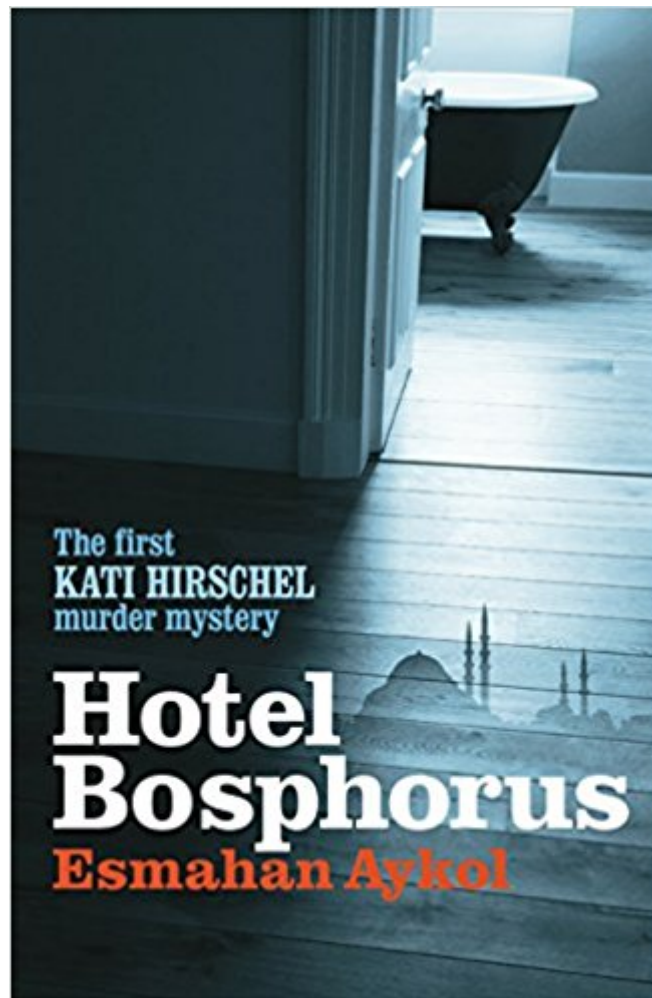




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# Hotel Bosphorus (Kati Hirschel Murder Mystery)



## Synopsis

"What matters is that [Esmahan] Aykol uses the genre to tell us a little more about the world than we're used to hearing from more commercial writers."#151;Newsday"A wonderful novel about Istanbul. The Turkish way of life, prejudices, men, politics, corruption#151;Esmahan Aykol writes about all these with a light and humorous touch."#151;Petros Markaris, author of *Che Commited Suicide* and *Zone Defence*"Bubbling with hedonism, enthusiasm, love of life and books, this should be mandatory reading for those holidaying in Turkey, visitors to Istanbul, and lovers of crime novels."#151;Hamburger AbendblattThis debut by a young Turkish woman novelist is set in her beloved Istanbul. The heroine, Kati Hirschel, is a foreigner and proud owner of the only mystery bookshop in town. When the director of a film starring an old school friend is found murdered in his hotel room, Kati cannot resist the temptation to start her own maverick investigation. After all, her friend Petra is the police's principal suspect, and reading all those detective novels must have taught Kati something.This suspenseful tale of murder features a heroine who is funny, feisty and undresses men in her mind more often than she would like. It uses humor, social commentary, and even erotic fantasy to expose Western prejudices about Turkey, as well as Turkish stereotyping of other Europeans.Esmahan Aykol was born in 1970 in Edirne, Turkey. She was a journalist for a number of Turkish publications and radio stations. After a stint as a bartender she turned to fiction writing. *Hotel Bosphorus* is her first novel and will be followed by two others featuring Kati Hirschel.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A wonderful novel about Istanbul. The Turkish way of life, prejudices, men, politics, corruption-Esmahan Aykol writes about all these with a light and humorous touch.A" Petros Markaris, author of Che Committed Suicide and Zone Defence. Bubbling with hedonism, enthusiasm, love of life and books, this should be mandatory reading for those holidaying in Turkey, visitors to Istanbul and lovers of crime novels.A" Hamburger Abendblatt

