

The Cruel Road / Amansız Yol (1985)

Ö. Kavur 1985)

Overview

Amansız Yol (Desperate Road) is an Ömer Kavur film where he treats his favorite themes such as the road and the search for meaning through an adventure of pursuit. Raised in the same environment, the past relationship between three youths is recast in a starkly different light. A woman and two men, these three people whose lives had branched in unexpected ways are reunited within a crime narrative. The main element that connects them all, the struggle to stay alive, becomes the starting point for an arduous journey.

Ömer Kavur has written the film's scenario with Barış Pirhasan, and has worked with Orhan Oğuz as his cinematographer again, while the film's production is by the experienced director Atıf Yılmaz. The main quality that makes *Amansız Yol* a significant film is by the way it tackles concepts such as love, poverty, shame, good-and-evil while keeping the tension of its story of crime and pursuit intact, in addition to its multi-dimensional characters. This is no doubt the result of the film's powerful scenario.

Cinematic Narration

Just like other Ömer Kavur films, *Amansız Yol* speaks an unornamented but effective cinematic language. Mise-en-scène, framing, and editing potently communicate the dramatic meanings of scenes. In addition, the imagery throughout the film draws in depth layers out of these meanings, bestowing even more dimensions to the import of these scenes as tools of signification. For instance, the way actors are framed in empty or wide-open spaces speak to the loneliness, the desperation of the characters without recourse to dialogue or action. Two-shots and three-shots allow the audience to grasp the relations between the characters. Shots in roads, tunnels, dark and uncanny streets, pubs, taverns, and highway stops succeed in conveying the atmosphere of the story. Casting and the direction of the actors is another point that must be raised. Zuhâl Olcay, Kadir İnanır, and Yavuzer Çetinkaya, with their on-point physical qualities and performances contribute to the success of the film.

Characters

<i>Hasan</i>	In his thirties. Truck driver.
<i>Yavuz</i>	In his thirties. Retired football player.
<i>Sabahat</i>	In her early thirties. Sex worker, mother.

Synopsis

Hasan comes back to Turkey with his truck loaded with imports from Germany which he has migrated to years ago in order to make money. His old lover Sabahat has married with their childhood friend Yavuz. Unable to hold any job, Yavuz has become a criminal. He also tolerates that Sabahat is making money through sex work. They also have a daughter. Yavuz leaves the money he swindled from the criminal gang with Hasan and disappears. Hasan rescues Sabahat and her daughter Ayşe from the gang members and takes them with him. Together, they embark on a long journey from the west of Turkey to its east. Hasan plans to leave them with their relatives in Mardin along the way while transporting goods to Diyarbakır. The men are on their trail. Ashamed of returning to her family, Sabahat leaves her daughter with Hasan and escapes before arriving at Mardin. Yavuz is waiting for Hasan in Diyarbakır to get back the money he left with him. The gang members find and kill Yavuz. Hasan takes Ayşe from Sabahat's aunt and gets back on the road back home.

The Plot

The return of Hasan Years after he left, Hasan comes back to Turkey from Germany as the driver of a product laden truck. The person who gives out jobs in his company is Sabri, someone he knows back from his neighborhood. His old friend Yavuz and his ex-girlfriend Sabahat is married, and now they have a daughter. Hasan delivers the truck to the company and goes to visit Yavuz in his home, years after he last saw him. Sabahat and her daughter Ayşe are home. Sabahat is surprised by Hasan's visit but she invites him in. Kadir asks about her well-being. Yavuz is crippled after an accident, his foot injured. After a short while, Yavuz comes home too. They hug each other. In the evening, at a table set in the garden they drink alcohol and eat. Sabahat goes out of the house with over the top make-up and fancy clothes. Hasan is taken aback but Yavuz shrugs it off and advises Hasan: "Don't mind it", going back to his drinking. Sabahat comes back home late at night. She lets on that she is angry, asking Hasan "Why did you come back?"

Before the others wake up, Hasan goes out and visits his mother's grave, leaving flowers. Then he goes to the company he works in. They talk business with Sabri. He is scheduled to depart the next morning to deliver to Diyarbakir. Yavuz comes to the company grounds to find him. When Sabri sees that Yavuz is waiting for him outside, he warns Hasan to stay away from Yavuz.

