

The Happiness of Blond People (Penguin Specials): A Personal Meditation on the Dangers of Identity (Penguin Shorts/Specials)

Elif Shafak



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Penguin Specials are designed to fill a gap. Written to be read over a long commute or a short journey, they are original and exclusively in digital form. This is Elif Shafak's examination of national identity.

"You know, I never understand. How come their children are so quiet and well disciplined?" "Yeah," said the distressed father, his voice suddenly softer. "Blond children never cry, do they?"

As Elif Shafak stands in line at the airport, she overhears a Turkish father expressing to a friend his bewilderment at the cultural differences he's experienced since immigrating to northern Europe. Is it true, she wonders, that the citizens of these countries are genuinely happier? Why do people leave their homes for other countries? And what lessons can we all learn, for the creation of truly harmonious societies, from the experiences of immigrants?

In the light of the recent backlash against multiculturalism and the influx of millions of Muslims into Europe from the east, this powerful and personal essay uses the lived experience of immigrants to examine this most hotly debated subject.

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