Esmahan Aykol: Esmahan Aykol was born in 1970 in Edirne, Turkey. She lives in Istanbul and Berlin. During her law studies she was a journalist for a number of Turkish publications and radio stations. After a stint as a bartender she turned to fiction writing. She has written three Katie Hirschel novels. Hotel Bosphorus is the first and has been published in Turkish, German, French and soon in Italian.Ruth Whitehouse: Ruth Whitehouse worked as a violinist in Ankara. She pursued her interest in Turkish culture and literature by doing by obtaining a PhD in Turkish Literature at SOAS in London. This is her first translation of a full novel but her work has been broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in April 2010 in a series called Young Turks, featuring translations of work by young Turkish writers.

“Any documentary or novel about Istanbul inevitably squeezes in the word “Bosphorus” somewhere or other.” Kati Hirschel Hotel Bosphorus takes place in Istanbul, the great and historic city straddling the Bosphorus and being both European and Asian. There is often a tension between the two parts of Istanbul an inner conflict. In part this conflict is played out in Kati Hirschel, the daughter of German Jewish refugees born in Istanbul and having dual citizenship. Kati is aware of having a foot in two worlds but belonging to none and often complains about feeling Turkish but being treated as German. Her Turkish language skills are not developed to the level she would like and her friends often tease her. Aykol uses Kati’s liminal position to comment on both German and Turkish culture as well as to overturn our stereotyped view of economic migration. After all, we usually think of Turks working in the West, especially Germany, and not westerners working in Turkey. While this is an interesting twist, we need to remember that Kati works in Turkey because she loves Istanbul while Turks work in the West because they need employment. As the owner of Istanbul’s only mystery bookstore, Kati is connected to her community of mystery buffs and aficionados. And, like most of us in that community, she dreams of solving a real crime. Unlike most of us, however, Kati will have her chance as one day a German Turkish film production, starring an old friend, arrives in the city and the director is murdered. Initially Kati is excited with the

prospect of detection. *Hotel Bosphorus* is not a "Istanbul novel" as it has been reading crime fiction since my childhood, and selling it for the last three years. I was no longer just an ordinary reader. The time had come for me to offer my theoretical knowledge to the benefit of society. *Hotel Bosphorus* is not a "Too soon, however, she learns that this is easier said than done. Kati is an interesting figure but less well drawn out than I would like. She can appear shallow but there are hints of hidden depth. This potential is not true in other characters that appear to be more stereotypes than people. Taking Fofu as an example. He does not appear in the story except through Kati's descriptions and appears to be a flighty and fragile gay man. Of him we know no more. Other characters also rely more on "type" than personality including gangsters and business people. One exception to the weak characterization is Inspector Batuhan "nal from Homicide who is in charge of the investigation. Unfortunately, he is treated very unsympathetically and discarded early in the story. While Istanbul plays a prominent role in the story, the city fails to become one of the characters. It fades to the background. This is disappointing as I had hoped Aykol would treat the city in the same way Collin Dexter treats Oxford (Inspector Morse and Inspector Lewis) and Ian Rankin treats Edinburgh (DI Rebus) as a character rather than as merely a place. Aykol spends a lot of time telling us about Istanbul rather than showing it to us. The narrative of the story also suffers from the same weakness as the story is told from only one perspective (Kati), descriptive, and lacks the power of showing. That said, however, there are some interesting twists when Kati breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the reader. Showing the main character being aware of the reader is unique and I do not recall seeing it in other mystery books. Lucky for us, the technique is not overly used and remains fresh. As a mystery, *Hotel Bosphorus* seems more akin to a cozy of *Hotel* than a soft-boiled and focuses on the amateur detective. It appears that Aykol had Miss Marple in mind as a role model since the Christie character is mentioned more than once. While Kati has yet to show the wit and intelligence of a Marple, I hope they develop in future books. (And, we have to remember that Miss Marple did not become herself in her first book). As a mystery, *Hotel Bosphorus* starts fairly strong with an interesting murder and Kati an enthusiastic detective. As time passes and the possibility of solving the crime diminishes, Kati's attention wanes and she starts to worry about mundane concerns such as her business and her mother's hospitalization in Germany to which she needs to attend. It may be that the shift in story arc is due Aykol having difficulty plotting the solution as it is a chance encounter that solves the mystery, not pure detection. There are now four books in the Kati Hirschel series with two translated into English. I hope, as the series develops, that Aykol finds her voice as there is

