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Vivien Silvey & Roger Hillman, Canberra, Australia

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In this paper we explore how Fatih Akin‟s film *Auf der anderen Seite* (*The Edge of Heaven*) situates Turkish-German transnationalism within historical and contemporary frameworks. The film reconfigures paradigms of Eastern and Western relationships, positioning Germany and Turkey (and beyond) within each other‟s sights/sites, rather than following the traditions which cast Turks as Germany‟s cultural others. Throughout the film references to the Koran and the Bible, the *Gastarbeiter* programme, Turkish and German literature and music, and Turkish history triangulate the Jewish, Christian and Islamic roots of German and Turkish culture. Also rooted in cinematic intertextuality, Akin‟s film comments on and inverts traditions of the representation of Turkish-German relationships, repositioning Turks and Turkish Germans as constitutive of German culture and vice versa. Beyond blurring these borders, it places transnational cinema in a global context. *Auf der anderen Seite* belongs to a recently emerged class of films whose structures emphasise pluralistic perspectives and whose themes revolve around globalisation‟s effects upon national borders. As such it remaps relationships between the European Union and the rest of the world, putting Turkey under the spotlight politically and geographically, which widens the periphery of European and global mediascapes.

## 1. Before the Turkish-German

In a crucial scene towards the end of the film, some of the major themes are drawn together, even if only indirectly, and provisionally resolved. As Susanne looks out from the terrace of Nejat‟s flat, he explains to her that the men she sees drawn by the call to prayer[1] are observing the festival of Bayram. He tells the story of Ishmael, the son Abraham was prepared to sacrifice in obedience to a divine order, and how that sacrifice was averted. We have that story too, responds Susanne, the secularized Christian. Nejat reveals his childhood fear of this story, and recalls his father‟s reassurance that he would

[1] El Hissy (2009: 185) draws attention to the accompanying shots: "Gleichzeitig folgen drei Einstellungen aufeinander, die zwei Moscheen und eine Kirche zeigen und damit auf das multireligiöse Leben in der Türkei hinweisen." „Istanbul wird... als Ort… auch der religiösen Vielfalt skizziert."

defy God‟s order in order to protect his son. Moved by the implications of this memory, Nejat asks Susanne to mind his shop for a few days, enabling him to seek a long-avoided encounter with his father. At the same time it is clear that in Susanne he has found a substitute mother (as has Ayten), his own having died when he was very young. Beyond the film‟s frame he will find Yeter‟s daughter after all, through the convergence point of Susanne, and not through his quixotic bookshop posters.

Susanne‟s response to the mention of Ishmael elides the dual understanding of the sacrificial story according to Judaic-Christian and Islam belief. Whether the covenant is made with Abraham‟s son by the flesh, Ishmael, or the son by promise, Isaac, is a fundamental difference between the two systems. In a film whose own story is so much about parents/children and so much about books,[2] the subsequent reception of the story recounted by Nejat has attested to the parting of the ways. The religions split across different fathers (Isaac for Christians; Ishmael for Moslems) and different books (the Bible, the Koran). But for Susanne only a confluence of narratives is relevant. Nejat, whose future points to his becoming a „son‟ of Susanne‟s in spirit, is restored (by his own initiative) to his parent of the „flesh‟, and a new covenant is suggested. Like so much else in the film, the personal level indirectly reflects a broader society that in turn is in flux; the longstanding official German stance that Germany was not a country of migration, and that Germanness was determined by ethnicity (ius sanguinis), took a dramatic turn with new laws coming into effect at the turn of the millennium.

