

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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The Encounter / Karşılaşma (2003)

Ö. Kavur

Overview

Karşılaşma (The Encounter) is the last film by Ömer Kavur. Just like the main characters of *Karşılaşma*, he was being treated for cancer while shooting the film. Two years after finishing this film, Kavur passed away. This is why the film holds a special and sad place in Kavur's filmography. That the film deals with life, death, fate and happiness makes the film especially important and elegiac in terms of Ömer Kavur's life story.

Karşılaşma and its director Ömer Kavur won several awards from festivals and competitions, chief among them Ankara and Antalya film festivals, and Siyad Awards. Constructed upon a crime story, *Karşılaşma* includes elements of murder, crime and love, and is one of the most pessimistic and somber of the director's films.

Cinematic Narration

Ömer Kavur's stylistic choices of frames that he uses in order to reflect the reactions of the characters in open and closed spaces, and his rhythm of editing is also present in *Karşılaşma*. Film has an effective language that does not draw attention to itself. Shots taken with a handheld camera by Osman, who is one of the characters, takes an important place in the story of the film. Using shots that appear to be taken with a handheld camera or an amateur camera, using these images to disrupt the chronological order of the narrative enriches the visual storytelling and the dramatic impact of the story. Prominent features of *Karşılaşma* are casting and direction of the actors, and the atmosphere created by the locations used. Characters are multi-dimensional and have depth. Ömer Kavur holds an important place in Turkey's cinema history in terms of creating characters, casting and directing actors.

Characters

<i>Sinan</i>	In his forties, an architect, cancer patient.
<i>Mahmut</i>	In his fifties, owner of a gambling house, cancer patient.
<i>Aslı</i>	In his late thirties, hotel manager, Osman's mother.
<i>Osman</i>	18 years old, student, son of Aslı and Mahmut.
<i>Hasan</i>	In his fifties, police commissioner, single.

Synopsis

Sinan meets Mahmut at the hospital that he is having chemotherapy. Mahmut asks Sinan to kill him because he does not want to die of cancer. Sinan refuses. Soon after he learns that Mahmut has been murdered and he goes the island where he has been killed. He meets with the hotel manager Aslı. He forms a friendship with Aslı's son Osman. Aslı and Sinan fall in love with each other. Commissioner Hasan tries to put an end to the relationship because he is also in love with Aslı. The relationship between Osman and Sinan deepens to the extent that Osman starts sharing his secrets with him. Mahmut is actually the father of Osman who has left Aslı before Osman was born. Hasan, who has been trying to get Sinan to leave the island also gets murdered. Sinan learns that it was Osman who killed Mahmut and Hasan. At the last moment, Osman decides against killing Sinan. Sinan stays on the island.

The Plot

Encounter with Mahmut In the hospital for chemotherapy, among patients who are afflicted by the same illness, Sinan meets Mahmut. He drops his wallet while he shows his ID; there is a photograph of his son. Mahmut asks how old he is. Sinan answers that "he was 17", that his son was dead. In the evening Mahmut calls Sinan from his home, invites him to his house. He operates a gambling den from a huge mansion with several rooms and high ceilings. They go out together to a tavern. They have a conversation all about life, death, and illness. When they leave the tavern, Mahmut gives his pocket watch to Sinan. While Sinan is absorbed by the watch, Mahmut disappears. A few weeks later, they meet again during a chemotherapy session. Mahmut is on edge and fuming. He gets angry while he talks about

how he has a lot to do but he does not have any time left. He leaves in the middle of the therapy, forgetting to pick up his phone and bag. Sinan goes to Mahmut's house to give back his belongings. Mahmut is not home. Sinan sits in his car and goes through Mahmut's bag. He finds a key and a bill with an address on it. He goes to that address. While he rummages around, he finds a photograph of a young woman stashed in a box. He falls asleep on a couch. When he wakes up, he finds Mahmut sitting opposite him, drinking. He asks Sinan if he is afraid to die. After a while, he proposes to go for a walk. They leave together in a car. Mahmut takes Sinan to the shore. There is no one around. He takes out his gun and offers it to Sinan, asks Sinan to kill him. When Sinan refuses, he insults him and pushes him down. Resisting all his persistence, Sinan refuses to kill Mahmut. Then Mahmut points the gun on Sinan, threatens to kill him. Sinan starts to shake and cry with fear. Just then, Mahmut's phone rings. The news he had been waiting comes; his men have found the thing Mahmut have been looking for all along. Twenty days after this event, Sinan goes to the hospital for a follow up. He asks after Mahmut and learns that he has not come for his appointment. He goes to Mahmut's house and learns that he has been murdered. The house is being vacated. Sinan secretly takes the photograph of the woman that he saw in his previous visit.

