

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

Çağrı İnceoğlu, Ph.D.

LÜTFİ Ö. AKAD (1916 – 2011)

Director and screenwriter

BIOGRAPHY

He was born in Istanbul. He graduated from Galatasaray High School and the Istanbul School of Economy and Commerce. He worked as a bank clerk for a while. In 1946, he started writing critics on theater and cinema and published his writings in magazines. His career in the film sector began in producing. He worked at Sena Film, Lale Film, and Erman Film as an accountant and production manager.

Director His first experience on directing and screenwriting was *Vurun Kahpeye* (1949) that was a literary adaptation from the Turkish prominent writer Halide Edip Adıvar's novel under the same title. He gained filmmaking experience with several of his following works that are unnotable in a filmic sense. He made *Kanun Namına* in 1952. It was his first significant achievement in cinema. The film gained massive success at the box offices. His film was also found successful by critics and frequently called a historic milestone of cinema in Turkey. *Kanun Namına* has often been marked as a turning point for the emerging modern cinema, differentiated from the earlier years' theatrical and primitive works. The leading critics have often celebrated its film language.

In the 1960s, he made several films through his collaboration with Yılmaz Güney, a well-known actor, director, and screenwriter. *Hudutların Kanunu* (1966) and *Kızılırmak Karakoyun* (1967) are worth mentioning as outputs of this partnership. He directed *Vesikalı Yarım* (1968), praised as a cult movie in Turkey's film history.

Akad has more than fifty works in an extensive range of genres like drama, melodrama, comedy, musical, crime, and non-fiction. The Italian Neorealism movement has been influential in his narrative and style. He built cinematic time and space efficiently in his works. He carefully investigated the possibilities of mise-en-scene, cinematography, and editing.

Social Problems During his career, he gradually and intensely focused on the social problems of modern Turkey. He often narrated the stories of the people among the lower classes of society. The rapid urbanization period through the 1960s in Turkey and its effects influenced his works. He represented the stories of the migrants who settled on the periphery of the big cities. In these works, their struggle and dreams of class change played a fundamental role. Although his interest in domestic migration is visible in many films, this theme is crystallized in his three films, migration trilogy: *Gelin* (1973), *Düğün* (1974), and *Diyet* (1975). Although he narrated the stories that occur in a local setting, he also addressed humanity's universal issues such as power relations, class antagonism, immigration, love, and ordinary people's criminal act.

Other Works Akad also made television dramas during the 1970s, and he created a few documentary films. He taught filmmaking at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (formerly Istanbul Fine Arts Academy of the State). He has written a memoir, *Işıkla Karanlık Arasında* (*Between the Dark and Light*) (2004).

Akad is a highly acclaimed director and one of the prominent figures of 20th-century cinema in Turkey. He is among the leading directors who have discovered and pronounced the narrative language of film in Turkey.

FILMOGRAPHY

Vurun Kahpeye (1949)
Lüküs Hayat (1950)
Kanun Namına (1952)
İpsala Cinayeti / Altı Ölü Var (1953)
Katil (1953)
Öldüren Şehir (1953)
Bulgar Sadık (1954)
Vahşi Bir Kız Sevdim (1954)
Kardeş Kurşunu (1954)

Beyaz Mendil (1955)
Meçhul Kadın (1955)
Kalbimin Şarkısı (1955)
Zümrüt (1958)
Ana Kucağı (1958)
Yalnızlar Rıhtımı (1959)
Üç Tekerlekli Bisiklet (1962)
Tanrının Bağıışı: Orman (1964)
Bir Gazetenin Hikayesi (1964)
Hududların Kanunu (1966)
Kızılırmak-Karakoyun (1967)
Ana (1967)
Kurbanlık Katil (1967)
Vesikalı Yarım (1968)
Seninle Ölmek İstiyorum (1969)
Bir Teselli Ver (1971)
Anneler ve Kızları (1971)
Yaralı Kurt (1972)
Gökçe Çiçek (1973)
Gelin (1973)
Düğün (1974)
Esir Hayat (1974)
Diyet (1975)

THEMES

Akad made his films in a broad range of genres and themes. It had been a prevalent practice among Yeşilçam directors of the era. Most of the significant figures in this entertainment industry vigorously had delivered their films on various scales. In its heyday, roughly two hundred and fifty films had been produced per year, one of the biggest production figures of its time globally. This trend was equally influential on the works of Akad. He delivered various films that feed the industry with commercial features, including comedy, horror, and melodrama. Although his films embrace a wide range of points, the works that reflect his personal, artistic tendencies can be traced in his filmography.