Nejat‟s father Ali, probably born in the 30s, is a true child of the Kemalist vision of a secularist state, in his readiness to defy his God. That core of family love is what reclaims Nejat, after his father‟s unintentional murder of Yeter, who might have provided the „mother‟ role later assigned to Susanne. Nejat disowns a murderer as his father. This in turn is familiar rhetoric from postwar German discourses, the „68ers‟ rejection of the Nazi heritage of their fathers‟ and grandfathers‟ generations. Ali‟s lineage has dual strands. Tempering the vindication of a secularist state, viewed positively in his putting his son before God, Ali‟s view of women seems to embody all that needs revision, the end of the line for a blinkered (Turkish) patriarchy. Yeter‟s

[2] As well as a mention of Goethe in a Hamburg University lecture, and the camera‟s lingering tracking shot of German literature in an Istanbul bookshop, Selim Özdagan‟s novel *Die Tochter des Schmieds* (2005) is prominent. In a rare gesture for a filmmaker, *Auf der anderen Seite* not only features the novel as a gift from son to father, but in acknowledging the novel in the end credits, encourages viewers to read it.

name means „enough"; the alias that her daughter Ayten adopts is „Gül", shared by the title-figure in Özdogan"s novel (see fn. 2), and meaning „rose" (cf. the „rose in winter" image associated with the French Revolution, in Nejat"s lecture). Nejat"s decision to seek reconciliation signals a return to his roots, having scaled the heights of acceptance within German society – which German of his age would relinquish a professorship? – for reasons which remain amorphous until this final quest. Both father and son are now ready for their encounter back on „home" soil, its realization lying beyond the end-frame of the film. While still open-ended, this provides a clearer narrative outcome than Cahit"s return to the site of his childhood at the end of *Gegen die Wand*.

The figure of Susanne (Staub) seems to have inherited the baggage of a national burden throughout the film (her „SS" initials doubling the repeated „s" in her Christian name). She is visually branded in the scene in which she quarrels with Ayten. Her fingers are conspicuously red from arranging cherries on a cake, an almost gratingly overt pointer to blood on her hands, which remains no more than a suggestive motif in the film. After her own daughter"s senseless death, she is the one who needs to undergo transformation, in the form of an inner journey equipping her to welcome Ayten rather than reluctantly harbouring her. Her former husband, who is referred to just once (when Lotte asks her mother whether she couldn"t approach him for money), is notably absent.

Still more telling than the Ishmael/Isaac link is the more general convergence of the cultural roots of Nejat and Susanne, namely the Jewish „stories" of the Old Testament. The origin of Turkish and German culture, Islam and Christianity, is Jewish cultural history, their implied synthesis. In relation to the host German society, with all its ongoing transformations, Turkish immigrants were viewed in the 70s as "the Jews of today" (Adelson 2005: 85). While this needs cautious nuancing for the triangulation German-Jewish-Turkish to be helpful, a degree of common ground is relevant to Akin"s film and what it attempts.[3] During the 1930s Turkey provided a safe haven for many

[3] See also the following reflection by the main figure in Zafer Şenocak"s novel *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1998: 89-90), translated here by Adelson (2005: 121): "In Germany now, a trialogue is developing among Germans, Jews, and Turks, among Christians, Jews, and Moslems. The undoing of the German-Jewish dichotomy might release both parties, Germans and Jews, from the burden of their traumatic experiences. But for this to succeed they would have to admit the Turks into their domain. And for their part, the Turks in Germany would have to discover the Jews, not just as part of the German past in which they cannot share, but as part of the present in which they live. Without the Jews the Turks stand in a dichotomous relation to the Germans. They tread in the footprints of the Jews of the past."

Jewish intellectuals fleeing the Third Reich. The new state created positions at university level designed for this intelligentsia, with 5-year contracts[4] for German-Jewish professorships at the new Istanbul University, all of them members of the „Notgemeinschaft deutscher Wissenschaftler im Ausland". Courses began in November 1933. As a direct consequence, the Europeanization of the Turkish education system spawned a whole tradition of intellectual capital, including librarianship (see Müller 1998), that was exiled from Germany. Alongside the phenomenon of Weimar on the Pacific, Akin reminds us of another Weimar, on the Bosporus. But also, among the at times dizzying symmetries of this film,[5] note Ayten's search for a sanctuary in the opposite direction, with her flight from the political unrest of Istanbul to Hamburg.