Encounter with Osman Sinan goes to Poyraz Island where Mahmut had been murdered. On the road, he narrowly escapes a collision with a motorbike. When the driver of the motorbike takes off his helmet, we see that he is a young man. Sinan hallucinates that it is his dead son. Next day he meets Osman, the driver of the motorbike in the town, but Osman runs away.

Encounter with Aslı Osman's mother Aslı comes to the boarding house Sinan is staying and apologizes on behalf of his son Osman because of their near accident. Sinan is smitten by Aslı's beauty. He learns that Mahmut had been staying in Aslı's hotel called Déjà Vu. In the evening he leaves the boarding house and moves to Déjà Vu. When he enters the hotel, Osman meets him with a camera in his hand. He records Sinan's arrival and their conversation. After he moves in to his room, Sinan goes down to the hotel's restaurant for dinner. Aslı is busy with other customers.

Encounter with Commissioner Hasan When Aslı approaches Sinan's table and starts talking to him, commissioner Hasan joins them. He sits across Sinan. He asks about Sinan's reasons for coming to the town, his profession. Next day Hasan catches Sinan in the town and takes him to the area where the wind turbines are and where Mahmut was murdered. While attempting to learn why Sinan is interested in this murder, he also forces him to leave the town. He implies that he suspects Sinan of murdering Mahmut. Sinan gets on a ferry out of town, but Aslı is also on the boat. When she asks questions about Mahmut, Sinan decides to stay in town.

Getting intimate with Aslı Sinan goes back to the hotel. There is a dinner with hotel's chef Tasula's old friends and relatives. They invite Sinan to the table. When Aslı and Sinan is left alone for a moment, they kiss.

Osman's secret place Osman takes Sinan to the house he was born in, now vacant, then to an abandoned wine cellar. They drink wine and talk. Osman dodges questions about his father. When they are at the vacant house, he gives his camera to Sinan and asks Sinan to record him. He looks at the camera and talks about his birth in the house, how he is unhappy with his life on the island. When they get back to the hotel the sun is down. Osman is drunk. Aslı gets angry at Osman. Hasan approaches them, notices that Sinan and Osman have been getting closer, makes sarcastic remarks to Sinan.

Sinan settles down on the island Sinan buys one of the old houses on the island. While this is happening Hasan asks Aslı to marry him. Aslı refuses. Hasan accuses Aslı of being in love with Sinan. Aslı goes to Sinan's house. They make love. When Sinan asks who murdered Mahmut, Aslı talks about her relationship with Mahmut. Mahmut is Osman's father; he abandoned Aslı when she was pregnant, never calling back again.

The next day Hasan comes to Sinan's house. He starts hitting Sinan. At that point Osman arrives. While Osman is trying to rescue Sinan, Hasan hits him too, calling him a "bastard". Osman gets on his bike and leaves in a haze of rage.

In the night, Aslı comes to Sinan in a hurry. It is raining. Osman have not been home. Sinan sends her to the hotel and goes to the old wine factory. Osman is there, crying. They go back to the hotel. Sinan tells Aslı that his son Cem have had an accident in such a rainy night. That is how Cem had died.

Osman meets his father The next day Osman takes Sinan to his room. He shows them the video that he shot when Mahmut came to the hotel. We go back to the past, the day Mahmut arrives. Aslı is busy

with customers in the restaurant. When she approaches Mahmut's table she recognizes him. Aslı is not happy seeing Mahmut. Commissioner Hasan sits at Mahmut's table. He tries to learn who he is, why he came but Mahmut brushes him off. After the customers leave Aslı sits at an empty table away from Mahmut. Mahmut tells her that he wants to meet his son. Aslı gets mad, gives snarky answers. Just then Osman enters. Mahmut tells him that he is his father. Osman is taken aback; he gets angry and does not know what to do. He tells Mahmut that he hates him.