The shady dealings of Yavuz Hasan and Yavuz go to a beer house. Yavuz meets a guy there. He is involved in a criminal deal. Then he takes Hasan to a tavern. After a while he tells Hasan to wait and leaves. He comes back with a bag full of money. Soon after two men arrive. Yavuz runs away, the men chase after him. Hasan runs out the door to catch them but cannot see anyone on the street. He takes the bag and leaves the tavern. In gloomy and uncanny streets, he searches for Yavuz while trying to find his way. In the morning, after waiting at the truck for a little more, he opens the bag. He takes the money inside and goes to Yavuz's house with the bag. The two men who chased after Yavuz are at home, pressuring Sabahat into telling where Yavuz is. When Hasan arrives, they fight with him too. When the opportunity comes, Sabahat, Ayşe and Hasan escape. Hasan offers to take them someplace safe, to Sabahat's aunt in Mardin. Sabahat seems reluctant to accept but she has no other choice. They hit the road.

The road All throughout the journey, Sabahat complains about Yavuz and his actions. She reveals that they are about to break up. Hasan calls the company on a road stop. The men after Yavuz has come to the company, asking after Yavuz and Hasan. Hasan suspects that they have learned where they are heading. They go back on the road. Sabahat asks Hasan to drop them off in Ankara. Hasan refuses. They argue. Sabahat says that she will go on living as a sex worker in Ankara. She takes her daughter and gets out of the truck, Hasan follows them. Sabahat tells Hasan that she is ashamed, that's why she does not want to go to Mardin. Sabahat and Ayşe get back in the truck. They go back on the road again. Hasan notices that a car is following them. He stops, takes out the gun that he took from the men in Yavuz's house and shows it to the men in the car. Back to road again, with the car following them. It's evening and they stop to eat. The men follow them into the diner. Hasan approaches them and tries to tell them the situation but they refuse to listen. The men think that they are all in on it alongside Yavuz, trying to swindle them. In the morning, they resume their journey. At a stop for tea, Sabahat enters a toilet but goes around them while the men are waiting for them to get out and she slashes one of the tires of their car. They get on the truck and hide behind a building in a village. The men are in pursuit after changing their tire. After they pass them by, Hasan and the others go back on the road. When Ayşe gets road sick, they stop by a river. Hasan takes photos of them with a Polaroid. Sabahat refuses to take the photos, saying that she does not want anything that would remind her of the past. Hasan reminds her of the times they were lovers, their clandestine meetings. While Sabahat tells him of the things that Yavuz did. Yavuz had crashed the car he was driving while drunk, which had resulted in the death of Sabahat's father. After that he had taken over her father's store but had run it to the ground. He had swindled everyone around them but leaving Sabahat and her daughter hungry anyway. He had also taken his share from Sabahat's earnings as a sex worker. During this telling, the two men find them on their way back. The chase continues. When they stop, Hasan gives Sabahat the money he took from Yavuz's bag. Sabahat gets angry because they did not give the money to the men to get rid of them. At night, Sabahat gets out of the room they stay in and goes to the truck, to Hasan. They make love.

The escape of Sabahat When Hasan wakes up, Sabahat is gone. He takes Ayşe from their room. During this, Sabahat calls the management of the boardinghouse and talks with Hasan. She asks him to take Ayşe to her aunt. Escaping from under the noses of the men searching for them, Hasan and Ayşe get in another truck and arrive at the city searching for Sabahat. But they cannot find her and turn back. The men pursuing them are gone but they have entered the truck and turned everything upside down in their search for the money. With Ayşe alongside him, Hasan travels to Mardin. In Mardin, he leaves Ayşe with Sabahat's aunt and goes on his way.

The money of Yavuz In Diyarbakır, he delivers the truck to the company. While leaving the company offices, Yavuz is there on a corner waiting for him to come out. He asks Hasan for his money. He does not care one bit for Sabahat or Ayşe. Hasan gives him the money. While Yavuz is walking away, the two men reappears yet again. They stab Yavuz and kill him. Hasan runs for help but they wound him. When Hasan is discharged from the hospital, he goes to Mardin, takes Ayşe with him. They go back on the road.