potential in Kati and her city. It should be noted that the translation is very easy to read and the language flows smoothly. It is my understanding that Turkish has unique language structures that are hard to render in other languages. Whitehouse is able to make these difficulties invisible to the reader rendering the story in smooth, easy to read British English. As a Canadian and reader of mostly English mysteries and translations, I find British English welcoming and familiar.\*\*\*And, finally, a friend has accused me of being hard on the setting because of my recent familiarity (if one week counts) with Istanbul. This may be true but such a great city requires a great voice. From my blog: Turkish Noir ([...])

This was almost a 4 but it had several things arguing against that rating. I agree with the reviewer who compared it to Stephanie Plum's books (although I don't care for her books.) I liked the insider feel, the description of the place, the ex-pat who loves Turkey, etc. It was a little boring in the middle, I didn't much care for her treatment of men -but - I thought the series has a lot of possibility. I'm looking forward to the next one.

Either this writer is very weak or the translator is awful, because it sounds as if an 8th Grader wrote it. The sentence structure is stilted and it reads as if it were literally translated without an appreciation of the structure of English. The asides to the reader are artificial and just don't work. The plot is slow and I was tempted to not finish it, but I persevered and it did not improve. Want a Turkish detective? Read Barbara Nadel's books instead.

Previous reviewers are not wrong. It is light, short on character depth etc. Think Stephanie Plum of Istanbul. Fun, easy read. like the style. Don't expect great literature but I really enjoyed it and would recommend it highly.

It may be partly the fault of the translation, but this book has faults that go beyond its pedestrian style. The exposition is awkward, the plot relies on absurd coincidence, the characters are poorly differentiated and the motivation of the narrator unclear. It does not even give a very vivid picture of Istanbul. Disappointing.

First Line: I keep driving around, but there's nowhere to park near the shop. Parking in Istanbul can be a problem, and since Kati Hirschel is usually running a bit late to open her business-- the only mystery bookshop in town-- she's just going to have to park and run. Having recently lost her

part-time employee, Kati does need to hire someone else, but she's also anticipating meeting Petra, an old school friend she hasn't seen for years. Kati is a German ex-pat who's fallen in love with Istanbul. Petra went on to become a very popular actress in Germany, and has come to Turkey to star in a new film; however, everything is put on hold when the film's director is found murdered in his hotel room. Petra is the prime suspect, and Kati can't resist running her own amateur investigation. After all, reading all those mysteries has surely taught her something. I found that my enjoyment of this book relied a lot upon my opinion of its main character, and I was alternately exasperated and delighted. I did really like the insider's point of view, especially since Kati is an ex-pat because it exposed both Western prejudices about Turkey as well as Turkish stereotyping of Europeans. Moreover, since Kati's investigating style was rather hit or miss, I also learned quite a few things about different sections of Istanbul. Kati has always been single, and never passes up the opportunity to ogle-- or bed-- a handsome, interesting man, and this led to one of the things that annoyed me. A handsome, interesting (and interested) policeman falls right into Kati's lap, and after a brief encounter, she dumps him with no explanation. You see, Kati was raised to hate the police, and she just can't overcome that prejudice. Then there was the way the book was written. Kati is speaking to us, and although I don't mind being brought into the story, and I can think of many, many books in which I loved the first person viewpoint, I draw the line at constantly being referred to as "dear reader." As the dear reader of this review, I found this tendency made the narrative stilted and gimmicky. Kati's investigative technique was all over the place. If she was paid by the mile, she could hire all the employees she needs and never have to work in her bookshop again. This scattered approach allowed her to meet various characters such as stock film types and a stock mobster and his minions as well as take a trip to Berlin. No, this book isn't long on character or plot development, but I did find it a light, fun read. If it's substance you crave, I would strongly suggest reading Barbara Nadel's Inspector Ikmen mysteries which are also set in Istanbul.

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