitus, or feudal habitus. At the same time, individual variations can exist within these broader social patterns. The dispositions that constitute habitus are also transferable across different spheres of life. For example, dispositions acquired within the family or educational institutions may later shape behavior in professional contexts (Jourdain & Naulin, 2016, pp. 42–43).

In this sense, feudal habitus can be understood as the set of perceptions, expectations, and

behavioral patterns that individuals internalize within a social order shaped by hierarchical and patriarchal relations. In *The Bride*, several female characters, particularly Meryem, her mother-in-law, and her sister-in-law, embody such dispositions in their everyday practices. At the same time, habitus is not entirely static. As Frère (2011, pp. 261–262) suggests, individuals may also develop a dynamic relationship with habitus and gradually distance themselves from the social structures they have internalized. As will be discussed later in the analysis, Meryem’s trajectory in the film can be interpreted as a movement toward such transformation, as she gradually breaks away from the feudal habitus that shapes her early experiences.

The film depicts a family structure in which tensions between feudal cultural norms and capitalist economic aspirations are evident in the characters’ interactions. On the one hand, the family remains deeply attached to patriarchal traditions and hierarchical forms of authority that reflect older rural social relations. On the other hand, the same family eagerly embraces the economic opportunities offered by capitalist commercial activity in the city. The family lives together in a shared courtyard in a *gecekondu* settlement, forming an extended household composed of three nuclear families: Hacı İlyas and his wife; their elder son, Hıdır, his wife, Naciye, and their children; and their younger son, Veli, his wife, Meryem, and their child, Osman. In many ways, this domestic environment recreates the social atmosphere of their

hometown, turning the courtyard house into a small “Yozgat within Istanbul.”

The film’s spatial organization plays a crucial role in visualizing these sociocultural relations. Much of the narrative unfolds within this shared courtyard where the extended family lives and works together. Through its mise-en-scène, the courtyard visually reproduces the household’s hierarchical order. As film scholars have noted, mise-en-scène, including the arrangement of bodies, objects, and spatial relations within the frame, often functions as a key mechanism through which films communicate social hierarchies and power relations (Gibbs, 2002; Bordwell and Thompson, 2013). In *The Bride*, the camera repeatedly frames multiple family members within the same confined space, emphasizing the household's collective yet hierarchical structure. The visual density of the courtyard environment reinforces the sense that the family’s patriarchal authority constrains individual autonomy.

The courtyard also acquires a broader sociological meaning within the narrative. Rather than simply serving as a background setting, it operates as a socially produced space in which rural cultural patterns continue to shape everyday life after migration to the city. As Henri Lefebvre argues, social relations are not merely reflected in space but actively produced through spatial organization and everyday practices (Lefebvre, 1991). In Akad’s film, the courtyard becomes a site where older social norms, patriarchal authority, gender hierarchy, and communal

control, are reproduced within the rapidly transforming urban environment of Istanbul. Eminağaoğlu and Yurderi (2018, pp. 129, 131) also draw attention to this spatial continuity in *The Bride*, particularly to the persistence of rural patterns in domestic space and the limits placed on women's engagement with the urban environment. Framing and staging further reinforce this patriarchal structure. In several scenes, male characters, particularly Hacı İlyas, occupy central positions within the frame, while female characters appear in more peripheral areas of the domestic space. Such visual arrangements subtly mirror the unequal distribution of authority within the household. Classical film theory has long emphasized that the placement of characters within the frame can function as a visual indicator of power relations (Bazin, 1967; Bordwell and Thompson, 2013). In *The Bride*, the image's hierarchical organization of bodies frequently positions the patriarch as the spatial and symbolic center of authority.

Performance also contributes to the representation of domination and submission within the household. Meryem's restrained gestures and hesitant movements contrast with the more assertive bodily posture of male characters, especially in scenes where economic decisions are discussed. These differences in bodily performance reinforce the asymmetry of power between men and women. As Christian Metz (1974) notes, cinematic meaning often emerges not only through dialogue but also through the expressive organization of gestures, movement, and

spatial relations within the frame. In Akad's film, these visual cues play a crucial role in communicating the persistence of patriarchal authority within the migrant household.

Gender relations play a central role in sustaining this social structure. Within the family economy, women's labor becomes one of the key mechanisms that maintain the household's economic activities. At the same time, gender operates as a social boundary that organizes the division of roles between men and women. Gender, in this sense, refers to the social and cultural expectations associated with femininity and masculinity rather than merely biological differences (Keskin & Ulasan, 2016, p. 50). Through these expectations, gender structures the distribution of authority, labour, and responsibility within the family.

In patriarchal social structures, men typically occupy positions associated with authority and decision-making, while women are largely confined to the domestic sphere. This division produces various forms of inequality in economic, social, and cultural life (Ridgeway, 2011, p. 9). Women's work is generally associated with unpaid domestic labor, such as childcare, cooking, and household maintenance, while men are expected to participate in the public sphere of economic production. These gendered roles contribute not only to the reproduction of patriarchal relations but also to the broader reproduction of capitalist social structures (Pelizzon, 1998).

