

A Broken Love Story / Kırık Bir Aşk Hikayesi 1981

Ö. Kavur

Overview

Kırık Bir Aşk Hikayesi is a film where some of Ömer Kavur's favorite themes can be found. Lack of love between people, rural life, and alienation are some of the concepts that the film delves into, alongside another important theme of the film, society's perspectives on women.

Ömer Kavur, in his films such as *Yatık Emine*, *Kırık Bir Aşk Hikayesi*, *Amansız Yol*, and *Kördüğüm* have dealt with the several ways violence is inflicted on women, and the freedom of women to make their own choices, their freedom to live their sexuality and love on their own terms. In these films, it is possible to see reflections of the women's emancipation struggles and the corresponding social movements in Turkey. *Kırık Bir Aşk Hikayesi* is arguably a much better film compared to Yeşilçam period films in terms of its representation of the relation between the main woman protagonist and society, and in terms of how it discusses this relation in much more productive and meaningful ways.

The film can also be considered as a multidimensional discussion of social life and social relations in rural geographies of Turkey. From both sociological and psychological perspectives, the film offers analyses on rural life and its male-dominant communities, its economic structures, its mundane uniformity, and its moral contradictions.

Cinematic Narration

It's important to keep in mind that *Kırık Bir Aşk Hikayesi* was limited by the tools, editing and processing technologies available in Turkey in 80's. In spite of all these limitations, the film impresses with its clean and striking cinematic language, its mise-en-scène and direction of actors.

Characters

- Aysel* 36 years old. Literature teacher.
Fuat 30 years old. The son of a notable family of the town.
Yavuz In his 30s. Belgin's big brother, Recep's son.
Bedri In his 40s. Art teacher.
Belgin In her 20s. Recep's daughter.
Recep In his 50s. Factory owner. Among the rich of the town.

Synopsis

Appointed to a small seaside town as a teacher, Aysel meets Fuat at an engagement celebration that she went at the insistence of her colleague art teacher Bedri. Engaged with the daughter of a rich family of the town under the pressure of his family, Fuat is taken with Aysel's beauty and her confident demeanor. After a while they embark on a romance. When this relationship is noticed around town, both come under fire. Fuat appears ready to face up to anything. However, when Aysel witnesses Fuat's fight with Yavuz, the brother of his fiancée and his childhood friend, she realizes that Fuat would not be able to leave, that he would not be able to change the life preordained for him and she leaves the town.

The Plot

The arrival of Aysel Aysel comes to the town to begin her job as a literature teacher in the high-school. While she looks for the place she will be staying, Fuat leaves a building and gets in his car. They do not notice each other. Aysel goes to the school and introduces herself to the principle. The principle takes her to the house that the previous teacher vacated. Aysel likes the house, decides to rent it.

Aysel teaches a class. When the class is over, she goes to the teacher's lounge and meets the other teachers. The art teacher Mr. Bedri complains about the monotony of life in the town.

Fuat's engagement Fuat, with his brother-in-law Yavuz, goes to a tavern where a belly dancer entertains. Yavuz is very drunk. He gets up and dances with the belly dancer. Fuat is going to be engaged with Yavuz's sister Belgin soon.

Fuat's home. His mother, his big sister and her husband talk about the jewelry they will be gifting Belgin in the engagement. Fuat's mother proposes to gift a brooch belonging a family elder. We learn that during this period, the family do not have enough money to purchase another gift.

Art teacher Mr. Bedri invites Aysel to the engagement. They go together. Fuat is taken with Aysel. When he finds a chance, he asks her to dance. Belgin notices Fuat's interest in Aysel.

Belgin's father Mr. Recep proposes to Fuat to merge his old workshop with his factory, and for Fuat to take over the business of managing the factory. Fuat declines. Fuat's sister gets angry with him for refusing the offer, reminding him that they are not rich anymore. Fuat wants to live by his own earnings.

Fuat's Interest After a school day, Bedri invites Aysel to drink tea in his home. They listen to music, talk about the town and life. The women in the town start to gossip about the two of them.