The recurring themes are significant parts of these tendencies. Social themes such as migration, conservatism, class antagonism due to social stratification, and personal or interpersonal issues such as love triangle, impossible love, and criminal act— especially murder — are often investigated in his works. A major common characteristic of themes in Akad's filmography was the centrality of social relations. In other words, the themes originated from social conflicts, and the personal issues always have a social ground in a typical Akad movie.

Homicide In Akad's films, the characters who have been pushed to crime occupy an essential role. One specific type of crime, homicide, plays a dominant role. An act of killing is not always necessarily represented through the plot, but the audience as a story element knows it. In other words, homicide might be in the past of someone, i.e., not in the chain of visible or audible events.

Not many of these criminal actions contain malicious killing or murder. Moreover, if there is a murder, villainous characters are often committed rather than the protagonist. Although homicide is encountered a lot in Akad's films, the frequency of the other types of crimes is barely visible. These crimes are typically attributed to the side characters in case of their existence.

Kanun Namına When Kanun Namına's protagonist, Nazım, discovers his relationship with Perihan is an evil setup; he could no longer contain his fury and kills the responsible person.

Üç Tekerlekli Bisiklet In the story, Ali had killed the owner of a wealthy and repressive construction company that was trying to take possession of Ali's small land.

Katil Kemal is a fugitive who had been imprisoned mistakenly for murder and wished to prove his innocence.

Öldüren Şehir The protagonist, Ali, is an ex-convict who was guilty of homicide.

Kızılırmak Karakoyun A wealthy landowner's son organizes a setup to steal the shepherd Ali Haydar's girlfriend. After a series of incidents, Ali Haydar has no option but to kill him to save his girlfriend and relationship.

Kurbanlık Katil An alcoholic homeless man (Mustafa) who has the lowest status at the society turns into a hitman. A construction company hires him to capture the land of another man.

Ana A family escapes from an old blood feud between the families. Their enemies find them and kill Döndü's husband. Döndü struggles to protect and raise her children. However, she cannot find a way except to kill the man who hurts her family. The events take place in a rural area.

Yaralı Kurt The protagonist of the film, Ali, is an ex-convict who begins to work as a hitman. The film reflects the psychological dimensions of a killer.

Migration In Akad's filmography, migration occupies an essential role, especially in the films he made in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the migration of the rural inhabitants began during the 1950s, the wave significantly strengthened in the 1960s. Many peasants were abandoning the village for the promise of urban life. However, many of them gathered at the edge of the cities without reaching out to the urban community.

In his films with the migration theme, predominantly the economic and social problems, and their consequences that migrant individuals and families had faced portrayed: Dissociation between their traditional culture and urban conditions. Their struggle with the undermining effect of newly met, harsh relations of the urban space. The gradual disintegration of their social values and families, and finally, their alienation.

Migration Trilogy Akad's well-known trilogy [*Gelin (the Bride)*, *Düğün (the Wedding)*, and *Diyet (the Blood Money)*] includes films that intensely address the struggling families in the urban space. The trilogy follows three different stages of migration. In his first film (*Gelin*), he narrates a newcomer family's story that contains fading values, greed, and decay of their relationships in the city. In the second film (*Düğün*), another family moved to the city earlier struggles to survive in the urban space. In the last film (*Diyet*), migrants who have managed to reach out to their neighborhood and have become factory workers gain class-consciousness.

Gelin Meryem moves from village to Istanbul with her husband and children. They are the last members of a crowded family that had moved to town earlier in the story. The elder of the family describes the neighborhood to his newcomer son: "*Here is not İstanbul; it is a usual Anatolian town. But, a little bit mixed... İstanbul is over there, beyond the buildings you see*". Meryem and Veli's son is ill and needs treatment. However, the big family has different plans for upgrading their small business, and they prefer to invest rather than spend it on an expensive cure for an illness.

Düğün The film narrates the story of five immigrant siblings that live on the outskirts of İstanbul. The economic restraints force them to separate their ways. One of their solutions is arranging a marriage for their youngest sister, who is barely a child. Zeliha, the eldest sister, resists the plans and unites her siblings.

Diyet Two young factory workers who recently have moved to town marry. They work in harsh conditions. The dangerous tasks at the factory make Hacer anxious about Hasan. Meeting the syndicate members helps to raise her political consciousness. However, Hasan disagrees with her.

Üç Tekerlekli Bisiklet The events take place at a shantytown in İstanbul where inhabitants had moved from rural areas. Hacer is a single mother who had come from an isolated Eastern town. Her husband had left them and moved to another city due to the lack of job opportunities. She washes laundry for a living. She tries to raise her son under challenging conditions. Although the other characters experience similar conditions, those in an advantageous position try to exploit the rest. Some inhabitants in the neighborhood dream of emigrating to West Germany. It is another popular destination for workers.