Rather than Jewish and Turkish aspects being secondary streams of German culture, an important strand of the film implies that their symbiosis guaranteed the survival of German culture during the years of the Third Reich. This makes fuller sense of the foregrounded role played by German literature, taught in Hamburg by an ethnic Turk, preserved in Istanbul by the bookshop which changes hands from the owner, homesick for Germany, to Nejat. But it also underpins the constellation of a new Germany (actually an old/new Germany inasmuch as it is (re-)united) in the new Europe, vis-à-vis Turkey's attempts to (re-)enter Europe via EU membership. Andreas Føllesdal (2009: 224) reminds us that those wishing to keep Turkey out of a Europe defined by its exclusivist Christian values have forgotten "that several of the parishes receiving the letters of what is now the Christian New Testament are located in what is now Turkey."

In the year 1933 Jewish emigration coincided with Turkish modernization.[6] In a suggestive scene following on from Yeter's death, Ali is conducted to his prison cell. The guard says: "And now to the right, and stop." His door prominently bears the number 21 – 2/33. If one reads this as a date, Germany was certainly hurtling to the Right, but unable to stop. In Turkish history, February 21, 1933 witnessed a demonstration in Istanbul by a group of university students including Tevfik Ileri, the

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4 Viewed through the prism of this article, this resonates with the initially limited contracts for Turkish *Gastarbeiter* entering the Federal Republic in the 60s.

5 Thomas Elsaesser writes: "The film's parallels, coincidences, improbabilities, and dramatic ironies are inescapable, and enough to make a Hollywood script doctor tear his hair out" (2008).

6 See Kader Konuk (2010) for an exploration of Erich Auerbach's years in Turkey and the resulting intellectual exchange across the Judeo-Christian and Muslim divide. See also Reisman (2006).

later Minister of Education. This demonstration is regarded as the first student movement during the republican period.[7] Ali"s gaze out his cell window is directly linked by an edit to the cask carrying Yeter"s body as it is unloaded from a Turkish Airlines flight. That in turn is succeeded by the opening of Part 2 of the film, contemporary street riots in Istanbul.

A hidden cipher in the linking scene at Istanbul Airport consolidates a sense of fused reference points across world history and cinema history. A baggage-truck belonging to Turkish Airlines, shot front-on, has a trailer with the brand-name „Havas", the name of airport buses in Istanbul and hence presumably realistic. But the truck itself bears a name that returns us to the land we have just left, lent further resonance by the number on Ali"s cell door, and that is „Harlan". With *Jud Süss* (1940), Veit Harlan made the most infamous anti-Semitic film of the Nazi era; drastic though the two deaths in Akin"s film are, they are free of racial hatred. Nor does the tapestry stop there. Veit Harlan"s niece, who played the role of Susanne Christian in *Paths of Glory* (1957), married its director Stanley Kubrick in 1958. Like Akin"s Susanne she carried heavy baggage, while the trans-Atlantic Kubrick himself was an exemplar of transnationalism *avant la lettre*. Beyond that, it seems[8] that „harlan" can be an imperative form in Turkish meaning literally „get flared up". This gesture towards indignation forms a wonderful bridge between the film audience, which has just witnessed Ali"s homicide, and film actors, with the start of the next Part showing Ayten and others „obeying" the injunction.

## 2. Beyond the Turkish-German

Other examples take us in different directions, either as polarities or as a synthesis of the Turkish-German. 30 years earlier, Susanne hitchhiked to India through Istanbul, meaning that Turkey was viewed as a transit-stop for Germans. So traffic was already two-way, and not confined to guestworkers imported from Anatolia to West Germany. Earlier instances of transnationalism extend to the soundtrack. In the bookshop the music of Bach is heard in a banjo arrangement that styles the composer as a German contribution to world music. One of the most striking features of *Gegen die Wand*,

[7] Thanks to our colleague Mehdi Ilhan for this information, which he was able to glean from http://forum.memurlar.net/topic.aspx?id=86439&page=2.

[8] With thanks to Can Yalcinkaya (Macquarie University, NSW).

continued here, was the way that spoken language iridesces across linguistic boundaries. Father Ali and son Nejat often speak in Turkish and German respectively, in completely relaxed dialogue, but sometimes also mix this combination.[9] And Lotte and Ayten converge on English for their communication. With a symmetry that is almost too geometrical, the film‟s three sections feature a Turkish woman killed in Germany, a German woman killed in Turkey, and then the prospective resurrection of a Turkish-German father/son relationship that had „died‟.