The Bride is one of the films in which these gender roles are particularly visible. Although the family lives in Istanbul, their everyday practices remain strongly shaped by rural values and patriarchal traditions. Internal migration brings the family into contact with the urban environment, yet their sociocultural framework remains largely unchanged. In the economic sphere, the family quickly adapts to the rational logic of capitalist commerce; however, in the cultural sphere, traditional practices, religious beliefs, and gender hierarchies persist. The tension between modernization and the continuing regulation of women's social position also appears elsewhere in Turkish cinema; in his study of Halit Refiğ, Akser (2018, pp. 5–6) points to the particular place of women in cinematic negotiations of Turkish modernization. This tension reflects a broader pattern frequently noted in studies of Turkish cinema, where films depicting migration often portray the coexistence of modern economic aspirations and traditional social structures (Arslan, 2011; Dönmez-Colin, 2008). The family's resistance to change is repeatedly emphasized in the film. Although Istanbul represents a modern urban environment, the family recreates the social atmosphere of their hometown within their living space. Superstitions, traditional beliefs, and strict social expectations regarding women remain largely intact. When Meryem's son Osman falls ill, members of the family initially refuse to trust modern medical treatment. Instead, they seek help from traditional practices such as prayers, amulets, and folk healers. When Meryem secretly takes her son to the hospital, the

emotional intensity of the scene highlights the distance between modern medical knowledge and the family's belief system.

Figure 2: Scenes in which Meryem's mother-in-law reacts to her. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppy9-zo9tVw>)



Gender expectations also appear in everyday interactions within the household. For

instance, when Veli and Meryem exchange affectionate glances in front of the family, Meryem's mother-in-law reacts harshly, asking: "What is this about looking at your husband in front of your mother-in-law? Is it because you came to Istanbul?" (08:52–09:08). The scene



Figure 2: Scenes showing Hıdır's ignoring İbrahim from Yerköy and the conversations between him and Veli. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppy9-zo9tVw>)

visually illustrates the strict moral codes governing women's behavior within the patriarchal household (see Figure 2). The composition of the scene reinforces this tension by placing Meryem within the domestic interior while older family members visually dominate the surrounding space, underscoring the generational and gendered hierarchies that structure the household.

Traditional norms and masculine authority place significant pressure on women. Social

expectations regarding morality and propriety are applied far more strictly to women than to men. As a result, women occupy a subordinate position in many areas of social life, including economic and cultural domains (Osmanoğlu, 2016, p. 88).

A similar perspective appears in another scene when Veli meets an old acquaintance from his military service. Hıdır later explains the distance he shows toward this man by saying: “He makes his wife work in a factory. How is that possible? A woman should stay at home, beside her husband” (03:56–04:36), a moment that clearly reflects prevailing gender norms (see Figure 3). Güner and Akyıldız (2014, p. 201) also discuss this episode as an indication of the persistence of traditional attitudes toward women’s work after migration to Istanbul. The family structure depicted in the film closely resembles the classical patriarchal family model described by Kandiyoti (1988, 2016). In such a system, the eldest male figure exercises authority over all household members, including younger men. The young bride enters a family structure in which she must navigate the authority of multiple figures, including her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and other relatives.

Although the family remains deeply attached to rural cultural values, it quickly adapts to capitalist economic practices after migrating to the city. Profit-making becomes the central organizing principle of the household economy. The family integrates into commercial activity

while simultaneously relying on traditional patriarchal structures that regulate women's labor.

As Becerikli notes:

“The Bride reflects the desire to attain the material values that dominate society as soon as possible, such as fast and rapid gains resulting from capitalist development... Although capitalist relations prevail in the economic sphere, traditional feudal relations persist within the family” (2020, p. 199).

The family adapts to the logic of capitalist accumulation, yet the process of capital accumulation itself is supported by the patriarchal and feudal structures that organize household labor. As Kandiyoti (1988, p. 279) emphasizes, patriarchal family relations often render women's labor invisible despite its central role in sustaining economic life.

Within the household economy depicted in the film, women work continuously. They produce goods such as pickles in the courtyard for the family's grocery business, perform domestic labor, and contribute to the household economy without receiving wages. This form of labour is central to what Guy Standing (1989) describes as the feminization of labor, particularly in areas where women's labor remains concentrated in informal or domestic spheres.

From the perspective of social reproduction, this labour plays a crucial role in sustaining the broader economic system. As Gill and Bakker explain, social reproduction involves both the biological reproduction of society and the ongoing reproduction of labor power through

everyday practices and social institutions (2006, p. 41). In this sense, patriarchal social relations have historically provided an important foundation for capitalist production systems, and many of these relations continue to persist within capitalist societies.

Economic References: Economic Domination & Sharing of Material Resources and Possibilities of the Family

Several economic dynamics in *The Bride* reveal that the family simultaneously internalizes capitalist relations in the economic sphere while maintaining feudal and traditional ties within the sociocultural domain. One of the most visible manifestations of this dual structure is the authority exercised by family elders, particularly Hacı İlyas, to control and distribute the household's material resources and economic opportunities. Economic decision-making is concentrated in his hands, and the organization of labor within the family, especially women's labor, is structured according to a distinctly male-centered hierarchy. Within this framework, patriarchal ideological patterns confine women to the domestic sphere while simultaneously enabling the systematic exploitation of their labor. At the same time, the strong desire of family members to improve their position within the social hierarchy becomes a powerful motivation shaping many of their economic decisions.

