

## Film review

*Two Sides of the Moon* is the poetic title of David Gould's 2011 documentary film about the case of Hatun Sürücü, a young Turkish-German woman who was killed by her youngest brother, Ayan, in Berlin in 2005. The film denounces the practice of honor killings in Western societies.

Over recent years honor killings have garnered increasing international media attention. The horror and injustice of these crimes have surfaced strongly within the human rights framework in the past decade, alerting filmmakers like Gould to this pressing issue. The dramatic confluence of social and cultural events that have made these killings a worldwide problem, crossing cultures, religions and nations, is poignantly portrayed in his film.

Gould thoroughly explores the patriarchal notion of honor as it permeates modern Western nations. When families migrate to new countries, they bring with them their traditional honor codes and forms of punishment inflicted on women who are deemed to have stained their family's reputation. These practices inevitably cause intercultural and intergenerational clashes when young women, born and raised in the multi-religious and multicultural host country and society, aspire to education and a career, and want the freedom to socialize with other groups and make their own choice of partner.

The film uses input from spiritual leaders like the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who comment on the philosophical and moral issues at stake. Experts such as social anthropologist Unni Wikan, cultural and social anthropologist Werner Schiffauer, honor crimes attorney Seyran Ates, and human rights activist Taina Bien-Aimé also contribute to the film by discussing the problematic and unresolved coexistence of culturally diverse and parallel worlds. They examine the complex picture of psychological and sociological forms of cultural marginalization and discrimination as experienced by Turkish migrants in German urban contexts, as well as the inability of these groups to reconcile the two cultures.

Although no members of the Sürücü family, nor any of Hatun's closest friends are interviewed, the audience is constantly in close connection with all of them. The film retells the compelling story of the struggle for social and cultural integration in Western communities, while maintaining a respectful attitude to Hatun's murder by refraining from showing graphic images or playing up the event. The film avoids any vampire-like exploitation of the tragedy, and instead develops a more participatory and painfully intimate tone. It is an expression of human rights activism, giving voice to the marginalized as it chronicles the tragedy of Hatun and her entire family.

Gould interprets the various realities of present-day Germany through a new critically perceptive lens. He uses realness as a narrative strategy, and experiments with documentary reconstruction. Hatun's vibrant personality, ambitious goals, courageous spirit and 'defiant' life choices were all expressions of her desire to assert personal aspirations and pursue happiness and independence. Her life is presented through a complex collage of visually engaging images and memories. The film combines private family videos and photographs, newsreel footage, journalistic reportages,

television programs, and other media and texts, while using new aesthetic devices and daring to push the boundaries of canonical documentary making.

The film is chronologically linear, with a narrative which is emotionally expressive and associative, thus transcending facts and spaces as it recomposes the broken pieces of the tragedy. The film is constructed around photo and film images of Hatun, her son, family, partner and coworkers that span emotional time and geographical space.

The film's evocative title captures several crucial aspects of the story. As Gould explains, the two sides of the moon refer to the two cultures, Turkish and German, coexisting in a climate of multi-racial tension and irreconcilable intercultural disjuncture. The more poetic reference is elegantly stated in the film with the attempt to bring together brother and sister. Hatun's second name, Aynur, means 'moon beam'. In Turkish 'ay' (moon) and 'nur' (light), means either simply moonlight, or luminous and beautiful like the moon. Her younger brother's name, Ayan, means king of the moon. 'Ayan' however, does not seem to originate from 'ay' (moon), but rather it means 'apparent' or 'clear.' There is another 'āyan', an older word used in the Ottoman Empire, which refers to notable people in a community, like leaders or representatives. So Ayan means clear, luminous leader, poetically rendered as 'king of the moon.'

*Two Sides of the Moon* bears the historical responsibility of documenting death in the wide-open space of urban Berlin and portrays the socio-ethnic mourning of a city in dismay. The film examines the socio-cultural causes of honor killings in Germany, and offers a gripping transnational and transcultural representation of this criminal practice.

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