The new social and political constellations underpinning the narrative of this film are meaningfully reflected in references to other films, especially Fassbinder‟s, or evocations of them. Fassbinder himself had frequently alluded to exiled Austrian/German directors such as Wilder and Lang, plus of course (the Hamburg-born!) Douglas Sirk. Going far beyond homage or acknowledgement of influence, this linked the New German Cinema to the German diaspora and also made a statement about film history as one form of history. Such a blend is the ideal springboard for Akin‟s treatment of transcultural issues going beyond the script of *Auf der anderen Seite*.

Posters seeking Yeter‟s daughter via a photo of her now-dead mother are strongly reminiscent of placards in *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* with their appeal: „Wer kennt Hermann Braun?‟ But in territory visually signposted as Fassbinder‟s, Akin‟s constellation frequently inverts the signifiers. With the generation of the ‟68ers afterimaged in Hanna Schygulla playing Susanne Staub, the first two chapters of the film‟s triptych start with May 1 street marches, first in Bremen, and then in Istanbul. These create a parallel between contemporary Turkish society and Fassbinder‟s Germany (seeking to compensate for postwar marginalization within Europe, rather like the perpetual bridesmaid Turkey in relation to the EU). Historical and film-historical suggestiveness radiate out from “the genealogy of Sirk-Fassbinder melodrama into which Akin is inscribing himself.” Thomas Elsaesser (2008: 37) goes on to describe Schygulla as “the guardian of this pledge to continue the generational burden of the German-German-„Hollywood‟ dialogue (Sirk was German-born), extended now into a German-Turkish-„European‟ dialogue.”

[9] Cf. the extended conversation between mother and daughter in Thomas Arslan‟s *Der schöne Tag* (2001), in which each understands the other perfectly, but neither swerves from Turkish and German respectively. The daughter‟s achievement in dubbing a French film (Rohmer‟s *Conte d’Été*) into German, is comparable to Nejat‟s, as Professor of German in Germany.

Such broader identity issues are framed by reference to other, especially German directors. Nejat"s father asks to be called Ali (which is the actor"s name, but more tellingly, the working title of Fassbinder"s *Angst essen Seele auf* was „Alle Türken heißen Ali"), while Ayten"s search for her mother Yeter via the Bremen telephone exchange draws a blank; under „Y" the only entry is „Yasemin" (the title figure in Hark Bohm"s West German film of 1988, a flirting with transcultural issues that are worlds apart from anything in Akin). The film"s sacrificial lineages end with Susanne"s „adoption" of Ayten, and Nejat waiting for his father on the shore, in a mood of reconciliation.

Trabzon, the Black Sea city to which Ali returns from Germany, was on the Silk Road and a gateway to Iran, as well as being a site of the Armenian Massacres. The final frames of *Auf der anderen Seite* vary the motif of the return of Odysseus in the style of the New Iranian Cinema, perhaps closest to the ending of Kiarostami"s *Through the Olive Trees* (1994). The configuration within the frame is reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich"s Romantic figures, facing away from the viewer, contemplating a Nature that dwarfs and exhilarates them. But what is happening in Akin"s final shots is very different. The cycles of nature – tides, weather, light – set the scene for the re-emergence of the human (Ali). They also reinforce the film"s cyclic movement, thereby breaking the cycle of violence which ends the other parent/child relationships (Yeter/Ayten, Susanne/Lotte). The cyclic is further established by the foreknowledge that this film is the second in a trilogy. When in the garden of Ali"s house in Bremen Nejat says that the tomatoes are ripe for plucking, there seems to be an irresistible link to another cyclically structured triptych with border crossings of European significance, Manchevski"s *Before the Rain* (1994).