Hasan's disappearance Sinan's estranged wife comes to the island and asks him to sign the divorce papers. Commissioner Hasan has not been seen for a few days. Police are looking for him. Sinan gets suspicious about the videos that Osman has been shooting and while he is at school he secretly gets into his room and finds Mahmut's gun. He tells about this to Aslı. Hasan's body is found. He has been murdered. Police gets suspicious of Sinan and they search his house. He is afraid that they would find the gun that he took from Osman's room and hid in a box in his house. Police finds the box but the gun is not inside. Aslı feels that Osman is Hasan's killer too. She asks Sinan to leave the town.

Osman's confession Just when Sinan is about to leave, Osman comes to him with his motorbike. Sinan gives Mahmut's pocket watch to him. Osman confesses that he killed Hasan. Sinan asks him about Mahmut. Osman leaves without answering. Sinan does not get on the ferry. He goes to the wind turbines. Osman is there too. He tells Sinan why he killed Mahmut, how it happened. Just like he did with Sinan, Mahmut had provoked Osman into killing him. Osman talks about these moments in tears. Sinan embraces him affectionately but Osman is angry at Sinan too because he thinks that he is also abandoning him by leaving the island. Because Sinan has become a father figure to him. He points the gun at Sinan, fires the gun a few times but he aims at a point just a bit off. This is a symbolic murder. Osman says to Sinan "I have killed you". At night, Sinan comes to the hotel. He has not left.

Themes

Happiness. When he is shooting videos with his handheld, Osman asks the people he is recording: "Are you happy?". These images reveal the web of relations and the secrets of the story while providing a more in-depth representation of the characters. That is why they are significant. The answers provided by the characters to Osman tells us about their perspectives on life. Some of them say "I'm happy" and evade the question, some scorn the question and the concept of happiness, and some among them reckon with themselves through their answer. Actually, none of the characters in the story are happy, even the youngest of them, Osman, who should be the most carefree among them. The story associates happiness with the responsibilities that people take on throughout their lives, their choices and actions. The characters are either unhappy because they have not fulfilled their responsibilities or other people who are responsible for them have failed them. It would not be wrong to say that maybe the most unhappy of them is Osman. Encounters between characters bring their misery to the surface. The film proposes that whether we are happy or not is determined by our choices. Osman is not able to choose his biological father but he has met Sinan, someone just like he imagined. In the penultimate scene he kills Sinan metaphorically. However, this is also a choice; it does not kill their chances of having a relationship. Sinan, by deciding to stay in the town, makes a choice; he chooses happiness.

Death. As we mentioned in the beginning, the film coincides with Ömer Kavur's own struggle with cancer and the theme of death makes up a considerable part of the narrative. Alongside characters who are about to die and who are murdered, a general sense of death permeates every scene of the film. On the postcard written "The future is here" on it, we see the place that Mahmut was murdered. Throughout the film, we see this image time and time again. We are confronted by this idea through this slogan, photograph and place, the idea that there is no escape from death, which especially underlies the conversations between Mahmut and Sinan. In a sense, we are obliged by the film to confront the reality of death, the destiny of human beings.

Relationship between father and son. In the lives of the main characters of the film, the relationship between fathers and sons determine their future happiness, what kind of a life they will lead, even their diseases. Sinan has had a fight with his son Cem on a rainy evening and leaving the house in a rage, Cem has had an accident with his bike. Sinan considers himself responsible for his son's death. Years ago, Mahmut had left the woman he was with, and rather than going back to them and taking responsibility for Aslı and Osman, rather than becoming a father to his son, he had never shown any interest in them. Years later when he realizes that he is dying, he finds Aslı and their son. But Mahmut's irresponsibility and selfishness is enduring. Because he is afraid to kill himself, he makes his son do it and turns him into a murderer. Osman bears the bruises of growing up fatherless; he is ashamed and angry over being considered "a bastard". Sinan blames himself; Mahmut feels regret over dying without

leaving a part of himself behind or not knowing anything about his merely genetic legacy, not knowing what it feels like to be a father; and Osman carries inside the wounds and the rage of growing without feeling the love and affection of a father, and being considered someone who is defective because of this. The essential problem of these three characters is related to fatherhood.

Character Analysis

Sinan In his forties, architect, has cancer. He is a gracious, calm, sensitive and curious character who values other people. He feels a strong sense of guilt because he considers himself responsible for his son's death. After the death of his son Cem, his relationship with his wife becomes strained and they are on the verge of divorce. He does not speak much and expresses himself through his actions. Rather than conflict, he prefers reconciliation.