In the film, Hacı İlyas, his wife, and his eldest son Hıdır appear particularly committed to the authority of money and the pursuit of economic advancement. Their aspiration to change

their class position prompts them to reorganize traditional social relations in accordance with the imperatives of capitalist accumulation. Yet, as noted in earlier sections of this study, their everyday life remains deeply embedded in patriarchal and feudal norms in sociocultural domains such as family structure, lifestyle, and patterns of thought. The film thus portrays a social order in which modern economic rationality coexists with inherited cultural hierarchies.

At this point, the narrative draws a striking distinction between the realm of tradition and that of economic rationality. Traditional authority governs the domestic space of the house and the courtyard, while the logic of modern capitalist relations begins beyond this enclosed environment. In other words, the courtyard functions as the sphere of everyday life shaped by customary norms, whereas the outside world becomes a field of economic struggle defined by competition and market relations (Yıldız, 2008, p. 99).

This distinction is not only narrative but also visual. Through its spatial organization and staging, the film consistently differentiates between the closed domestic environment of the courtyard and the more dynamic economic spaces of the city. As David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson emphasize, *mise-en-scène*, including staging, spatial arrangement, and composition within the frame, plays a crucial role in shaping how viewers interpret social relations within cinematic space (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013). In *The Bride*, courtyard scenes are frequently

composed with relatively static framing and group staging, emphasizing enclosure and hierarchy. Family members are arranged around Hacı İlyas in ways that visually reinforce his authority as the central figure controlling both domestic and economic life.

From a spatial theory perspective, the courtyard can also be understood as a socially produced space in which everyday practices, gender relations, and economic activities intersect. As Henri Lefebvre argues, social space is produced through the interaction of economic structures, social practices, and symbolic meanings (Lefebvre, 1991). In *The Bride*, the courtyard functions precisely as such a space: it is simultaneously a domestic environment, a site of patriarchal authority, and a location where economic strategies are informally organized.

This becomes particularly visible in scenes depicting women's collective labor. In several courtyard sequences, women prepare pickles for sale in the marketplace. Although this activity appears as routine domestic work, the staging of these scenes reveals its economic significance. Women are shown working collectively in the courtyard, transforming the domestic space into a site of informal production that directly contributes to the family's accumulation strategy. In this sense, the courtyard serves not only as a cultural space shaped by tradition but also as an economic microenvironment that supports the family's upward mobility.

The contradictions between tradition and economic pragmatism become especially

evident in Hıdır's activities in the marketplace. When Hacı İlyas is absent from the shop, Hıdır secretly sells wine and earns considerable profit. When explaining this situation to his brother, he notes that their father is aware of the practice but remains silent because it brings in money. In this sense, traditional prohibitions can be suspended when financial gain is at stake. Yet the same Hıdır refuses even to greet a fellow villager in the neighborhood because the man allows his wife to work in a factory. Tradition thus becomes decisive not when it conflicts with profit but when it concerns the reproduction of patriarchal authority and gender hierarchy. As Dorsay observes:

“Almost all members of the Hacı İlyas family symbolize different aspects of the rapid transformation in Turkish society, particularly after the 1950s. Hacı İlyas, who sells everything in Yozgat and moves to the big city to become rich, clearly understands the direction of social change. The painful transition from feudal backwardness to capitalism appears embodied in his character. His passion for money and shops can crush even family members' lives. Yet this is not an individual cruelty; it reflects the logic of capitalistization itself. Capitalism has been built throughout the world upon countless tears, immense labor exploitation, and human suffering” (Dorsay, 1989, p. 39).

Within this framework, the fundamental motivation of those who control capital is to invest wherever possible, generate profit, and accumulate further capital. In the film, no clear limit restrains this impulse. From the beginning, the family's objective is not the satisfaction of immediate needs but the pursuit of continuous economic expansion. Consequently, the household even restricts its consumption to increase savings. While they once consumed relatively rich meals, such as eggs with minced meat, they later survived for months on modest foods, such as bulgur and

tarhana, to accumulate enough capital to open a second grocery store.

This situation reflects a paradoxical relationship between income and consumption. Although the family's economic resources gradually increase, their standard of living does not improve accordingly. In this context, Bourdieu's discussion of the relationship between food consumption and forms of capital offers a useful perspective (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 177–178). According to Bourdieu, social groups with limited economic and cultural capital tend to consume inexpensive but filling foods. In this family's case, however, the restriction of consumption does not result from poverty but from the deliberate prioritization of capital accumulation.

Another important contradiction concerns the use of women's labor. As mentioned earlier, the family condemns village women who work in factories, considering them morally corrupted by urban life. At the same time, they see no problem with women producing goods within the household, preparing pickles in the courtyard for sale in the market, performing domestic labor, and raising children. What disturbs Hacı İlyas and his eldest son Hıdır is therefore not the exploitation of women's labor itself but its transformation into wage labor outside the patriarchal household.