For a viewer of German films the apartment raid in the wake of the Istanbul street demonstration evokes Schlöndorff/von Trotta"s *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (1975). In the lead-up to this scene, there are visual links between Ayten in her shrouding beanie with its criminal associations,[10] and the police who are similarly masked. They evoke nothing special in a contemporary German context, but resonate

[10] It also perhaps evokes the burkha, and Western anxieties surrounding it being worn in situations involving security (entering banks, etc.), another instance of the othering of violence.

with the extended profilmic event of urban terrorism in 70s West Germany, or even with the hostage-taking of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.

However the most telling example of intertextuality, ambiguous in its intentionality, proves to be the „Goethe" quotations. For they are not to be found in Goethe.[11] It would be breathtaking for Akin to have known this. Even going by the more likely scenario that he was unaware of „passing off" Goethe quotations, this destabilizing effect on national canons and icons is the clearest example of what this film achieves at its surface level.

## 3. On the other side of the Turkish-German: Constitutive Others

*The Edge of Heaven* is not just positioned within a cinema whose Turkish, German and Turkish-German elements are being hotly debated. It is one of a swathe of films from a range of countries which use what Wendy Everett (2005) describes as a "fractal form" to re-present the cultural impact of globalisation. Fractal films use narrative structures which are multistrand, temporally jumbled, and at first chaotic yet in the end fatefully coincidental. Named for their resemblance to the "order out of disorder" concept of fractal geometry in chaos theory, these films depict worlds in which borders are perforated and, as in *The Edge of Heaven*, significantly questioned. *The Edge of Heaven* subverts the construction of Turkey as Other to Germany, and to appropriate Petra Fachinger's (2001) phrase, rewrites Turkey as well as Germany from the margins.

Itself part of a trilogy on love, death and evil, *The Edge of Heaven* recalls another trilogy, Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu's films *Amores Perros, 21 Grams* and the

[11] To confirm a suspicion, we approached the Goethe-Wörterbuch, Arbeitsstelle Tübingen. Dr Martina Eicheldinger sent the following helpful reply: „Bei den von Ihnen gesuchten Zitaten handelt es sich mit höchster Wahrscheinlichkeit nicht um ‚echte Goethe-Sprüche‚„ weder in unserem Belegarchiv auf Karteikarten noch auf der CD-ROM Goethes Werke (Chadwyck-Healey Ltd. 1995) finde ich unter den Schlüsselwörtern auch nur annähernd passende Textstellen. Das schließt natürlich nicht aus, daß sinngemäß Goethesche Gedanken wiedergegeben werden. Daß alles seine Zeit hat, ist eine (Binsen-)Weisheit, die sich schon beim Prediger Salomo findet und mit Goethes organizistischen Denken durchaus ‚irgendwie„ zu vereinbaren ist. Auch daß Goethe kein Freund der (Französischen) Revolution und revolutionärer Ereignisse war, ist allgemein bekannt (vgl. z. B. das Gespräch mit Eckermann, 4.1.1824: ‚Weil ich nun aber die Revolutionen haßte, so nannte man mich einen Freund des Bestehenden‚„), wörtlich nachweisen lassen sich die beiden zitierten Passagen in Goethes Oeuvre jedoch nicht" (email of 1 October 2009). An adaptation of Solomon's words, again resonating with mood and referenced timeframe of Akin's film (the 60s), is the Pete Seeger song "Turn! Turn! Turn! (to Everything There is a Season)".

transcontinental *Babel.* Mexican-cum-American director Iñárritu describes *Babel*, which explores miscommunication spanning stories set in Morocco, Los Angeles, Mexico and Japan, as being "about the point of view of others".[12] Alongside others such as *Crash*, *Magnolia,* Kieslowski‟s *Three Colours* trilogy (which is also a portrait of the European Union), Michael Haneke‟s *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* and *Code Unknown*, these movies depict diaspora, violent encounters and/or connections between a variety of different people and nations. They depict societies or the world consisting of Others, where, regardless of whether the characters are typically Other or Same, they feel alienated and long for some sort of meaningful connection. Whereas Michael Haneke‟s films focus on hindrances to such connections, in the majority of films characters find connections through encounters with strangers. These films attempt to re-map societies as multiplex, rather than dichotomous as dominant and other (see Hamid Naficy 2009).