Sensitive. Sinan is someone who is sensitive towards people, their emotions and problems. He notices that Osman needs love and intimacy, so he spends time with him. He tries to go along with Osman's games. When they are travelling on a bike to the house Osman was born, he speeds up dangerously. While Sinan is frightened because of the dangerous speed and because he remembers his son Cem, he does not stop being gentle towards Osman. He tries to meet Osman's demands. He drinks with him, he encourages him to speak frankly when Osman asks him to record him with his camera, he does not refuse Osman's requests to meet up. Underneath these understanding, affectionate, and even fatherly behaviors lie, as much as Sinan's characteristic qualities, his curiosity over the secret behind Mahmut's murder and his attempts to alleviate his feelings of guilt over his son's death by caring for Osman.

Reconciliatory. Sinan tries to respond to Mahmut and Hasan's provocative, taunting, and threatening attitudes and words by staying calm, maintaining his courtesy and rather than quarrel with them, circumventing them by acting in an agreeable manner. He is not prone to violence. Even when Commissioner Hasan lashes out at him because he is jealous over Sinan's intimacy with Aslı, he tries to protect himself. But when Hasan hits Osman too, Sinan attacks him.

Mahmut In his fifties, owner of a gambling den, has cancer. He is a bully, an arrogant, selfish, unhappy man.

Bully. Mahmut is someone who would resort to anything, even physical and verbal violence. He observes people's psychologies, notices their weaknesses and makes use of them. In order to get himself killed, the moment he meets Sinan he starts to weigh him up, learns about where he is most vulnerable in order to make him do what he desires. In the treatment center, he intentionally leaves behind his phone and the bag with his house key and address inside. In the end, he takes Sinan to a beach where no one is around and asks him to shoot him. But before that he tries to analyze and influence Sinan by talking about concepts such as death, illness, and fear. When Sinan refuses to shoot him he first attempts to psychologically pressure him by begging, then when he cannot convince Sinan he points the gun at him and says: "If you don't kill me, I will kill you." In a similar way he gives the gun to his son, he makes him mad by insulting him and makes him kill him. In his gambling saloon, he gets a cheating customer beaten up by his men.

Arrogant. Mahmut is an arrogant man, a shrewd observer of people's weaknesses and he is a wealthy and powerful man who uses his powers to make people do what he wants so he looks down on people. This arrogance is also a consequence of his apathy, and because he considers people only through his rationality. Commissioner Hasan comes to his table and tries to learn who he is and his reasons for coming to the island. When Mahmut gives snide answers, Hasan threatens him. In a mocking manner Mahmut says: "You can't do anything." This attitude stems from him being someone who is dying, who does not accept that he can be a person who would be so weak that he would die from an illness, who has become reckless because he would rather be murdered. When he takes Sinan to the deserted beach and tries to convince him to end his life, he says: "I will not lose to this pesty disease". One of the moments that demonstrate his arrogance is when he says "What a dumb guy!" when he cannot convince Sinan.

Selfish. Mahmut is also selfish, which is compatible with his other qualities. He does not care about what would become of Sinan or his son as long as he is killed. He does not think how Osman would be scarred after he is killed, how Osman is psychologically affected by the words he spews while he goads him on such as "Coward!" and "You bastard!". When he comes to the island, he first tries to convince Osman to go back to İstanbul together. He uses his wealth and says that he will provide him a wonderful

life. The only thing in his mind is possessing a son, not being a father to Osman or meet Osman's need for a father's love even though it would be late.

Unhappy. He feels the guilt of abandoning the things that would make his life meaningful, Aslı and his son. This is why he is unhappy. His sickness and the knowledge that he would not be living for long makes him even more desperate and sad. He says to Sinan: "I don't like myself enough to kill myself". Mahmut's reason for his sickness is "being askew". He describes his character, the life he lived, and his choices with these words.

Aslı At the end of her thirties, a hotel manager, Osman's mother. She is a beautiful, elegant, mild-mannered and emotional woman. In Commissioner Hasan's words, every man in the town is an admirer of Aslı. She has become pregnant during his relationship with Mahmut, has raised her son by herself when Mahmut left. When her father dies, she takes over the hotel's management.