This perspective recalls Kolker's observation regarding gender roles in capitalist societies:

“In a capitalist society, cultural constraints encourage narratives of closed families and dependent women, in which the man has the freedom to work outside the home while the woman remains responsible for caring for the children who will become future workers or managers” (cited in Tunalı, 2006, p. 46).

Women's labor thus becomes one of the productive mechanisms sustaining capitalist relations. As will be discussed later in the analysis, this structure eventually becomes a turning point in Meryem's developing consciousness.

Another dimension of domination appears in the control of the family's financial resources. The individual who controls the household income determines how these resources are distributed and whether they benefit particular family members. In this respect, Hacı İlyas exerts decisive influence over both his wife and his children. The power relations between men and women in the family are closely tied to a patriarchal ideology that places the male lineage at the center of authority.

The family's economic ambitions are also connected to their desire to move toward the city's economic center. Hacı İlyas and his eldest son Hıdır believe that the most profitable grocery business can only be established in wealthier districts. For this reason, they rent a shop beneath a newly built apartment building in Şişli. Hacı İlyas explains the importance of location to his son Veli:

"This place is no different from our neighborhood. This is not Istanbul; it is an Anatolian town. People from the South, the Aegean, and the Black Sea are all mixed here. Istanbul is behind those buildings. Five kuruş for this here, twenty-five kuruş in the center of the city. Understand?" (09:16–09:44).

Ultimately, the family's prediction proves correct: after the shop in the city opens, at the cost of Osman's life, the scale of consumption changes dramatically. The city thus represents both

expanded profit opportunities and a new scale of economic circulation.

The tragic consequences of this economic logic become most visible in the film's sacrificial scene. As shown in Figure 4, the moment when Meryem cuts the sacrificial ram's rope transforms the religious



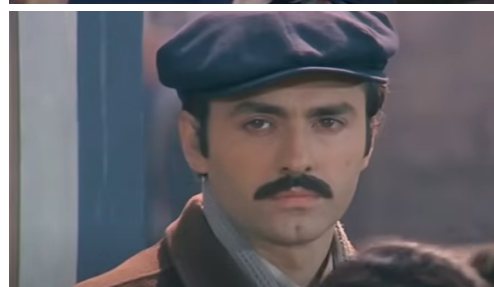
ritual into a powerful symbolic commentary on the family's priorities. Osman's death effectively

Figure 3: Scenes in which Meryem cuts the rope of the sacrificial ram (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppy9-zo9tVw>)

replaces the sacrificial animal, revealing the devastating human cost of relentless economic ambition.

In the following sequence, Meryem confronts Hacı İlyas in the grocery store. A fire breaks out during the confrontation, and Meryem disappears. Yet the family members appear more distressed about the destruction of the shop than about Osman's death. Their reaction reflects a

worldview in which economic continuity takes precedence over personal loss. This logic is expressed explicitly in the dialogue between Veli and his brother:



Hıdır:
mill
power.



“This
needs

Sometimes it also needs a sacrifice.” (1:23:37–1:23:57).

In this sense, the family’s actions illustrate the mentality of a new type of migrant emerging during this period. As Işık and Pınarcıoğlu observe, the dominant migrant figure of the new era was not a passive subject adapting quietly to urban life but rather an individual willing to do almost anything to move upward in the social hierarchy (2021, p. 127).



Figure 4: Scenes in which Veli comes to Meryem's factory exit and asks if there is a job for him in the factory (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppy9-zo9tVw>)

In the film's final sequence, Meryem begins working in a factory. When Veli waits for her outside the factory and asks whether there might be a job for him as well, the film introduces a possible alternative to the patriarchal family economy. As seen in Figure 5, the factory space contrasts sharply with the enclosed courtyard of the family house, suggesting the emergence of a new social and economic horizon beyond the traditional household structure.

Finally, it is worth noting that Ömer Lütfi Akad's intellectual background gave him a strong awareness of economic structures. His decision to foreground economic relations in *The Bride* reflects a broader perspective shaped, in part, by Marxist discussions of the relationship between economic infrastructure and social life. As Akad himself explains:

“Whether it is a true story, a fairy tale, an adventure, or a love story, I tried to present a cross-section of people's efforts to survive within an economic framework” (Akad, cited in Gündoğdu, 2020, p. 63).

From this perspective, *The Bride* can be interpreted as a narrative in which social relations are deeply embedded within relations of production. Economic dynamics, together with the sociocultural and religious elements of Turkish society, collectively shape the broader interpretive framework through which the story unfolds.

Religious References: The Exploitation of Blind Faith in Favor of Material Interests

In *The Bride*, religious and feudal motifs are repeatedly reconfigured within the framework of capitalist economic logic. The family does not abandon religious practices and traditional beliefs after migrating to the city; rather, these practices are selectively mobilized and interpreted in ways that ultimately serve material interests. Within this framework, the narrative symbolically presents Osman as a sacrifice to the relentless pursuit of profit, what Meryem calls “shop malaria” in one scene of the film (48:46–48:54).

