

Frenzy (2015) Emin Alper

Overview

Political and social themes are used in this film just as in Alper's other films. Tension and paranoia are other themes which are explored in *Frenzy*. Alper wanted to point out how the political atmosphere in which we all live today prevents us from trusting each other and makes people paranoid and how this feeling drives us to madness from time to time. Alper has stated that his first and second movies are stories about men because of the violence in them; he thinks that if there is violence, that is because of toxic masculinity and men being immature in order to try to prove their manhood.

Cinematic Language

Alper has said that he never worked with the same art director twice, but his movies are not drastically different in that sense. Although we can argue that the colour palette in *Frenzy* is darker than in his other films, we can also say that he often uses muted tones in his movies. He cared a lot about the locations for the shooting of *Frenzy*. In this film, the locations are used to show the environment which the characters inhabit more precisely in order to develop the story's visual language. He thinks that location is one of key elements for creating atmosphere, and that is why in *Frenzy* he uses a lot of establishing shots between scenes. When the characters are walking, he places a tracking camera behind them which follows them so that the audience feel as if they are walking behind them like members of the group. Sometimes, mystery is created by not showing too much detail, so some scenes in the film seem as if they belong to a thriller film. Alper always gives a lot of attention to casting, and this is especially the case in *Frenzy*. His dialogs are very natural and use accents; every character speaks with a different accent in *Frenzy* because he wants to keep the location and the characters' ethnicities unknown for the audience. That is why *Frenzy* creates a feeling in the audience that the story is timeless and universal and that the events depicted might be from past, the present or the future. Alper uses the irony which is created by this timelessness: sometimes characters are unaware of particular situations or threats or truths, but the audience knows the truth behind them. This technique is used to evoke uncomfortable feelings for the audience.

Characters

- Kadir:* A middle-aged man who works for the state in disguise.
Ahmet: Kadir's youngest brother, he is in his late twenties.
Meral: Ali's wife and a friend of the two brothers.
Ali: Meral's husband and also a friend of the brothers.
Hamza: A middle-aged man who is Kadir's boss.

Summary

The story takes place in dystopian Istanbul where political violence is taking its toll on the city. With consistent bombings, police and military threats and terror attacks, people live with constant fear and paranoia. Kadir is a middle-aged man who has spent his last twenty years behind bars. He has been released on parole but is required to do state service. He is employed as a garbage collector, but this is a disguise because his actual responsibility is to recognize bomb-making equipment. He has been trained for his new job, enabling him to identify potential threats. He goes back to his old neighbourhood where he meets his younger brother for the first time in many years. His younger brother Ahmet also works for the city and his job is to shoot stray dogs. He is having a hard time, especially after being abandoned by his wife who also took their children with her. Although Kadir tries to form a relationship with his brother, Ahmet is unwilling to bond and he keeps his distance. Ahmet's unwillingness deepens Kadir's paranoia: for him, everyone else is a suspect.

Story

The environment of the film Frenzy's political environment is crucial for understanding the theme and the story of the film. It is disordered and bomb attacks are taking place in the city. For that reason, the police want to hire a group of people to search for any material which could be used for making bombs and Kadir is one of the people hired for this job.

Finding his brother When he goes to the neighbourhood where he will work, Kadir finds his brother Ahmet's house; he has not seen Ahmet since the day he was imprisoned. Ahmet helps Kadir to rent a house; his friends Ali and his wife Meral rent their house to Kadir. Kadir wants to reconnect with his younger brother and often goes to his home to visit him, but he senses that something is wrong with Ahmet.

Attraction Meral So Kadir rents a room from his brother's friends Ali and Meral, a friendly and welcoming couple. Kadir develops an attraction towards his friendly yet mysterious neighbour Meral. Other than his brother, Ali and Meral are his only friends whom he trusts. For him, everybody else in the neighbourhood are suspects. However Kadir's world turns upside down when he discovers that his trusted friends are enemies of state. Meral and Ali suddenly disappear and leave Kadir in a state of confusion and paranoia. He doesn't immediately categorize Meral as an enemy, but thinks of her as someone he can save. While he is trying to deal with his problems, he constantly attempts to keep in touch with his brother but he loses contact with him.

Ahmet's job and problem His brother Ahmet is depressed, mentally unstable. His job is to kill stray dogs by shooting them with his shotgun and then burying their bodies. One day he misses a shot, injuring a dog's front paw. The dog runs away. Ahmet later finds the dog, but rather than killing it he takes the dog home with him and takes care of it. Eventually the dog's wounded paw heals but Ahmet has bonded with it so much that he is not willing to let the dog go; he names it Coni. In fact he gets very worried when the dog runs away. Ironically, when the dog returns he beats it in his anger. He isolates himself from the outside world, hiding in his home. He trusts nobody, not even his own brother. From that point on, he starts hiding in his house, he ignores Kadir's visits and also hides himself from him. All the time, bomb attacks are occurring in the city.