Just as fractal films blur national identities and borders, the relationship between mainstream, arthouse, Hollywood and European cinema is increasingly contentious.[13] The concept of the boundaries between markets and types of cinema has a twofold relevance to fractal films. Firstly, the fractal film form has evolved from the influences of international film markets, as frequent comparisons to the work of Alain Resnais, Robert Altman and Krzysztof Kieslowski, as well as Kurosawa‟s *Rashomon* attest. Secondly, in their thematic schemes fractal films explore the fault lines between borders and boundaries. Akin, the Turkish German director, feels an affinity to Martin Scorsese (see Nicodemus 2007), and Naficy notes how Scorsese "removes the hyphen" from *ITALIANAMERICAN* and thus fuses his cultural identities rather than keeping them separate (Naficy 2006: 116). All this emphasises the extent to which Akin places transnational cinema within a global context, both cinematically through intertextuality, and thematically in regards to Europe and its others.

Like the displaced, marginalised European immigrants in Haneke‟s films, the characters of Turkish background in *The Edge of Heaven* are shown at a distance from German society, despite their residence in Germany. Haneke‟s *Code Unknown* and *71*

[12] In the interview with Nathan Gardels (2007).

[13] Take for instance the tossed salad of Tarantino‟s *Inglourious Basterds*, which, emerging from a combination of independent/Hollywood/European influences, casts Brad Pitt and Mike Myers alongside *Goodbye Lenin!*‟s Daniel Brühl, *Paris*‟s Mélanie Laurent and Gedeon Burkhard, of *Inspector Rex* fame.

*Fragments* both have Romanian characters who appear as European foreigners in Europe (a woman and a young boy, respectively). They are illegal immigrants, and face destitution on the extreme peripheries of the French and Austrian societies. In *The Edge of Heaven* Ayten faces a similar plight when she leaves behind her involvement with the activist group and, penniless, sleeps at the university. In below-ground rooms and an ivory tower academic office, the Turkish-German characters Ali, Yeter and Nejat are visually framed at a remove from the rest of German society.[14] When Nejat and Ali eat ice cream outside the Bremen Bahnhof, they appear to be the only ones sitting, while everyone behind them moves around. Nejat and Ali's awkward use of the public space recalls Zygmunt Bauman's assertion that in capitalism "the public space is an arena to move through, not be in" (1994: 149). This sense of Turkey's secondary position to German culture is underscored when Ayten passes a poster at the university advertising a course in Rebel Studies. The irony here emerges that in Germany political rebellion can be studied in the abstract, whereas in Turkey it comprises everyday life for Ayten. Guido Rings (2008: 32) notes that in this film Akin displays truly "transcultural tendencies" rather than subscribing to cultural binaries. Yet while the characters subvert or betray remnants of the cliché figures and relationships Göktürk (2002: 250-254) detects in earlier Turkish German films, Akin shows in the film's Bremen and Hamburg segments that transnationalism does not necessarily or immediately erase divisions.

In the prelude and coda of *The Edge of Heaven* a shopkeeper tells Nejat that the Black Sea Coast musician Kazim Koyuncu (who was young, like Nejat) died of cancer from the Chernobyl disaster. *The Edge of Heaven* is thus prefaced and concluded with the point that a violent accident may have unforetold global ramifications which expose the arbitrariness of national borders. This perforation of national borders appears with the police's discussion of Lotte's death as an international affair. And, earlier on, Lotte reads an Amnesty International book on the Turkish legal system. Not just geographically, but politically, Turkey is put under an international spotlight, but also the spotlight of the new Europe. Alongside the Istanbul demonstrations we are reminded that Germany continues to be a site where Kurds fight for cultural autonomy (Lyon & Uçarer 2001). Germany's position as a third party to Turkish and Kurdish conflict and

[14] At one point Nejat looks up at his half-full class from behind the podium and is framed first on one side by a map of Europe (including Turkey) and then on the other by one of Germany. He appears confined, suggesting the "caught between two worlds" motif prevalent in earlier Turkish-German films (see Fincham 2008).

the Kurds‟ marginalised identity within Turkey further confound the concept of borders and the centrality of any one particular country or identity. On all sides, Eurocentric boundaries are erased as each country and identity becomes politically involved with the other.