Themes

Poverty. In countries where poverty and income inequality are rampant, poverty is among the prevalent themes. It is also frequently taken up in Turkish cinema. There are many films produced during the Yeşilçam period when the struggle between the rich and the poor was an oft-repeated subject. The idea that in the end, the poor lived a happier life against all odds or the rich and the evil ones would be the ones vanquished in the end was persistently communicated. *Amansız Yol* is among the films that breaks this mold, offering a realistic representation of what it means to live in poverty. In the stories of the three main characters of the film, we see that poverty, the drive to make money and live better, and the desperation resulting from their failures are the main elements that shape their lives. Hasan had gone to Germany in order to make money and make a better life for Sabahat and himself back at home. But when things had not gone his way, he had gotten mixed up in illegal dealings and because of that he had been arrested and done prison time. Yavuz, with his dubious character qualities had neither succeeded in football, nor had he been able to hold a job, attempting to make money through illegal means. And Sabahat had been doing sex work in order to earn a living for her family. All three characters may be defined as lumpen, unqualified people. Hasan is more resilient compared to the others because of what he had gone through in Germany. He tries to earn a living by driving trucks. The lives of these three characters once more intersect years later because of money.

The Road The metaphorical content of the road is diverse and rich, with its uncertain, obscure connotations, its narrative role in searching for something, the dangers it represents, and its ambiguity where separation, and the hope for meeting again come together. It is one of the main themes in Ömer Kavur films. Other elements of the theme are discovering oneself, coming to terms with oneself, and making contact with other worlds. *Amansız Yol* (Desperate Road) underlines this theme with its name. It is also a story that actually takes place on the road. Characters make a journey from Edirne to Mardin, from Mardin to Diyarbakır. This long road takes each of their lives towards unexpected horizons. Yavuz is murdered. Sabahat escapes and is lost before arriving at Mardin. Hasan completes the journey and with the hope of finding Sabahat, takes her daughter Ayşe with him and begins the journey back home. On the road, we also become witnesses to some reckonings. Sabahat and Hasan may not be able to recover what they have lost in the past but there is also a tantalizing possibility for something new to be born. Hasan does not reveal what he went through before he came to Turkey but the past offenses are forgiven. Sabahat admits that her feelings are still alive. While Hasan, in making up a fairy tale for Ayşe, maybe tells his story for the first time, sharing some of his burden. On the other hand, all along the road they try to escape the men chasing the money that Yavuz stole from them. The two men pursue them to Diyarbakır.

Shame This theme becomes apparent throughout the film, especially in the actions of Hasan and Sabahat, in their choices and what they say. In the course of the film, Hasan feels the shame of leaving Sabahat behind, never calling back, ending up prison because he had done things that does not become his personality. Even though he recognizes Sabahat's unhappiness, that she is hurt, he cannot talk about his past. And Sabahat considers herself so "dirty" because of what she does for money, she feels so ashamed of this that she does not want to meet her family "like this" and escapes, even leaving her

daughter behind. That both of them are unable to cope with these feelings of shame and guilt, and the unbearable things that they went through, may be the reason why the opportunity for them to get back together is lost in this time of their lives. And they are so battered, and downtrodden that they know nothing would be like before. This is most evident in the way Sabahat refuses to talk about the good old days. Hasan wants to remind her about their shared memories, but Sabahat rejects this offer, saying: "I forgot all of them."

Character Analysis

Hasan Hasan is a thirty something, essentially honest, sensitive, observant, calm and careful man. He had gone to Germany years before, but had not been able to find a suitable job, thereby getting involved in crime, then getting caught and doing time for years. Because he is ashamed, he had never told this to anyone. He comes back to Turkey as a truck driver. He is trying to earn a living through legitimate means.

Sensitive. Hasan goes to Yavuz's house the day he disappears, eluding the men that he committed crimes with. The men have come home. They are pressuring Sabahat into telling where Yavuz is hiding. Hasan fights with the men, takes Sabahat and her daughter away from there. He takes them to go hide in Mardin with Sabahat's aunt. They get on the road together. Hasan has come back to Turkey in order to make an honest living. Rather than leaving his ex-girlfriend Sabahat and her daughter in the hands of dangerous men, he tries to rescue them. This choice is informed both by his sensitive character and his feelings of guilt in leaving Sabahat behind by going to Germany.