Murray Bookchin’s account of the city provides a useful perspective on this tension. Bookchin (1992, p. 173) conceives of the city as a social space in which relations can extend beyond bonds based primarily on kinship toward broader forms of collective association. *The Bride*, however, reveals the uneven and contradictory character of this transformation. Migration to Istanbul places the family within a new urban and commercial environment, yet it does not dissolve the patriarchal, religious, and cultural relations carried from rural life. These relations persist even as the family adapts rapidly to the imperatives of accumulation and profit. Women’s unpaid labor,

patriarchal authority, and traditional moral codes remain central to the organization of the household while also contributing to its economic ambitions. The film therefore presents urban transformation not as a straightforward passage from tradition to modernity, but as a contradictory process in which capitalist economic practices coexist with, and, in certain respects, are supported by, persistent feudal and patriarchal relations.

In this sense, although the family has migrated from a rural environment to the city, their fundamental aspirations revolve around climbing the commercial ladder and achieving upward mobility. Economic success gradually becomes the central organizing principle of everyday life. Ironically, however, this ambition ultimately leads those in positions of authority to sacrifice even their own grandchild.

Throughout the film, Osman frequently suffers from convulsions and fainting spells. Despite Meryem's growing concern, both the family and her husband initially dismiss the illness as a minor childhood condition. While Meryem repeatedly insists that Osman should be taken to a doctor, Veli becomes increasingly absorbed in the dream of opening a new grocery store with his father and brother. Eventually, Meryem secretly takes Osman to the hospital and learns that he has a hole in his heart and urgently needs surgery costing seven thousand liras.

When Meryem informs the family of the diagnosis, Hacı İlyas explains that they are already heavily indebted and will soon have to repay approximately 130,000 liras. He asks her to wait. As time passes and Osman's condition worsens, Meryem realizes that no one in the family intends to prioritize the child's treatment. In desperation, she sells her gold jewelry and gives the money to Hacı İlyas, explaining that if they can add two thousand more liras, the surgery can be performed.

However, Hacı İlyas postpones the operation once again. Ramadan, he explains, is a highly profitable period for trade, and the family has recently purchased large quantities of goods for the grocery business. They will address the issue after Eid.

The cinematic construction of this scene reinforces the ideological tension between religious devotion and economic calculation. The conversation takes place at the moment of iftar while the call to prayer echoes in the background. The use of sound in this sequence is particularly striking. As Michel Chion notes, sound in cinema frequently introduces an additional layer of meaning that interacts with the visual image and reshapes the viewer's interpretation of a scene (Chion, 1994). In this moment, the adhan functions as a powerful auditory symbol of religious devotion, while the characters simultaneously discuss financial calculations. The juxtaposition of sacred sound and economic rationality creates a striking cinematic irony, inviting viewers to question the sincerity of the family's religiosity.

Although Meryem receives a promise that Osman's surgery will be performed before Eid al-Adha, the promise is never fulfilled. The family rents a new shop, and additional expenses emerge for furnishing and organizing the store. Once again, the child's treatment is postponed.

The film thus portrays a deeply religious family whose everyday practices contradict the moral values they claim to uphold. Hacı İlyas, known as "İlyas from Sorgun," has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. His wife is believed to possess healing powers through prayer. The family regularly gathers for iftar and sahur during Ramadan. Yet these rituals coexist with practices that clearly contradict religious teachings. For instance, the ambitious eldest son Hıdır secretly sells wine in the grocery store at night, transforming the shop into a tavern after hours. Although Hacı İlyas is aware of this, he deliberately ignores it because it generates profit.

In this sense, the film reveals a striking paradox: religious prohibitions can be suspended when they conflict with economic gain. As Robert Stam argues, cinematic narratives often expose ideological contradictions embedded within social structures, allowing viewers to observe how cultural values become reinterpreted within specific historical contexts (Stam, 2000). In *The Bride*, religion does not disappear under the pressures of capitalist modernization; instead, it is selectively mobilized to legitimize economic ambition.

At the same time, religious discourse functions as a convenient justification for decisions motivated primarily by economic interests. While modern medical treatment for Osman is repeatedly postponed due to financial considerations, the family relies on prayers, amulets, and traditional healing practices. Hacı İlyas trusts prayer for his grandson's illness, yet he does not hesitate to purchase modern medicine from the pharmacist for his own knee pain. In this way, religious belief and traditional practices serve to mask economic calculations. As Becerikli observes:

“In the narrative, the family also interprets the child's illness within traditional belief systems. The mother-in-law reads prayers for the child and has an amulet prepared, while hiring a woman to pour lead reflects widespread superstitious practices. Veli's remarks that the child is merely affected by the wind and that his mother's breath used to cure them in the past indicate how such beliefs are transmitted across generations. However, when Hacı İlyas refuses to finance the necessary surgery, Osman eventually dies. Afterward, he describes the event as a matter of destiny and attempts to evade responsibility by appealing to religion. Meanwhile, despite the family's strong religious image, the elder brother secretly sells wine and earns substantial income. Religious rules can therefore be ignored when economic interests are at stake, demonstrating the powerful influence of commercial capitalism” (Becerikli, 2020, pp. 202–203).