Like both Haneke‟s and Iñárritu‟s films, *The Edge of Heaven*‟s plot hinges on instances of violence. As a reaction to modernity‟s dissolution of Europe‟s borders, Haneke‟s *71 Fragments* revolves around the eruption of pent up alienation, and *Code Unknown* launches from culturally-biased antagonisms. While Ali‟s violence towards Yeter and the street urchins‟ confrontation with Lotte are loaded with cultural connotations, the fact that they occur as unintended accidents reflects an approach to violence like that found in *Crash* and *Babel* (both American films).[15] Ali‟s sexist behaviour implies a hangover from the stereotype of traditional patriarchal and oppressive Turkish men. Yet when Ali strikes Yeter he is drunk, and does not strike with any intention of killing her. This element of accident partially mitigates the act, turning Ali into a victim of misfortune and making it poignant when Nejat severs their bond.

Likewise, the boys (who bring to mind a human rights worker‟s earlier suggestion that Nejat would be better off sponsoring a Kurdish child‟s education) do not realise the gun is loaded and appear utterly shocked when it is. This scene is remarkably similar to one in *Babel* where two young Moroccan boys fooling with a gun unintentionally wound a white American female tourist. Together these scenes illustrate Ezra and Rowden‟s observation that after 9/11, figures such as the brown-skinned terrorist and white female tourist appear in narratives which are "devoted to eradicating" violence and terrorism (Ezra & Rowden 2006: 11). In emphasising the accidental nature of events which are then interpreted by the media in *Babel* and the police in *The Edge of Heaven* to be the Other‟s terrorist acts,[16] Akin undermines the construction of the Other as terrorist. Rather than portraying violence as a deliberate expression of cultural divides as Haneke does, *The Edge of Heaven* focuses more on the arbitrary and accidental nature of these two events and leaves some of the cultural connotations undeveloped. The boys

[15] For further discussion of some contrasts between American and European fractal narratives, see Everett (2005) and Hassapopoulou (2008).

[16] Here in relation to Turkish-German relationships, this phenomenon also follows Bhabha‟s consideration of "the otherness of the people-as-one". Bhabha (1990: 301). For key concepts of Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Judith Butler and others in relation to Turkish-German literature and cinema, see Blumentrath et al. 2007).

disappear and remain outside the frame, while the viewer is denied Ali‟s reconciliation with Nejat. Rather than attempting to "eradicate violence", Akin leaves these issues unresolved.

On the other hand, Ayten‟s involvement with the Kurdish workers‟ party and her position as a refugee signal the deliberate applications of violence in and between Europe and its Others. Her relatively communal time in prison (we see her playing volleyball, and her cellmates play cards) echoes Tevfik Baser‟s *Abschied vom falschen Paradies* (1989), in which a Turkish woman who killed her husband befriends German women in jail (indeed Ayten tells Lotte most of the women are in jail for having murdered their husbands). Akin‟s textual alterations transpose the process of cultural integration onto Turkish soil, and ultimately provide a more hopeful outlook than that of Baser‟s film. Not only does the "between two worlds" motif disappear in Ayten‟s return to Istanbul, but it is the German women, Lotte and more significantly Susanne, who travel to Istanbul and head towards becoming German-Turkish. Both Ayten and Susanne lower their defences; the rebel repents and the conservative takes up what in Germany would have been a political cause in adopting her. By extension Akin infers that Germany and the EU need to extend a hand to develop a familial, benevolent and two-way relationship with Turkey. Having defused their earlier political confrontation, Ayten and Susanne turn to an intergenerational "translation" (Hall & Maharaj, 2001: 37) of what the other needs, acting out of respect for the love they felt for Lotte. Figuratively marrying both the history and future of Turkish and German relationships, *The Edge of Heaven* infers that Turkey‟s accession to the EU is not simply a matter of Turkish political and human rights reform, but equally depends on the EU‟s ideological reform. Akin reframes the questions of Turkey‟s accession to the EU into a question of each acceding to the other.