Another day, Fuat sees Aysel in the town market, he watches her from afar. Just then Belgin gets out of a shop and approaches Fuat. They have a fight over Belgin's dress. Belgin returns home, unhappy. She reprimands her mother, demanding to know why would they marry her to Fuat even though they do not love each other.

Fuat calls the school and talks with Aysel, asks her to meet him. Aysel turns a cold shoulder. During an official state parade, Fuat watches Aysel, walking with students through the main street of the town.

Two unhappy men Bedri and Fuat go fishing. Fuat talks about how he cannot love anyone, how no one understands him, that he does not even know why he is marrying Belgin. The next evening Bedri sails out to the sea by himself and commits suicide. In the funeral, Aysel is crying. Fuat approaches and consoles her. After the funeral they go together to Aysel's house. Aysel falls asleep on the coach. When she wakes up, Fuat asks to leave, saying that he wants to get together again.

The first meeting Fuat and Aysel first go to Bedri's grave, they leave flowers, then they eat at a restaurant and go to a hotel. Aysel is a little nervous. Soon after they enter the room, Aysel quickly leaves and runs away from the hotel. Fuat follows after her. They walk hand in hand in on the shore. It starts to rain. They shelter in an old building. Fuat takes her to a family house they no longer use. He tells Aysel that he loves her. They go to Aysel's house and eat dinner. Both of them are happy.

Dinner at Yavuz's house. His wife is pregnant and Yavuz has brought the family together because he wants to break the good news and celebrate it at the same time. Fuat is constantly looking at his watch. At this time Aysel has prepared the dinner table, waiting for Fuat. Fuat arrives at a late hour but the lights are out in Aysel's house. He takes off his engagement ring and throws it away.

They meet the next day. Aysel is angry, they fight. Fuat slaps Aysel and she falls down. She does not accept Fuat's help and stands up on her own.

His mother's support Fuat comes to the coffee house, Yavuz is there. He notices that Fuat is unhappy. When his mother sees that Fuat is worried, she supports her son, saying: "Do whatever is right for you". Fuat waits in front of Aysel's house. They get back together. They walk on the shore. Aysel is worried about being in a relationship while also living in the town. Fuat proposes to her: "Let's get married." They make love in the unused summer house of Fuat's family.

Fuat goes to Mr. Recep and tells him that he cannot marry Belgin. Recep talks about the situation with his wife, asks her to deal with the problem.

Aysel in the crosshairs In the teacher's lounge, one of the woman teachers start talking about Aysel, about her immorality. Another teacher reproaches her for being a gossip, and silences her.

Fuat's sister catches up to Aysel on the street, blames her for being loose.

Aysel goes to Fuat and tells him about the situation. Fuat gets angry, forces her into a coach pulled by horses. Together on the coach, they prance around the town for everyone to see.

Recep asks Fuat to pay back the money he borrowed from him.

Fuat takes Aysel to a crowded restaurant in town. Yavuz arrives and calls him out, insults him, punches him. Aysel goes outside and tries to break them up. Yavuz hits Aysel too. The fight intensifies. Yavuz starts crying, Fuat hugs him. Aysel gets away from there.

The goodbye Fuat and Aysel meet up in the vacant, historic building they sheltered from the rain in their first meeting. Aysel says her goodbyes and does not allow Fuat to say anything. Fuat does not stop her.

Fuat and Belgin get married. In the night of the wedding, Aysel leaves town. Fuat is unhappy.

Ten years have passed. While Aysel is travelling to the city where she is newly appointed, she calls Fuat from the bus stop near the town. Fuat comes. In this very short meeting, it is apparent that they have not forgotten about each other.

Fuat's home. They have two children. Fuat comes home. He is unhappy, enters into his study. He looks at the photograph taken years before with Aysel, at their first meeting.