Bir Teselli Ver The protagonist is a migrant factory worker, and he lives in a shantytown in İstanbul.

Love Triangle Love triangles represent another common theme in the works of Akad. Love triangles –and even quadrangles – sometimes emerge as a second obstacle in the plot. However, there are also occasions that these complex relationships occupy the center of the narrative. Leading characters in love are strained because of the consequences of a third and even fourth person's actions. In conclusion, they may gravitate toward destruction inescapably.

Kanun Namına Ayten and Nazım love each other. However, Ayten's stepdaughter loves Nazım, and she tries to ruin their relationship with jealousy. Besides this triple relationship, Ayten represents an object of desire for Halil. Moreover, Perihan, a femme fatale, captures Nazım's attention and develops a relationship with him as a part of the plans.

Kızılırmak Karakoyun A poor shepherd from the rural part of Anatolia, Ali Haydar, is in love with the leader's daughter of his tribe. Despite their relationship, the leader's wife desires Ali Haydar, and a wealthy landowner's son desires Hatice.

Yalnızlar Rıhtımı Although one of the main characters, Güner, is a smuggler's mistress, a relationship develops with Rıdvan, a captain.

Bir Teselli Ver Orhan is a poor factory worker who falls in love with the daughter of his boss. However, he confronts a daunting obstacle. She is the fiancée of one of the company's shareholders.

Kader Böyle İstedi Nilüfer, an upper-class wealthy woman, and Ahmet, a taxi driver, fall in love. Despite their relationship, Ferit, a rich man, loves Nilüfer.

Seninle Ölmek İstiyorum Selma has a loveless marriage with a prosperous businessman. Her unhappiness pushes her to alcoholism. Nihat's love emerges as a rescuer for her. However, Selma's husband does not quickly approve of their relationship.

Vesikalı Yarım The female protagonist discovers that her lover is married.

Esir Hayat Aydın, a textile engineer, and Ayşe, a designer, meet on a Cyprus business trip. They fall in love. However, Ayşe is already engaged to a wealthy and cruel man.

CHARACTERS

Powerless and Poor people The main characters in an Akad film often have a subordinate role in society. They have no power socially and economically and are oppressed. He preferred to narrate the story of the individuals who are among the disadvantaged groups. These characters are not from the high or even middle classes. In other words, they have no power economically, no education, or no specialization with modern qualities. It is worth noting that his characters are also not among the ranks of the law forces, state officials, or any other position that represents the authority.

Contrarily, his characters are the people involved in criminal activity. However, this criminal element is never related to organized crime. Almost entirely, crime occurs because of the influences of the social environment. A protagonist is often an ordinary person who had no guilt at the beginning. He/she –but mainly he – faces the problematic social and economic conditions and the actions of a villainous character/s. The chain of events in the narrative puts a real strain on him/her. They are entrapped into a setup. Eventually, the protagonist cannot overcome material and psychological obstacles and often gravitates toward crime.

It is also worth noting that different degrees of poverty are represented in Akad's films. The less poor people, in other words, the people who are not rich but barer of a few other possessions, try to take advantage of the people around them.

Hacer One of the main characters of *Üç Tekerlekli Bisiklet*, Hacer, is a single mother who struggles with severe economic conditions. She difficultly pays her rent. Her landlord sexually harrases.

Ali The other leading character of *Üç Tekerlekli Bisiklet*, Ali, has nothing but a tiny dairy in the poor neighborhood. For that reason, he resists the construction company that wants his property. He acts back against the cruelty of the company.

Seyit Ali Seyit Ali of *Hududların Kanunu* lives in a poor village at the border. Villagers have no land nor any other property. The non-existence of any means of living draws Seyit Ali to smuggle goods between the two sides of the border. Seyit Ali wishes his son to have a different life rather than to become a smuggler.

Ali Haydar In *Kızılırmak Karakoyun*, Ali Haydar is a poor shepherd who lives in a nomadic tribe. He is at the lowest status in his community. Because of his lack of power, he often restrains from arguing with the people. However, he finds himself in the middle of a competition when the wealthy landowner's son at the town wants Ali's girlfriend to marry him.

Ali *Kurbanlık Katil*'s main character Ali is an alcoholic homeless man. An instruction company finds useful for their purposes. He is available to commit crimes in exchange for money.

Orhan *Bir Teselli Ver*'s Orhan is a poor worker who lives in a shantytown. When he falls in love with his boss's daughter, people disapprove of their relationship because of the vast class gap.