What becomes increasingly clear throughout the narrative is that the family's religiosity largely consists of ritualistic practices detached from ethical reflection. Although they perform prayers, fast, and engage in sacrificial rituals, these practices remain disconnected from moral responsibility. Concepts such as religion, tradition, family honor, and hearth frequently appear in their speech, yet they lose their significance when confronted with economic interests.

The symbolic climax of this contradiction appears in the sacrificial scene. As Christian Metz argues, symbolic structures in cinema often condense complex ideological conflicts into powerful visual metaphors (Metz, 1974). In the film's climactic moment, the sacrificial ram becomes a visual metaphor for Osman himself. When Meryem cuts the rope of the sacrificial animal and declares, "May your Eid al-Adha be blessed, Hacı İlyas, Aga Baba! May your sacrifice be halal!", the scene reverses the well-known parable of Abraham. Rather than illustrating devotion to God, the narrative exposes a world in which human lives are sacrificed for economic ambition (Bötke, 2016, p. 158).

Ultimately, the film exposes the painful contradictions faced by a family that simultaneously embodies feudal, religious, and capitalist elements. Their ability to function within the ruthless logic of commercial capitalism requires continuous compromises, including moral and human ones. Through this tension, Ömer Lütfi Akad offers a powerful critique of capitalism by revealing how traditional and religious structures can be instrumentalized to serve economic ambition. In the final confrontation between Meryem and Hacı İlyas, the conflict between these opposing moral positions becomes unmistakable, culminating in the film's most dramatic critique (Onaran, 2001, pp. 173–174).

Conclusion

Works of art, whether films, novels, poems, or musical compositions, inevitably emerge from the social environments in which they are produced. Artists cannot remain detached from the political,

economic, and cultural contexts that shape the societies in which they live. These broader forces influence both the themes and the formal structures of artistic production. Cinema, as one of the most socially embedded art forms, reflects these influences with particular clarity. The historical development of Turkish cinema, therefore, cannot be separated from the economic, political, and sociocultural transformations experienced by Turkish society.

Within this trajectory, Ömer Lütfi Akad occupies a distinctive position. Moving beyond conventional narrative formulas, Akad developed a cinematic language that engaged directly with the social realities of his time. Drawing on Turkey's cultural and ideological background, he sought to construct a form of national cinema capable of interpreting the country's changing social structure. This perspective becomes especially visible in the Migration Trilogy, which collectively portrays the sociological and economic dimensions of Turkey's transformation during the period of rapid internal migration.

The historical background of these films is closely connected to the large-scale rural–urban migration that began in Turkey after the 1950s. Mechanization in agriculture and the economic changes that followed the Second World War reduced employment opportunities in rural areas and accelerated migration to major cities such as Istanbul. During the following decades, this movement produced profound transformations in Turkish society, including rapid urbanization, the expansion

of gecekondu settlements, and the emergence of new forms of social inequality. These developments inevitably found their reflection in Turkish cinema.

Within this broader context, *The Bride* tells the story of a family that migrates from Yozgat to Istanbul and gradually reorganizes its life according to the logic of capitalist accumulation. The family's economic ambitions increasingly dominate everyday decision-making, ultimately leading them to sacrifice even their youngest member in pursuit of commercial success. Through this narrative, the film reveals how capitalist aspirations operate within a family structure that remains deeply embedded in feudal cultural traditions and patriarchal authority. Economic, sociocultural, and religious references throughout the film demonstrate how these ambitions are often legitimized through traditional moral discourses.

At the same time, the film offers a critical perspective on patriarchal authority. Women are initially confined within gender roles that associate them with the domestic sphere and restrict their autonomy. Yet Meryem's gradual transformation introduces the possibility of resistance to these structures. By rejecting the authority of the extended family and entering wage labor, she opens the possibility of an alternative social trajectory within the changing urban environment.

More broadly, the film illustrates the coexistence of different social orders within a single family structure. Capitalist economic motivations reshape everyday life and family relations, while

feudal cultural norms and patriarchal authority continue to organize the sociocultural sphere. Religious symbolism mediates this relationship by providing a moral language through which material interests can be justified. In this sense, the film portrays modernization not as a simple replacement of traditional structures but as a process that produces hybrid social formations in which different systems of values coexist and interact.

From this perspective, the article also contributes to existing discussions on Akad's cinema and on migration in Turkish film history. While *The Bride* has often been interpreted primarily as a narrative about internal migration, the present analysis emphasizes how the film simultaneously portrays the interaction between capitalist economic practices and sociocultural structures shaped by feudal and patriarchal relations. By examining these tensions through the film's sociocultural, economic, and religious references, as well as through its visual organization of space and family relations, the study highlights how Akad constructs a complex cinematic representation of social transformation. In this sense, *The Bride* remains one of the most powerful cinematic reflections on the contradictions accompanying Turkey's transition from a predominantly rural society to an urbanizing capitalist economy.

Editor's Note: To strengthen the article's positioning within scholarship, the following directly relevant studies have been added to the references: Akser (2018), Eminağaoğlu and Yurderi (2018),

Güner and Akyıldız (2014), Sarı Aksakal (2023), and Yüksel (2020).

REFERENCES

Adıgüzel, Y. (2020). *Göç sosyolojisi*. Nobel.