Humiliation Kadir's boss Hamza calls Kadir over and humiliates him in front of two other police officers. He makes fun of a report which Kadir has prepared and demands that he work harder. On the other hand, Ahmet also starts to worry and becomes paranoid because he could get into trouble if it is found that he is looking after a dog. Because Ahmet is hiding at home and ignoring Kadir's visits, a disconnection starts to grow between the brothers. The city is now under a blockade and there is constant tension.

Increased paranoia Now both of the brothers are paranoid, confusing their enemies with their friends and mixing reality with fantasy. Kadir has been betrayed by his friends and abandoned by his brother and he makes up conspiracy theories. He shares his theory with Hamza, telling him that Meral and Ali are in Ahmet's house, holding Ahmet hostage. The police burst into Ahmet's house and Ahmet thinks that they have come for the dog. Ahmet and his dog die in the raid. The film ends with people from the neighbourhood, including Meral and Ali, executing Kadir in a dream-like sequence.

Ending At the end of the story, Kadir enters Ali's home and there are many people there. They direct him to a street where his other brother Veli lives, who has been missing and is considered by the police to be the leader of the terrorist organization. After Veli looks deeply into his brother's eyes, a man holds a gun to Kadir's head. With this ending, Alper wanted to leave the end to the perception of the audience; he said that this final scene could be either a dream of Kadir or a real event which actually took place.

Themes

Paranoia Both of the main characters, Ahmet and Kadir, become increasingly paranoid during the film. The whole story is centered around mistrust and conspiracy. Their ever-growing suspicion drives them insane to the point where they lose everything, even their lives. The film uses paranoia to play with the perception of reality. Characters perceive their allies as threats and their enemies as allies.

Madness Paranoia later leads to madness. As the line between fantasy and reality blurs, hallucinations occur. Ahmet isolates himself out of fear, not even trusting his brother. Kadir gets so confused and paranoid to the point that he loses his sense of reality. For example, he thinks that he can hear the voices of Meral and Ali coming from Ahmet's house. The film tells the story of two brothers who both lose their identity and their mind.

Violence The film takes place in dystopian Turkey where we witness revolutionary violence pitted against state violence. The film does not pitch one against the other but accepts them as facts and argues that those themes might well happen. In fact, they did happen in the same year that the film came out. Unfortunately, on the same day that Emin Alper received an invitation to the Venice Film Festival, the Suruç massacre happened. Terrorist attacks and bombings are a big element of the story. The main character's job is to find potential attackers. During the film, we see glimpses on television of violence and fear taking over the city. There is cruelty towards animals and many dogs are killed on screen; in one scene, Hamza beats up Kadir.

Tragedy The whole story is quite tragic; there is no happy ending for anyone. Every character in the film lives and dies in fear and misery. The whole city and the whole country are depicted as suffering. At one point, Kadir says "It wasn't like that 20 years ago. At the time, we had trouble finding bread, now people are struggling for their life". During the film, both Kadir and Ahmet experience the loss of their loved ones, they deal with mental problems, they live in poor conditions, they are betrayed, they have horrible jobs and co-workers, they are alone, they don't know who to trust and they live in constant fear. Sadly almost nothing good happens to them but that is why it is a story worth telling.

Analysis of the Characters

Kadir Kadir is a middle-age man with salt-and-pepper hair and a beard. His accent is most probably a middle-Aegean accent (Alper said that he chose that accent because it would create less controversy than other accents might). He lives in İstanbul and comes from a poor family. He has two brothers, Ahmet and Veli. According to him, Veli went missing about ten years earlier but he doesn't know why. He has started to work for the police but although he does his job well, he is humiliated by his superior. He has a secret desire for Meral. He is over-involved with his job and becomes obsessed with finding the perpetrator of the bomb attacks. For that reason, he is suspicious of almost everybody and everything. He is actually a good person and is trying to be involved in his brother's life. He has guilty feelings about leaving his brother at a young age and he acts very protectively towards him. He has a paranoid belief that Ahmet is having an affair with Meral, whom he desires secretly.

Confusion Kadir was arrested at some point in the past life and has spent twenty years behind bars. Because of this, he is not familiar with the outside world, especially the new standard of life caused by constant terrorist attacks. Kadir's whole life changes when he is released on parole: he is suddenly thrust into a world which he doesn't understand.

The need to belong After being released, Kadir goes to find his younger and depressed brother. He moves to the same neighbourhood and rents a room from Meral and Ali and they become good friends. Kadir is a lonely man, he just wants companionship; he wants to feel a sense of belonging. He suffers from not having an identity. Kadir wants to be aware of his surroundings both in his new job (finding terrorists and bomb-making equipment) and for himself. He has some ideals. He wants to be a big brother figure to Ahmet but his brother is not interested. He probably wants his new friend Meral for himself. Meral is the only woman he knows and trusts. He imagines that Meral might be seeing Ahmet so he sees Ahmet as a rival as well.

Madness Meral and Ali's betrayal is a turning point for Kadir. He hesitates to believe that they are enemies of the state, especially Meral. His character is shaped by his gender; he fantasises about saving Meral as if she is weak and needy. He wants to be good at his job; he writes reports about his suspicions even though he wasn't asked to do so. At first Hamza, his boss, congratulates him on his work and tells him that he is hopeful for his future work. But later in the film, Hamza knocks him down. He and his co-workers insult Kadir, making fun of his reports and his paranoid assumptions. They act as if he is a mad man, which he actually is.

