



**Roma**  
Alfonso Cuarón  
★★★★★

**The Wild Pear Tree**  
Nuri Bilge Ceylan  
★★★★★

**Disobedience**  
Sebastián Lelio  
★★★★★

**Three Identical Strangers**  
Tim Wardle  
★★★★★

**Creed II**  
Steven Caple Jr  
★★★★★

raised triplet brothers who re-met by chance or mischance in 1980 – turns into a Grimm's tale of "scientific" manipulation.

Director Tim Wardle interviews the two surviving brothers, who explain why one brother didn't. The trio's handsome, curly-mopped, sparkling-eyed younger selves, seen in flashback, were stars of gossip TV and the New York party scene. Then they learned the secrets of their adoption, which seemed to turn their faces to wise sorrow overnight. The things researchers do in the name of research! (That's a clue.) This amazing story is told with patient thoroughness by Wardle. Even the guilty have their turn before the camera. The innocent – well, they're always the first to spellbind us and the last, poignantly, to benefit from the spells they cast.

Sylvester Stallone in *Creed II* looks as if he has been put together from a large-scale Stallone figurine that fell to bits on the props room floor. His latest, oldest, frailer-looking Rocky Balboa has a wobbly gait, a slab of widow's-peak hair resembling a dead mackerel – "I just combed it," he says, possibly meaning "glued it" – and a faceful of wrinkles equally not, we suspect, the actor's own.

God loves a wreck. That's what this latest *Rocky* saga instalment is betting on. It even goes full-wreckage on Michael B. Jordan, whose Adonis Creed loses his looks when pulverised by a Russian glove psycho. The Russian's trainer-dad is no less than Dolph Lundgren, also from the Old Franchise Survivors' Variety Home, re-playing *Rocky IV*'s Ivan Drago.

The film is cheerfully ludicrous. Add to the rogue's gallery of veterans, who also include a silver-haired Brigitte Nielsen startlingly resembling Camilla of Cornwall, a rogue's roster of cornball plot contrivances. The climactic fight is over-wrought, overpitched and over only when the fat referee finally blows. Take a bet on who wins. I don't think you'll lose.

## Life through an exceptional lens

Conviction: Yalitza Aparici in 'Roma'. Below: Sylvester Stallone and Michael B. Jordan in 'Creed II'



(*Winter Sleep*), about? It's hard not to answer with the old quip. About three hours. Also, however, about everything you can imagine.

Ceylan is wonderful at this length: an ancient mariner or ageless mandarin stopping you, me and every bewitchable soul to unfold a story that for long passages hardly seems a story at all.

Sinan (Aydin Dogu Demirkol), a university student in Canakkale, returns to his rural home town to visit a long-suffering mum and a dad laden with gambling debts. He also meets, in strange, sparring, elegiac scenes, a one-time girlfriend (dapple-lit under a tree), two imams arguing about belief and unbelief, an irascible local author and a rich

sand tycoon who might fund Sinan's book (an essay and story collection he calls "a quirky metafiction novel") . . . and more, and more.

The young hero – hangdog, cranky, emotional, longing for adulthood and identity – and these townspeople are the story. They are the story in the way the raptured, unstoppable talkers were in *Winter Sleep* and *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*. The talk in Ceylan films is seldom static. People walk and talk. The 20-minute scene with the imams covers a good mile, up dale, downhill, into town.

Everyone looks for certainty in an uncertain world; while knowing that uncertainty, that whore-seductress, may be life's real, sexy, dangerous thing. Isn't that the mischievous meaning of the gambling motif? And the reason the scenes between boy and father are at once fond and recriminating, loving and hating?

In one scene Sinan climbs into a wooden horse, erected for tourists on the supposed site of ancient Troy. Perhaps he is the story's destroying gift, peering through chinks at the land he and his generation will reformingly raze. Or perhaps, in this hypnotic and beautiful film (photographed in a stunning warm-colour chiaroscuro by Gokhan Tiryaki), he is the lordly, educated dimwit who knows no better than any of us how to reform or rearrange this intractable world.

Sebastián Lelio's *Disobedience*, from the maker of *Gloria* and *A Fantastic Woman*, falls dead like a bird from the sky. Mystery bird. Mystery death. What happened?

It should have had sustaining wings, this London-set tale of two Jewish women (Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams) rediscovering a transgressive love when one (Weisz), a New York-based photographer, returns for her orthodox rabbi father's funeral. The script was co-

written by Rebecca Lenkiewicz – *Ida*, no less – from a novel by Naomi Alderman. Religious defiance can be good drama: see *Apostasy*. And the performances are fine, Weisz's better than fine in its filigree delineations of hurt, hope, passion.

Even so: dead pigeon on Anglo-Judaism Street (with apologies to Sam Fuller). There is no colour in the British suburban settings, depicted with a wan, best-guess moodiness by a Chilean director lost for first-hand insight. There is also barely any story: meaning backstory. Who are these women? We know nothing of their pre-film lives (the novel's flashbacks have been filleted). An ardent, full-on sex scene proves that even sex can be dull when no characterisation underpins it. (Compare *Blue Is the Warmest Colour*.) There are two words in the phrase "human suffering". We get the suffering here, God knows. We never really get the "human" or the humans.

*Three Identical Strangers* is the year's most shape-shifting documentary. It begins with a miracle reunion and ends with a mood of darkening conspiracy. This fact-based fairy story of fraternal reunion – three separately



Hypnotic: Hazar Erguclu, left, and Dogu Demirkol in 'The Wild Pear Tree'