Agocuk, P., Kanlı, İ., & Kasap, F. (2017). 1990'lı yıllardan günümüze Türk sinemasında dış göç temsili ve göçmen kimlik sorunsalı. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 6(3), 505–523. <https://doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v6i3.939>

Akad, L. Ö. (2004). *Işıkla karanlık arasında*. Türkiye İş Bankası.

Akser, M. (2018). Halit Refig's I Lost My Heart to a Turk: Woman, Islam and modernity in Turkish cinema. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 7(1), 5–29. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2018.223>

Akyüz, S., & Dabak, B. (2017). Erkekliğin yol hali: “Sarı Mercedes” ve “Otobüs” filmlerinde erkeklik kurguları. *Fe Dergi*, 9(1), 79–91. https://doi.org/10.1501/Fe0001_00000000179

Alpay, Y., & Alkin, E. (2022). *Olaylarla Türkiye ekonomisi: Yirminci yüzyıl Türkiye ekonomi tarihi*. Hümanist.

Arslan, S. (2011). *Cinema in Turkey: A new critical history*. Oxford University Press.

Ateş, M. (2020). Sinemada göç bağlamında sınıf, kimlik ve mekân: Ömer Lütfi Akad ve Göç Üçlemesi. *Medeniyet ve Toplum Dergisi*, 4(2), 128–141.

Bahar, O., & Bingöl, F. K. (2010). Türkiye'de iç göç hareketlerinin istihdam ve işgücü piyasalarına etkileri. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 15(2), 43–61.

Bazin, A. (1967). *What is cinema?* (H. Gray, Trans.). University of California Press.

Becerikli, R. (2020). *Türk sinemasında anlatı ve karakter açısından birey*. Kriter.

Bookchin, M. (1992). *Urbanization without cities: The rise and decline of citizenship* (Rev. ed.). Black Rose Books.

Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2013). *Film art: An introduction*. McGraw-Hill.

- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.
- Bötke, A. (2016). Gelenekler kurban istiyor. In B. Acar (Ed.), *Türk sinemasında 100 unutulmaz karakter* (pp. 156–159). Edebi Şeyler.
- Chion, M. (1994). *Audio-vision: Sound on screen*. Columbia University Press.
- Çakır, E. (2022). Sinemada toplum eleştirisi olarak dinî ve mitik anlatı: Gelin, Düğün, Diyet. *Korkut Ata Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8, 823–838. <https://doi.org/10.51531/korkutataturkiyat.1147332>
- Dorsay, A. (1989). *Sinemamızın umut yılları*. İnkılap.
- Dönmez-Colin, G. (2008). *Turkish cinema: Identity, distance and belonging*. Reaktion Books.
- Ekici, S., & Tuncel, G. (2015). Göç ve insan. *Birey ve Toplum Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 5(1), 9–22.
- Eminağaoğlu, Z., & Yurderi, M. M. (2018). Relationship between migration and space in Turkish cinema: Lütfi Akad's films Gelin, Düğün ve Diyet. *Journal of World of Turks*, 10(2), 123–136.
- Frère, B. (2011). Bourdieu's sociological fiction: A phenomenological reading of habitus. In S. Susen & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The legacy of Pierre Bourdieu* (pp. 247–270). Anthem Press.
- Gibbs, J. (2002). *Mise-en-scène: Film style and interpretation*. Wallflower.
- Gill, S., & Bakker, I. (2006). New constitutionalism and the social reproduction of caring institutions. *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*, 27(1), 35–57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11017-005-5756-z>
- Güçhan, G. (1992). *Toplumsal değişme ve Türk sineması: Kente göç eden insanın Türk sinemasında değişen profili*. İmge.
- Gündoğdu, M. (2020). *Lütfi Ömer Akad: Bir anlatı ustası*. Cümle.
- Güner, T., & Akyıldız, H. (2014). Gelin, Düğün, Diyet filmleri ışığında geçmişten günümüze Türkiye'de göç, istihdam ve kentleşme sorunları. *Çalışma ve Toplum*, 1(40), 187–210.
- Güneş, G., & Akdağ, M. (2013). Çok partili yaşama geçiş sürecinde Adnan Menderes'in Aydın ilindeki siyasi faaliyetleri (1946–1950). *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 13(27), 185–224.