After Yavuz is killed, and Sabahat disappears, he cannot bear to leave Ayşe with Sabahat's old aunt. He goes to Mardin and takes Ayşe with him. He promises the child to search and find Sabahat together.

Hasan has not forgotten the beautiful relationship that he had with Sabahat in the past. Before she abandons her daughter and escapes, Sabahat leaves the boardinghouse in the road stop and goes to Hasan, to his truck. Hasan responds to Sabahat's passion. They make love.

When Yavuz escapes the men breaking into the tavern Hasan follows him because of his urge to help his old friend. He searches for Yavuz in dark streets. After he gives Yavuz the money in Diyarbakır, the men following them show up again. Yavuz runs away. Hasan goes after them to help his friend, even after all the horrible things Yavuz did. In a blind alley, the men who corner Yavuz and kill him also stab and wound him.

Honest. Hasan takes the money in the bag with him that Yavuz left behind while escaping. However, he wants to give the money to Sabahat, so that she can make a new life for herself. Sabahat refuses the money. In the end, he delivers it to Yavuz in Diyarbakır, waiting for Hasan.

Calm. Hasan observes Sabahat's work, Yavuz's brazen indifference towards her situation, the man Yavuz meets with in the alehouse, the way he escapes from them in the tavern, their pursuit by the men after Yavuz throughout their time on the road, Sabahat's words and her moods carefully and instead of reacting without thinking to all these events around him, he acts in a calm and careful manner.

Yavuz In his thirties, a drunkard who was never able to hold on to a job, ambitious, indifferent, selfish, and an immoral person. He had been responsible for the death of Sabahat's father while drunk driving, also injuring his leg and ending his football career.

Selfish. Yavuz is so selfish that he does not think, or if he thinks, does not care what happens to Sabahat or Ayşe when he swindles the men he deals with and escapes. The first thing that he asks Hasan when he finds him in Diyarbakır is not his daughter or his wife, but the money he stole.

Indifferent. Yavuz is not making any money so its up to Sabahat to earn a living for their family. Sabahat is doing sex work in order to accomplish this. Yavuz is not bothered by this. On the contrary, he dips into the money that Sabahat earns.

There is no love between Sabahat and him, or it has withered away. He does not care what Sabahat wants, expects, if she is happy or not, or how Ayşe is raised. He admits to Hasan that they are about to get a divorce. There is no hint of regret in his behaviors over being the cause of the death of Sabahat's father.

Immoral. That he is not bothered by his wife being a sex worker, that he does not make a living through honest ways, that even in his illegal dealings he breaks his promises to the men he does business with, that he leaves his family behind in danger, that he tries to involve his old friend Hasan into his illegal businesses, putting him in danger, demonstrates that Yavuz is thoroughly immoral.

Sabahat In her early thirties, married with children. A person who has been let down by his youthful love affair Hasan and his husband Yavuz, unhappy, fragile, powerless, lacking in self-confidence.

Unhappy. Hasan has gone to Germany to make money but while he was trying to find a job, unable to find one, he has committed crimes and gone into prison, Hasan has never called Sabahat, and has never told about his past because he was ashamed. But Sabahat thinks that Hasan had abandoned him, had forgotten about him. She has no profession. When Hasan did not come back, she marries Yavuz and has children from him but Yavuz's indifference, his lack of compassion, and his selfishness has made her unhappy. So much unhappy that she does not even want to remember the good days of her past.

Lack of self-confidence. Sabahat is making a living through sex work. But she is unable to change her whole life and turn back to his family and Hasan because she feels too ashamed, and she is unable to cope with her shame. Because she thinks Hasan abandoned him and she had an unhappy marriage, she has lost all confidence in people. Leaving Ayşe behind and escaping, unable to get over her shame about her sex work, feeling unhappy, insecure and disappointed all the time are her weakest qualities.



Two friends reunite years later. But a lot has changed.



Sabahat does not want to go back to her relatives; she is ashamed of herself.



Hasan wants to take his old lover Sabahat and her daughter to someplace safe.



It is not going to be easy to get rid of the gang members.



Sabahat and Hasan has not forgotten each other. Even for a night, they get back together.



Hasan promises Ayşe that they would find her mother: "We will definitely find her!" They get back on the road in search of Sabahat.



The end of Yavuz who cares about nothing but money.



The road takes these three characters into different destinations.