Emotional. Aslı seems to be someone who has been making choices according to her emotions since the early periods of her life. Her trust in Mahmut, having a child when her only economic support is her father, her reluctance to verify her suspicions over her son Osman's murder of Mahmut, her attempts to stay away from Sinan in order to protect him reflects her emotionally charged actions.

Mild mannered. Aslı responds to the oppressive, assertive or indifferent attitudes of the men around her by evading conflict or through warning them mildly. She manages the situation without breaking anyone's heart seriously. When Commissioner Hasan proposes, she does not even say in a direct and clear way that she does not love him, that she does not want to marry him. She usually reacts to Osman's rebellious, manic acts compassionately, rebuking him half-heartedly. Maybe her most explicit and harsh act comes in the scene when she refuses Mahmut in the restaurant. Yet again she does turn this conversation into a quarrel, a fight.

Osman 18 years old, a student, the son of Aslı and Mahmut. He is a lively, energetic, outgoing young man just like his age implies. He has grown up without a father, not even knowing who he is and has felt frustrated and has been scarred by it. This is why he is angry and unhappy. Both these feelings of frustration and his suffocating life on the island makes him rebel occasionally.

Unhappy. Osman records videos of new guests of the hotel who he finds interesting, asking them if they are happy or not. Clearly, happiness is a matter of importance to him. As a young person who has not felt the love of a father, whose life is stuck in an island, he is not happy. He tells Sinan that he wants to get away from the island.

Angry. Most of Osman's acts are shaped by his lack of a father and the rage felt over this. His desire to change everything about his life, falling for the provocations of Mahmut and Hasan who both call him a "bastard" and killing them, over speeding with his bike, even wanting to kill Sinan who he wants and hopes to be a father to him shows that Osman carries an intense rage within him. This feeling that he cannot overcome turns him into a murderer.

Hasan In his fifties, a police commissioner, single. He uses his position as the highest-ranking police officer in the town as a way of dominance in his relationships with other people. He is in love with Aslı and considers all other men as his rivals. His reactions and ideas are shallow. He is not reluctant to inflict psychological and physical violence on people. He acts according to his emotions.

Shallow. His perspective on human relationships is shallow. Instead of building a friendly and deep relationship with Aslı, he lays claim to her, tries to keep other men away from her and even though they do not share an emotional connection he dreams about getting married with her. When Osman asks him his question of happiness while he is recording Hasan with his camera, he answers "Never mind that son, happiness is a fairy tale"; he equates happiness with winning a football match.

Violence prone. When they first come to town, Hasan tries to learn about the reasons behind both Mahmut and Sinan's arrival. When he cannot get the answer he wants out of Mahmut, he threatens him. He pushes Sinan to leave town. He keeps a constant and close watch over Aslı. He attacks Osman because he got close with Sinan and Sinan defends Osman, and he insults Osman by calling him a bastard. When Aslı refuses his marriage proposal, he attempts to win her over by begging her.

Helpless. Hasan is also a character under the influence of his shortcomings, who reacts to events not with his mind and reasoning but with his emotions. When he gets jealous, he threatens Aslı and he tries to control the men he considers his rivals. He does all this and he also lets on his intentions. His

helplessness, and his despair over not winning Aslı's heart is revealed when he gets violent with Sinan, when he attacks and insults Osman.



The encounter between two patients who are both on the verge of death.



Osman and Sinan form a close relationship in a small amount of time. Osman is ready to embrace Sinan as a father figure.



A narcissist and an egoist, Mahmut prefers to be murdered rather than being a victim of cancer. However, Sinan is not sadistic enough to kill someone in cold blood.



Osman's real father Mahmut cannot find the intimacy he seeks neither from his son, nor from Aslı.



The power struggle between two men in love with Aslı. Hasan enters this war with his violent tendencies, while Sinan has a calm and sensitive personality.



The recording from Osman's handheld camera. Mahmut's answer to his son's question, "Are you a happy person?" is "We will see." He would count himself happy if he can get what he wants.



Osman attempts to murder Sinan, just as he killed Mahmut and Hasan. But this time he is angry at Sinan because he too would abandon him and not be a father to him.



While Osman is speeding on his motorbike with his arms wide open, Sinan gets scared stiff to death. His son has died in a motorcycle accident.



Aslı and Sinan's relationship is emboldened by secrets revealed, by their emotional support for each other, and their joint struggle to protect Osman.