- Gürmen, P. T. (2007). *Bir halk sinemacısı: Osman Fahir Seden*. Dergah.
- Işık, O., & Pınarcıoğlu, M. (2021). *Nöbetleşe yoksulluk: Sultanbeyli örneği*. İletişim.
- Jourdain, A., & Naulin, S. (2016). *Pierre Bourdieu'nün kuramı ve sosyolojik kullanımları* (Ö. Elitez, Trans.). İletişim.
- Kanbolat, Y. (1963). *Türkiye ziraatında bünye değişikliği*. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Maliye Enstitüsü.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender & Society*, 2(3), 274–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124388002003004>
- Kandiyoti, D. (2016). Locating the politics of gender: Patriarchy, neo-liberal governance and violence in Turkey. *Research and Policy on Turkey*, 1(2), 103–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23760818.2016.1201242>
- Kaplan, Y. (1996). Turkish cinema. In G. Nowell-Smith (Ed.), *The Oxford history of world cinema* (pp. 656–660). Oxford University Press.
- Kayalı, K. (1994). *Yönetmenler çerçevesinde Türk sineması*. Ayyıldız.
- Keleş, R. (1996). *Kentleşme sürecinde Türkiye*. KOSİAD.
- Keskin, F., & Ulusan, A. (2016). Kadının toplumsal inşasına yönelik kuramsal yaklaşımlara dair bir değerlendirme. *Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 26, 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.31123/akil.438558>
- Kırel, S. (2005). *Yeşilçam öykü sineması*. Babil.
- Kongar, E. (1982). Kentleşen gecekondular ya da gecekondulaşan kentler sorunu. In *Kentsel bütünleşme: Türk Sosyal Bilimler Derneği, Türkiye Gelişme Araştırmaları Vakfı ortak semineri* (pp. 23–54). Türkiye Gelişme Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları.
- Köymen, O. (2009). Kapitalizm ve köylülük: Ağalar–üretenler–patronlar. *Mülkiye*, 33(262), 25–39.
- Kuyucak Esen, Ş. (2019). *80'ler Türkiye'sinde sinema*. Su.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Blackwell.

Leslie, E. (2005). Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and film. In M. Wayne (Ed.), *Understanding film: Marxist perspectives* (pp. 34–57). Pluto Press.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. SAGE.

Metz, C. (1974). *Film language: A semiotics of the cinema*. University of Chicago Press.

Nazik, Y. (2024). 60'lı yıllarda Türk sinemasında akımlar tartışması üzerine bir deneme. *Hece, Türk Sineması Özel Sayısı*, 1(48), 175–183.

Onaran, A. Ş. (1994). *Türk sinema tarihi*. Kitle.

Onaran, A. Ş. (2001). *Lütfi Ömer Akad'ın sineması*. Antalya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Altın Portakal Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı Yayınları.

Oral, B., & Çetinkaya, F. (2017). Sosyolojik bir olgu olarak göç, tanımı, nedenleri ve göç kuramları. *Türkiye Klinikleri Public Health-Special Topic*, 3(1), 1–8.

Osmanoğlu, Ö. (2016). Türk sinemasında dış göç olgusu: Sosyo-kültürel karşılaşmalar, kimlik çatışması ve yabancılaşma. *Marmara İletişim Dergisi*, 25, 77–98. <https://doi.org/10.17829/midr.20162520718>

Özden, Z. (2004). *Film eleştirisi*. İmge.

Özön, N. (1968). *Türk sineması kronolojisi*. Bilgi.

Pelizzon, S. M. (1998). But can she spin? The decline in the social standing of women in the transition from feudalism to capitalism [Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton].

Ridgeway, C. L. (2011). *Framed by gender: How gender inequality persists in the modern world*. Oxford University Press.

Ryan, M., & Kellner, D. (1988). *Camera politica: The politics and ideology of contemporary Hollywood film*. Indiana University Press.

Sarı Aksakal, B. (2023). Cinematic views on critical representations of the economic policies of the Democrat Party era: Social realist film initiatives in Turkish cinema. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 11(2), 275–332. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2023.569>

Sim, Ş. (2020). *Türk sinemasında öncüler*. Kriter.

Stam, R. (2000). *Film theory: An introduction*. Blackwell.

Standing, G. (1989). Global feminization through flexible labor. *World Development*, 17(7), 1077–1095. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(89\)90170-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(89)90170-8)

Sungur, Z. (2016). Demokrat Parti döneminde (1950–1960) tarım politikaları ve etkileri. *Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 8(14), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.20875/sb.81206>

Şenses, F. (2021). 1950’li yıllar: Ne getirdi? Ne götürdü? In R. F. Barbaros & E. J. Zürcher (Eds.), *Modernizmin yansımaları: 50’li yıllarda Türkiye* (pp. 17–31). Efil.

Tunalı, D. (2006). *Batıdan Doğuya, Hollywood'dan Yeşilçam'a melodram: Zihniyet ve kültür etkileşimleri çerçevesinde Yeşilçam melodramına bakış*. Aşina.

Ulubay, S., & Önal, F. (2022). Göç tartışmaları bağlamında yabancılaşmanın kaynağı olarak mekân. *Megaron*, 17(2), 264–273. <https://doi.org/10.14744/megaron.2022.97957>

van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News analysis: Case studies of international and national news in the press*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Yerasimos, S. (1980). *Az gelişmişlik sürecinde Türkiye* (B. Kuzucu, Trans.). Gözlem.

Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2005). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri*. Seçkin.

Yıldız, E. (2008). *Gecekondu sineması*. Hayalet.

Yıldız, M. (2017). Yapısal aile terapisinin temel kavramlarıyla Gelin filminin incelenmesi. *OPUS-Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 7(12), 157–176. <https://doi.org/10.26466/opus.285054>

Yiğit, Z. (2022). Post-migration representations of Istanbul in Turkey’s independent cinema. *European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 7(2), 59–69.

Yüksel, H. (2020). The urbanization of labor and its struggle for unionism in Turkish cinema. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 8(2), 150–194. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2019.239>