Powerful and Rich People The leading characters rarely have wealth and a higher social status. In this case, a character with a vital status always accompanies a feebler one. The repression of the

characters occurs predominately as a result of economic and hierarchical relations. The existence or inexistence of money emerges as an active agent of this process. The owner/s of the money manipulates and dominates the other characters; they even employ their power to obtain love. Hence, the films narrate the relationship, i.e., love, hate, or economic conflicts, between these people.

Halil He is the villain of *Kanun Namına*. He is rich and ruthless. In various scenes, it is demonstrated that he has gained his wealth through smuggling, gambling, and drug dealing. He likes to take advantage of people and tries every way to achieve what he wishes.

Osman Aga Kızılırmak Karakoyun's character Osman Ağa has become rich and powerful through commerce and tyranny. He has bought the town's surrounding economic means and continues to buy the significant land, and Villagers has become financially dependent on him. Due to the high interests he demands, villagers' debts increase day by day. He often threatens people and becomes violent. He increases the pressure on the leader of the nomadic tribe.

Ali Rıza He is described as a wealthy businessman who has his wealth partly due of illegal actions (*Esir Hayat*). He finds opportunities to manipulate people through his power in business and personal life. When her fiancé runs away from the wedding, he follows them with his gunmen.

Salim The wealthy, selfish factory owner of *Diyet*. His success in his business is more important to him rather the health of his employees. He does not care about working conditions. He does not upgrade the dangerous machine because he finds it expensive. Salim also tries to prevent the workers union's organization in the factory.

Rıza In *Seninle Ölmek İstiyorum*, Rıza, the husband of Selma is a rich businessman. He is loveless and even cruel to his wife. He is responsible for the drinking issue of Selma.

Women Although the female characters were submissive and weak in Akad's early career, the later years' works contain female protagonists with dominant character traits. In his migration trilogy, he especially created vivid and strong characters who made an indelible impression on the audience. All of the female protagonists in the trilogy have more sophisticated personalities who try to save their beloved ones against the males' greed and profound indifference in the family and the capitalist exploitation in their workplace.

Ayten Ayten in *Kanun Namına* represents a passive character. She is effortlessly manipulated by the people, especially by her family members. She cannot demonstrate free will during the film except to save her husband in the end.

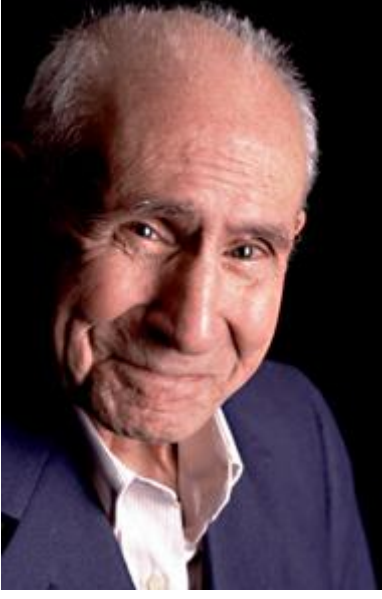
Sabiha Sabiha of *Vesikalı Yarım* is a beautiful woman who works in a bar to entertain predominantly male clients. Although she needs to be feminine in her work, she gives importance to her freedom and does not need men in her private life. She begins a relationship with Halil because only she loves him. When she learns that Halil is married and has children, she is devastated. However, she puts an end to her relationship.

Meryem The protagonist of *Gelin* is a timid woman who was grown up in a traditional masculine society. However, she is not narrow-minded. She is a progressive character. She articulates her disagreements with irrationality and conservatism. Therefore, she is known as stubborn by her family members.

Zeliha Zeliha of *Düğün* is a devoted sister. She does all the housework, becomes a mother for her younger siblings. She is a strong woman full of love and energy. When her brothers feel weak under severe circumstances, she supports them with her courage. Although she belongs to a masculine society, she is not passive and does not avoid arguing with men.

Hacer When her husband had left Hacer, the protagonist of *Diyet*, she has moved to İstanbul with her small children and begun to work at the factory. She meets Hasan, who also works at the same place, and marries him. In the beginning, she is passive and indifferent to the problems at her workplace. However, she develops a political perspective when she meets the people from the workers' union. She grasps the causes of the issues, the necessity for a change and wants her husband to understand the situation. Therefore, she is a more conscious and forward character than the men she is surrounded by.

Hacer In *Üç Tekerlekli Bisiklet*, Hacer works for long hours and looks after her son. She encounters sexual harassment but struggles. Moreover, she saves a fugitive from the police and his enemies.



Lütfi Ö. Akad