Themes

Rural life. The story is located in a town by the shore. In such an environment, human relationships are woven with repeating patterns. More than anonymous interactions, there are face-to-face relations. People know each other. The main focus of small talk is about the lives of others. Marriages are often between the children of families who know each other, who are educationally, financially and culturally the equivalent of each other. While women usually spend their times at home, men are free to have fun and go about as they like. There is nothing in this situation that contradicts with the moral norms of society. Those who come to these towns from the outside are state officials such as doctors, district governors, and teachers. No matter how long they live there, these people always remain outsiders. Lives and relationships do not change much neither in short term nor in long. Compared to big cities, a more traditional and conservative moral understanding holds sway. The story world of *Kırık Bir Aşk Hikayesi* is constructed within a framework that shows all these qualities. Recep wants to marry her daughter to another notable family's son, Fuat. The goal of adding Fuat's family's olive farms and workshops to his own wealth is included in this wedding plan. The main subject of gossip is the wealth of families, their children and the outsiders. Perspectives of people on marriage and gender roles, especially the outlook of the two families, are traditional and conservative. As someone coming from outside the town, Bedri speaks about the monotony, the entrenched ideology, and how those who cannot internalize these are destined to be alone. As another outsider, Aysel blames the people of the town of cowardice while he criticizes Fuat.

The outsider. In communities where traditional relationships hold sway, those who come from the outside, especially from the big cities, and those who don't accept the behaviors, and the ideas endorsed by that community are perceived as outsiders. "The outsider" is a threat to the traditional community. Their values and their relationships can potentially change or disrupt the established order. As the two outsiders of the film, Bedri and Aysel represent the different aspects of this theme. Against all the relationships that does not mean anything to him, against all the mundanity of life in the town, Bedri keeps to himself and does not rail against anything. As someone coming from Istanbul, Aysel wants to live according to her own ideas of right and wrong but soon realizes that she cannot live in the town this way. For both of them, the solution is finally running away. In the end, the traditional, conservative community either grinds down or casts out the outsider.

Lack of affection. Inside the pre-determined, limited, diversity averse web of relationships and ways of life in rural towns, the importance of concepts such as love and affections diminishes. Love, which may also come to mean freedom, may threaten the traditional values. Therefore marriage is arranged by the elders of the family according to their ideas and it is expected that the family and the material accumulations of the family is preserved, which makes love and affection mostly irrelevant. People play the roles ascribed to them, their emotions and their existential search for meaning are not considered. In *Kırık Bir Aşk Hikayesi*, neither Belgin nor Fuat can understand why they are forced to marry. Even though they both realize that they do not love one another. When they talk about this, either justifications are made about the family's future and well-being, or they are offered platitudes about how they will become used to each other and fall in love. As a matter fact, they get married and have two children. When Aysel and Fuat fall in love with each other, their desires and emotions fly in the face of these traditions.

Character Analysis

Aysel Aysel is a 36 years old teacher who has worked in İstanbul for a long time, who seems to be a woman with financial freedom, a powerful woman with her self-confidence intact and the choices of her life made by her. On the other hand, she has weaknesses, and she makes choices that contradicts this brave and powerful aspect of her character. In her decisions as to how she is going to live her life, she cannot behave completely independent from social expectations.

Independent The first moment that we see that Aysel is a highly confident and powerful woman is the scene when she goes to eat at a restaurant for tradespeople where the only customers are men. One of the customers find it strange that she is there, turns and stares at her. Aysel notices that look but she goes on eating. At first, she seems indifferent to Fuat's interest. But before long, just after Bedri's death, even though she knows that Fuat is engaged, she goes out for dinner with him and after that, to a hotel. At the end of the film, she breaks off with Fuat when she realizes that Fuat belongs to that town and to those people who live there. These moments demonstrate that Aysel is a brave woman who knows what she wants and who has confidence in herself.

