

The Edge of Heaven/Auf der anderen Seite, 2007

“Only God is entitled to solitude.”

Major Credits:

Direction: Fatih Akin

Screenplay: Fatih Akin

Cinematography: Rainer Klausmann

Cast: [Nurgül Yesilçay](#) (Ayten 'Gül' Öztürk), [Baki Davrak](#) (Nejat Aksu), [Tuncel Kurtiz](#) (Ali Aksu), [Hanna Schygulla](#) (Susanne Staub), [Patrycia Ziolkowska](#) (Charlotte 'Lotte' Staub), [Nursel Köse](#) (Yeter / Jessy)

Background:

The second of Akin's "Love, Death, and the Devil," trilogy, *The Edge of Heaven* received equally strong reviews as its predecessor, *Head On* (2004), although not quite so many international awards. The director has acknowledged the pressure he felt to match the enormous success of the earlier film without repeating the formula. He conceived of *The Edge of Heaven* as a more expansive narrative (six characters instead of two, four main locales instead of two, multiple story lines and border-crossing journeys). He also employed much more recognizable actors: Tuncel Kurtiz and Hanna Schygulla are legendary stars of the Turkish and German cinemas, respectively; Kurtiz is associated with the greatest of Turkish directors, Yılmaz Güney, and Schygulla with the prodigious German filmmaker, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. [Nurgül Yesilçay](#) was a major young star in Turkey, considered too beautiful to play a terrorist; Patrycia Ziolkowska had worked with Akin on an earlier film, *Solino* (2002).

Cinematic Qualities:

1. *Music*—Akin has said that the music of Kazim Koyuncu, a Turkish pop singer who died at an early age (referenced in the repeated dialogue at the gas station), serves as the “leitmotif” for the entire film. In between *Head On* and *The Edge of Heaven* Akin made a feature-length documentary, *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul*, that celebrates Istanbul as a musical crossroads.
2. *Nested Narratives*—following the international style of the previous fifteen years (*Pulp Fiction*, *Traffic*, *Amores Perros*, *Syrianna*, *Crash*), Akin creates multiple story lines that echo each other, bringing together—or nearly bringing together: note the “near misses” between Ali and Susanne in Istanbul and Lotte/Ayten (in Susanna’s car) and Nejat/Yeter (in the street car) in Hamburg.
3. *Visual Composition*—Akin creates several arresting moments through the use of long shots in interior spaces: the slow track out on Lotte in the hotel phone booth, calling her mother for aid; the high angle shot in the Istanbul hotel room where Susanne bares her grief (note the uncanny use of *dissolves* in this long take; the equally stirring moment when Susanne awakes from her dream in her daughter’s white room.
4. *Repetition*—The film uses visual rhymes (Lotte showing Ayten her new room and house; Nejat doing the same for Lotte; the two panning shots of coffins descending a plane) and repeated shots (the gas station on the Baltic coast; Ayten sleeping during Nejat’s lecture) to unify the narrative and also, perhaps, to suggest one of the film’s themes.

Questions for Discussion:

1. The story of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son as a sign of faith belongs to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Nejat’s memory of asking his father about the tale prompts his return to Turkey. What is the significance of this particular myth in relation to the narrative lines of *The Edge of Heaven*?
2. Ayten defines her politics to Susanne when he describes how she is fighting against globalization. But what is the ideology of the *film*? Where does the film’s *moral center* lie? Consider all six characters with regard to this question.
3. Especially in light of the punk ethos of *Head On*, *The Edge of Heaven* is surprisingly *literary*; the three title cards, the bookstore, the lecture on Goethe, Lotte’s diary, The Abraham/Ibrahim story. What is the effect of these reminders of more traditional forms of storytelling in the context of Akin’s nested narratives?