

Ali's son Nejat, a highly educated and integrated Professor of German Literature and Goethe expert at Hamburg university, is not at all pleased about the prospect of having a relationship with Yeter, but when he discovers that she has a 27 year old daughter in Istanbul whom she supports by sending shoes, his attitude softens. When Ali returns from the hospital after suffering a heart attack, he suspects his son of having had an affair with Yeter. Yeter threatens to leave the house when Ali, in a drunken rage, demands sex from her. Ali hits Yeter and she is inadvertently killed by the force of her fall.

Ali is sent to prison. The story, along with Yeter's body, moves to Istanbul where Nejat starts a search for Yeter's daughter Ayten. He comes across a German language bookstore that is for sale and being, like most characters, at the mercy of the plot, he decides to buy the store and live in Istanbul. Ayten is a member of a politically radical student group in Turkey. At a violent demonstration, she finds herself in possession of a police gun which she hides on a rooftop. Following a raid on her group, she flees Turkey and crosses the line in the other direction, to Bremen in Germany where she takes up a new identity with political allies. Moving to Hamburg she gets to know Lotte by chance who is a student at the university. Lotte offers to help her with food, clothes and a place to stay, something her mother Susanne is not very happy about. Susanne is even less pleased when she discovers that Lotte has fallen in love with Ayten and the two have become lovers.

Ayten's stay in Germany comes to an abrupt end when she and Lotte are stopped by police and Ayten's illegal status is discovered. Her claim for political asylum in Germany is denied and she is deported to Turkey where she is immediately imprisoned. Lotte, having found love and a political purpose, decides to travel to Istanbul to work on freeing Ayten. Thus the narrative returns once again to Turkey, where eventually all six protagonists end up in a quest for understanding and forgiveness.

The symmetry of the movie is consummated when the casket with Lotte's body is flown to Germany, crossing the casket of Yeter moving in the opposite direction. Although Ayten has never met her mother again and Nejat doesn't get to know Ayten, nevertheless when Nejat waits for his father who is out fishing at the Turkish shore town of Trabzon on the black sea and when Susanne helps Ayten to repent and get out of jail, there is a palpable sense of people moving to the other side (*Auf die andere Seite*) instead of remaining on separate sides (*Auf der anderen Seite*).

Akin's movie is a compelling evocation of cultural evolution and personal growth. A high price is exacted for this development and even in death there is symmetry in the death of one German and one Turk. Nejat's character is the iconic figure in this story, symbolizing of the power of education to enable the offspring of *Auslander* to become a culture preserving insider among *Eingeborene*.

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Friday Film Fest Series



Auf der anderen Seite

(The Edge of Heaven)

By Fatih Akin

Oct 21st 2011 • 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

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The German Society of PA

611 Spring Garden St.

215-627-2332

Auf der anderen Seite

Director: Fatih Akin
Production: 2007
Producer: Fatih Akin
Script: Fatih Akin
Music: Shantel
Cinematography: Rainer Klausmann
Length: 122 Minutes
Cast: Tuncel Kurtiz (Ali Aksu, Turkish immigrant in Bremen) Baki Davrak (Nejat Aksu, son of Ali, German Professor in Hamburg) Nursel Köse (Yeter Öztürk, Turkish prostitute) Nurgül Yesilcay (Ayten Öztürk, daughter of Yeter, student in Turkey) Patrycia Ziolkowska (Lotte Staub, student in Hamburg) Hanna Schygulla (Susannen Staub, mother of Lotte)

Notes and commentary by Karl Moehlmann

About the Director: Akin was born in 1973 in Hamburg to parents of Turkish origins. He attended Hamburg's College of Fine Arts to study visual communication. He graduated in 2000. His feature films have included "Im Juli" (2000), "Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren" (2001) and "Solino" (2002). His fourth feature film in 2004 "Gegen die Wand" (Head-on) was a major success and received several prizes, among them the Golden Bear award at the Berlin Film Festival. In 2007 came "Auf der anderen Seite" (The edge of Heaven) and in 2009 the comedy "Soul Kitchen". Akin has been married since 2004 to German-Mexican actress Monique Obermüller and lives in Hamburg-Altona.

Turkish Immigration into Germany

Fifty years ago Turkey and Germany signed an agreement regulating the recruitment of workers from Turkey for the servicing of the booming economy in West-Germany. Between 1961 and 1998 the number of people of Turkish descent living in Germany skyrocketed from 6800 to 2.1 million, making *Türkeistämmige* the largest minority group in Germany. According to the German Federal Office of Statistics, since 1998 this trend has reversed itself to a degree, with the population of such *Ausländer* decreasing to 1.6 million, largely (and somewhat surprisingly) because the number of people moving back to Turkey in the past thirteen years has eclipsed the number of those moving to Germany.

The successful integration of Turkish immigrants into German society has proven to be uneven. The workers of the first generation of immigrants had a lower level of education and poor or no knowledge of the German language. Their children were required to go to German schools and learn the German language. That second generation made definite progress in integrating into a society that unlike the United States was not accustomed to large scale immigration.

With about 6.75 million or 8.5% of the population of Germany being of foreign origin, the problems and obstacles inherent in striving to achieve *Multikultikeit* are evident everywhere. In Berlin, about 75% of the Turkish population has not finished *Hauptschule* (equivalent to American high school) with only 3.3% eligible to attend institutes of higher education and 21.6% entering the apprenticeship program.

Some classes in schools in Berlin have a makeup where up to 80% of the students are the children of immigrants, in most cases predominantly of Turkish extraction. Obviously such demographics can create very difficult learning environments for both teachers and students. The typical outcome of such a scenario is a failure to master the German language, compounded by a subsequent failure to acquire the concomitant skills required for successful competition in the modern economy.

Unemployment among Turkish youth in Germany remains high, resulting in a higher crime rate for this ethnic group. Conversely, acts of *Fremdenhass*, with Turks as a prime target, have riled Germany over the past 10-15 years. Conservative politicians like Bavarian Governor Horst Seehofer (CSU) have advocated the promulgation of a German *Leitkultur* as a counterpoise to what these conservatives see as the disintegrative tendencies of a multi cultural society.

Thus both the social dynamics and the ensuing ideological rhetoric have predictably ignited a heated debate about the advantages and dangers of a multicultural model of society. At this juncture, it is not at all certain that Germany is going to continue to be willing to pursue such a model. Both advocates and opponents of the multicultural model realize that continuing on such a course will require even more radical changes in educational, social, economic and immigration policies.

Crossing the lines

"Sechs Menschen, deren Wege sich auf schicksalhafte Weise kreuzen, ohne sich zu berühren. Erst der Tod führt sie zusammen, auf einer emotionalen Reise zur Vergebung."

(Six people whose paths cross in fateful ways without touching each other - only in death do they come together in an emotional journey towards forgiveness) A father and a son and two mothers and two daughters, four Turks and two Germans, all arranged in symmetrical fashion in 3 pairs comprise a story that moves across generational, cultural and geographic lines.

When retired widower Ali, a Turkish immigrant living in the northern town of Bremen, seeks the services of the Turkish prostitute Yeter, he sets off a series of events that highlight the situation on both sides of the cultural divide, in Germany as well as in Turkey. After receiving threats from two Muslim moral watchdogs, Yeter agrees to accept Alis offer to give up prostitution and move in with him.