## 4. A fractal world

> *It avails not, time nor place – distance avails not,*
> *I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence,*
> *Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,*
> *Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd...*[17]

[17] Whitman, Walt (1855) Crossing Brooklyn Ferry. From *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990: 130).

Considering the importance of city and rural settings in *The Edge of Heaven*, it is useful to consider Bhabha‟s assertion that "it is the city which provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out" (1990: 320). In fractal films this proves true as characters cross and recross each others‟ paths repeatedly, and with each (re)tracing, their identities take on new meaning. Like other films such as *Run Lola Run* and *Chungking Express*, *The Edge of Heaven* treats the city as a site of shifting identifications. Missing links and deaths are voids which catalyse new unions between characters rather than cementing traditional ones.

Ultimately though, *The Edge of Heaven* inverts the identity of Turkey as Other by presenting it as a home (if not by lineage then by choice) for all the characters. Whereas in Germany the Turkish and Turkish-German characters occupy margins to a certain extent, the fact that by the end of the film all the characters find a sense of purpose in Turkey transforms it into a new frontier. In Istanbul Susanne greets the men at the cafe, little knowing that her daughter used to as well.[18] This act of greeting inscribes both Lotte and Susanne as part of the local space, as familiars rather than tourists. And when the boys snatch Lotte‟s purse it appears that she is familiar with the back alleys, as at one point she chooses another path in order to head them off.

But if the city according to Bhabha is a space where new identifications play out, then what are we to make of Nejat‟s journey into the rural landscape with its evening firmaments and finally the seashore? Typically in German films such as *Knockin' On Heaven's Door* the ocean represents a utopian horizon, which Wenders distorts in *The American Friend*. Here Akin presents it with the dual possibility of life and death, as we ultimately remain uncertain whether Ali will return. Nejat‟s hope for reconciliation with his father leads him to an endless frontier, a borderless expanse of water.

This scene should be considered in relation to earlier ones which focus on journeys over water. After her successful flight from the police, Ayten returns to the city by ferry, sitting on the right hand side of the boat (at least, that is how the camera makes it seem).

Later we see Lotte, map in hand, on the left-hand side of the screen, looking out at Istanbul from a ferry. After Lotte‟s death, Ayten stands at the stern, bathed in sunlight, facing the ferry‟s wake. The two sides join, with a sense of direction both forwards

[18] Perhaps Susanne had also crossed paths with these people when she was Lotte‟s age, passing through Istanbul on the way further east to India.

(towards the camera) and receding (looking at the wake), suggesting past, present, and future rather than divided sides. As in Walt Whitman‟s poem *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*, this link between two people who make the same journey at different times conveys a sense of unity regardless of the passage of time or existence. Ayten is retracing Lotte‟s steps unwittingly, yet we witness the connection between the two former lovers. This connection erases the borders of time, layering the two characters‟ experiences just as Kazim Koyuncu‟s music (featured prominently through the film) consists of layered, converging voices and melodies. The Other is elided in these layers, as each is presented in lateral connection with the other(s). Thus the process of rewriting the constitutive Other is enacted as a continual process, one which appears not only in the context of Turkey and Germany‟s relationship, but in their relationship with the EU and the rest of the world. In the context of fractal narratives, world cinema is not only akin to world literature since it is distributed worldwide, but because it has expanded to represent global reaches within its frames.

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## Biographical details

Roger Hillman teaches Film Studies and German Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. Publications in the area of Turkish-German Cinema include the co-authored *Transkulturalität* (see Blumentrath et al. under „References"), as well as the chapter "Transnationalism in the films of Fatih Akin" in *Europe and its Others: Essays on Interperception and Identity*, ed. Paul Gifford and Tessa Hausdewell (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010).

Vivien Silvey is a PhD candidate at the Australian National University. Her research focus is on network narratives and comparative studies in world cinema. In 2010 she presented papers on this topic at conferences in Cork and Stirling and at the NECS conference held in Istanbul.

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