Loss of power Kadir wants to be appreciated as a brother, friend, worker and in general as a good employee. But he loses control of his life. He is abandoned by both of his brothers. His trusted friend and the woman whom he fancies betray him. He becomes bad at his job and his colleagues pity him.

Paranoia Over time, his character becomes overly paranoid and he loses himself in illusions and madness takes its toll. He loses his sense of reality and becomes obsessed by his conspiracy theories. He thinks that his brother is in danger but in an attempt to save his brother he causes his death and his brother is labelled as a terrorist. Ultimately, Kadir messes up everything. At the end of the film we are left with a deeply damaged man who lost all the sense and meaning of life.

Ahmet Ahmet is in his late twenties. He is an average looking man with dark hair and dark eyes. He is Kadir's youngest brother; he was around seven years old when Kadir was arrested. His other brother Veli went missing when Ahmet was a teenager. He is poor and he works as a dog killer for the city. He lives in the outskirts of Istanbul.

Loneliness Ahmet has been abandoned by his wife and this has really upset him. He works for a municipal unit which is responsible for culling stray dogs. Since Kadir and Veli left him, he has grown up alone. He is frustrated as his loneliness increases and that makes him quite introverted and he is emotionally unstable. He does not feel close to Kadir. He is a very compassionate man but tries to look as if he is not. He is afraid of authority and the fear of being fired from his job because of the dog which he looks after drags him into paranoia. One day, after twenty years of imprisonment, his brother Kadir rings his doorbell. After all those years, he can't even recognize his own brother. Despite Kadir's efforts, Ahmet is not interested in bonding with him. We learn that he is married with children but that his wife has abandoned him - she took the kids with her and disappeared. He is quite miserable and even suicidal at such a young age. He isolates himself in his house and tries to ignore people around him.

Emotional Ahmet's job is to kill stray dogs by shooting them. One day he misses a target and shoots a dog in the paw without killing it. Later, he hears the same dog whimpering and he takes it home with him. He is planning to release the dog after the wound has healed, but over time he begins to like his new companion and even gives him a name, 'Coni'. He hides the dog in his house. He doesn't trust anyone so he never shows his new friend to anyone, not even his brother. One day, Coni runs away. Ahmet gets very agitated and searches for him in fear. Later, when Coni returns home, Ahmet is so angry that he hits the dog. He is in a horrible mind-set. Everyone in his life has left him – his brothers, his wife and his children. He is all alone and the only thing that keeps him going now is Coni.

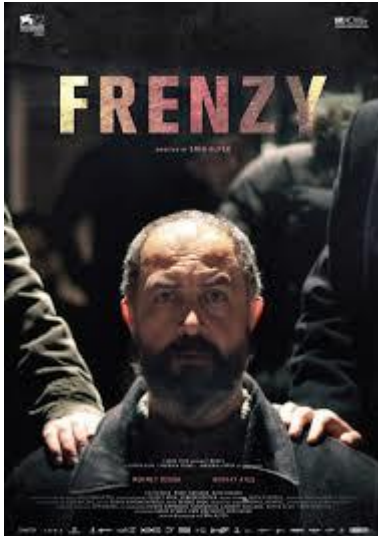
The need to belong Ahmet has a bond with Coni but the real reason for him to keep Coni alive is not because he just wants to protect a dog's life, it is because it is now his reason to live. Their whole relationship has become a desperate attempt to keep himself alive. If Coni is gone, then there is nothing left for him to keep going. With that mentally unstable mind, he beats the dog as a release for his emotions. That is why he becomes over-protective of the dog, taking several precautions to keep him safe. He completely isolates himself, which leads to Kadir's conspiracy theories which ultimately kill both Ahmet and Coni.

Meral Meral is a beautiful young woman. She has blue eyes and dark hair and a charming and friendly personality. She is married to Ali. The couple are good friends with Ahmet. As soon as Kadir meets her, it is clear that he fancies her. Meral is the only female character in the film; she is the object of desire. Her main role is to turn Kadir's world upside down: she is the main reason for his paranoia.

Friendliness Meral's friendliness and warm personality pull Kadir closer to her. She is someone who can fulfil his needs. She takes care of him when he burns his hand, gives him food, plays games with him. She keeps him company and she is trustworthy. She is also very desirable, so he wants to be with Meral. But Meral is welcoming to every man around her. We don't know what is on her mind. Her noodle soup and her red hair strands are two items which get into Ahmet's house, and that is enough to make Kadir suspicious of their relationship.

An unfathomable person Halfway through the film, Meral and Ali suddenly disappear. It turns out that they are part of the terrorist group. This affects Kadir excessively. Her sudden character shift is

one of the turning points in the film. At the end of the film, Meral is one of the people watching Kadir's execution.



Film poster for *Frenzy*



Meral and Kadir



Ahmet with dogs