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## THE WILD PEAR TREE, by Nuri Bilge Ceylan (Turkey)

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### Ambition and bitterness

An emotional bitter confrontation between a son and a father in a blocked society.

Translation: Julien Pellegrin



Ahlat agaci (The Wild Pear Tree), the eighth feature film by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, is a true masterpiece: an exciting and courageous film, with excellent writing and staging, enriched by magnificent details. It proposes a lucid family chronicle in a significant social and cultural context. It offers above all the effective representation of the character and soul of an ambitious, proud and dissatisfied twenty-year-old approaching adulthood, who dreams of fulfillment, feels superior to others, and becomes aware of the failure of his own hopes. The film describes the sad existential dynamics of a modest family in the province between the port of Canakkale, on the Dardanelles strait, near the site of Troy and Gallipoli, and the countryside. These are places well known by Ceylan because he spent his childhood there. Sinan (Aydin Dogu Demirkol), recently graduated, awaits the competition to become a teacher. Passionate about literature and an aspiring writer, he is the author of a memorial, which contains stories and episodes of his land and his family, entitled "The Wild Pear Tree". Back in the rural village where he was born, he endeavors with all his strength to collect the money necessary to publish his book. But he finds himself having to deal with the debts accumulated by his father, Idris (Murat Cemcir), a teacher about to retire, who was once seductive and charismatic in his own way, but who became fatalist, having for years been seriously game-addict, wagered in betting on horse races and other games of chance. He compromised the family budget and the relations with his wife Asunam (Bennu Yildirimlar), and socially discredited his family.

Sinan's dilemmas lead him to an itinerant condition, confronting a long series of characters: his father, mother, sister, grandparents, friends, a former schoolmate with whom love is impossible (there is an exceptional sequence, between sensuality withheld, tenuous regret and bitter resignation), a famous local writer, target of the ill-concealed envy of Sinan, possible financiers for the publication of his book and two young imams apparently modern, but defenders of the Koranic orthodoxy. Thanks to a loan, he finally manages to publish his book in a small print run, but when he returns from military service, he discovers that practically no one has bought it in the bookstore. Only his father, marginalized in a cottage in the countryside, and aiming to cultivate the land, read it and appreciated it. The exceptional narrative fluidity shows that the time and the seasons pass without cadence, up to the suggestive final confrontation between the father and his son, with two possible alternative solutions for Sinan. It is an amazing epilogue, perfect in its radical "non-synthesis" that reveals an irreconcilable drama, which takes your breath away. Nuri Bilge Ceylan has always aimed to investigate and represent human nature, as he told the press. He is notoriously interested in the gap and tension between Istanbul and the province, and inspired by the great Russian playwright Anton Chekhov. In his films, he deals with the problems of coexistence and the confrontation of feelings and values, without proposing syntheses or moral judgments. His cinema constantly represents unexpressed feelings, absence of belonging and resistance to identification with predetermined social codes. In his first films, Small town (1997) and Clouds of May (1999), he revisited the rural spaces of his childhood. In Distant (2002), Climates (2006) and Three monkeys (2008) he offered an intense and close observation of different characters, their destinies, the solitude and the impossibility of escape from their context. Like Once upon a time in Anatolia (2011) and Winter sleep (Palme d'Or for the best film in Cannes in 2014), The Wild Pear Tree is a magnificent fresco of human relationships, which also

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Liam Gallagher

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Sene





Aksu. It focuses on the dialectic between an irresponsible and weak father and a tormented son, full of rancor, with ambivalent feelings for his native place, which he feels as oppressive, but not resigned. The film is strongly characterized by a succession of long, elaborate, but often also touching, dialogues, sometimes with strong oppositions of opinions and values, between a sarcastic, resentful or disillusioned Sinan and his interlocutors. Conversations often take place indoors or during long walks in different landscape settings. The Wild Pear Tree proposes a brilliant unfolding of narrative and verbal architectures, with continual expansion of the confrontations between the characters and with changes in tone and posture. The film configures a never predictable harmony, which combines consistency and lightness and which totally captures the mind and soul of the viewer, who is not overwhelmed by the film duration

of just over three hours, because it goes beyond any concept of classicism, without showing complacency or mannerism. Ceylan has stated that he has long wanted to make a film about youth status and that his father's character, in the dimension of an outsider, is a new fact in his cinema. But it is also necessary to note the novelty, compared to the filmography of Ceylan, of the presence in the film of explicit details on the political situation of the country that emerge during the conversations (for example the repression of student struggles, conformism as a model proposed by authorities and "entrepreneurs", the weight of religion in society). It is quite clear that in the cinema of Ceylan, the time of words has come: they are decisive to relate to a society oppressed by anti-freedom laws and the censorship of freedom of thought and expression. The Wild Pear Tree appears visually fascinating, being studied with brilliant visual architectures and beautiful and dynamic tableaux based on the interaction between the characters and between them and the landscape: it is made of a masterly composition of the images, intense close-ups and fixed shots with a skilled game of field - counter-field and effective angles, suggestive sequence plans, panoramic widescreen of the autumn and winter landscape with considerable depth of field, and an exceptional photography, with variegated tones, whose director is the usual collaborator of Ceylan, Gökhan Tiryaki.