Contradictions But Aysel also has contradictions; while she appears to be a strong woman, she has weaknesses that does not tally with this profile. At their first meeting, when they go to a hotel room, Aysel is a little nervous. After they enter the room, she runs away from the hotel and goes to the shore. Fuat runs after her and asks what happened. Her escape from the room and her answer to Fuat's question, that "It was too ugly" to stay, shows that she attaches importance to the moral norms of society. She has found it too soon to make love on their first date. It may also be the hotel room, the place for it that she found unbecoming. These attitudes about when and where to experience one's sexuality are learned in the web of social relations. The night when she cooks dinner for Fuat, she gives up waiting for him when he does not show up. The next day when they see each other, she puts her rage into words by turning the subject into plural, saying: "You are all cowards". In these words, we see that she looks down on all of townspeople because she is from İstanbul, and we also see the power of being a free and independent woman. The quarrel gets heated. Fuat hits Aysel and she falls down. Aysel goes away. After a while, Fuat waits for her in front of her house. In this scene, even though Aysel had been a victim of violence, she restarts her relation with Fuat. They make love for the first time.

Fuat A thirty-year-old high-school graduate who has lived all his life in a small town by the sea. He is the son of a family that owns olive groves, who are having financial difficulties because the business in their workshop has deteriorated after their father had died. He has become indifferent to the people in town because of their disingenuous, affectionless behaviors towards each other. He complains about not being able to love anyone. Even though from time to time he acts courageously, he is not strong enough to live his life as he wants to by breaking out of the role deemed appropriate for him. He resorts to violence when he cannot control his rage.

Rebel Fuat is going to marry Belgin because their families want them to and pressure them. He does not care about Belgin and does not have feelings for her. At the night of their engagement, he sees Aysel. Without a care for the families and the townspeople, he dances with her. Calling Aysel in the school, taking her to her house and supporting her after Bedri's funeral, going to the cemetery with her, and taking Aysel to a restaurant and to the hotel are all arguably bold acts for a man who has lived his entire life in that town and who has been newly engaged. Later when his relationship with Aysel is heard around the town he rebels against the pressure coming from both families; in order to clearly show that he loves her, that he would not give up on her, he forces Aysel into a carriage and they prance around town. All these show that even though Fuat is pressured into existing in a traditional community, he has the courage to live a relationship that he would be happy with.

Traditional On the other hand, Fuat is a member of this traditional, male-dominant community. When he gets angry, he resorts to violence. When he walks in the town center, he does not approve of the new dress that Belgin bought and he tries to put pressure on her by harshly reprimanding her, saying: "Where would you wear that?" In another scene, Fuat does not go to Aysel even though he had promised her he would. In the scene where they have a fight on the shore, disappointed and angry because she had been stood up, Aysel blames her and the townspeople for being cowards. Fuat slaps Aysel violently, causing her to fall down.

Angry When Yavuz learns that Fuat has decided to not marry Belgin, Yavuz picks a fight with him. They come to blows. Yavuz starts to cry, Fuat hugs him. At this moment we understand the personal history of Fuat in that town, his friendship with Yavuz since their childhood, and finally that he belongs to that place. His family, friends, and memories are in that town. When Aysel witnesses this fight and "the brotherly" hug after, Aysel leaves Fuat and the town. At their last meeting before she leaves, Fuat does not stop her and says nothing. He gives up because of his ties to the place and also because he does not have any skills, education or material means to live outside of there. One of the reasons people feel tied down to these rural towns is the invisible forces that make them repeat the lives of their parents, especially because the male children are expected to take over the businesses their fathers built. Despite the fact that Fuat would not be able to forget Aysel, he marries Belgin.

On the night of the wedding, at the feast, Fuat has Aysel in his mind. During the wedding, Aysel is about to get on a bus that would take her out of town. Fuat gets out of the building after he dances with Belgin; he looks through the window at the people dancing inside. This image vividly illustrates how Fuat is unable to completely break away from his life in the town, and how he also does not completely belong there.

Yavuz In his thirties. A high-school graduate and a lifelong resident of a seaside town. Married. A typical character from rural geographies who has embraced the values, behaviors and moral contradictions of a male dominant society. He lives a life of ease in his factory inherited from his father, without any real responsibility.

Contradictions Yavuz drinks a lot. Despite being married, he frequents taverns, coffee houses, night clubs, and brothels. In the tavern that he takes Fuat, he gets very drunk and dances with the belly dancer. Being married is not an obstacle for him in having fun any way he likes and being with other women. On the other hand, fundamental functions of traditional society such as being married, having children, are important for Yavuz. When he learns that he is going to be a father, he invites Fuat and his family to his home to celebrate. This contradiction belongs to the society itself more than the character of Yavuz. He is an individual who has grown up within these contradictions.

Emotional When Fuat tells Recep that he would not be marrying Belgin, Yavuz finds him in the restaurant during their dinner with Aysel and he calls him out. They fight. When Aysel tries to separate them, he hits her too. After a while, Yavuz starts to cry. Fuat hugs him. In this scene Yavuz attempts to solve the problem through violence, he shows his anger by acting violently. However, he breaks down crying because he feels that he put Fuat, Belgin, and his family in a difficult situation, because he hit his childhood friend Fuat, or maybe because he feels helpless in the face of Fuat's love. This scene is more reflective of the individual contradictions of the character.

Belgin In her early twenties, a high-school graduate. She has studied in İstanbul. She is the daughter of Recep, and sister of Yavuz. She acts with the confidence of having an economically powerful family and being educated in İstanbul.

Simarik Belgin's family is preparing for the engagement and the wedding. Belgin comes home but says that she will go out again, to hang out with friends who arrived from İstanbul. Although her family thinks she is spoilt, they allow her.

Unloved When they are together, Fuat does not show Belgin any love or intimacy. Belgin notices this too. After their engagement, one day Fuat reprimands Belgin for her dress. Belgin goes back home. She complains to her mother: "Why do you marry me to Fuat? We don't even love each other! ...He doesn't even notice me!"

Even in their wedding, Belgin knows that Fuat is unhappy. Despite that, as with the other people of the town, she does not object to the way of life and the roles she would play in this life that is considered appropriate for her. Belgin would go on repeating her mother's life, her happiness will not matter.

Recep In his fifties. The owner of a big workshop that everyone calls the factory. Among the wealthy of the town. Compared to other characters, Recep is more straightforward and typical. However, as a representative of the power relations in the town and of the self-interested person, he is important.

Two scenes are significant in terms of the power that Recep holds in the town. The first one is the scene after her daughter's engagement, when he offers Fuat to merge the old workshop with his own business and for Fuat to take over the factory. He leverages the financial troubles of Fuat and his

family. In this scene we understand what the marriages in the town are really built upon. This scene also shows Recep's hunger for more power, and how he intends to rule over his son-in-law, making Fuat work for him.

The second important scene is when Fuat tells him that he is not marrying Belgin, when Recep asks Fuat to pay back his debt. Recep attempts to use Fuat's debt as ammunition to show who holds the power, trying to change Fuat's mind.



Fuat and Aysel. First encounter.



Missing their old wealthy life, Fuat's sister pressures Fuat into marrying Belgin. That is how their life would improve.



Bedri, who has sophisticated tastes, complain about not being understood, about the monotony of life in the town.



The main topic of conversation in the town is the lives of others.



Her mother convinces Belgin into marriage who bemoans the fact that Fuat and she is not in love with each other.



When their relationship is revealed, Fuat and Belgin's families try everything to put a stop to it.



For the first time in his life, Fuat says "I love you" to someone.



Belgin's father asks Fuat to pay back his debt immediately. If he wants to get rid of the debt, Fuat has to marry his daughter.



Aysel realizes that Fuat cannot leave the town, cannot change the way of life that is offered to him.



Aysel decides to leave the town. Fuat does not stop her.



In his own wedding, Fuat feels like a stranger who is looking at everything from the outside.



Years later. Fuat, an unhappy, married man with children, is living his ordinary life in the town and he cannot get over Aysel.