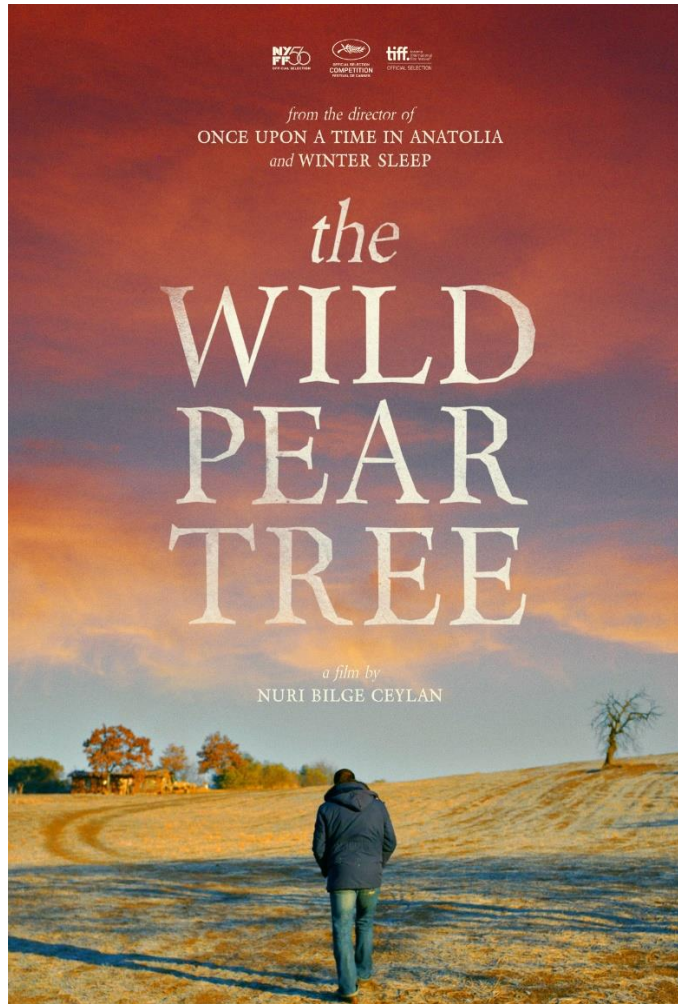


A Cinema Guild release



2018 / 188 minutes / 2.39:1 / DCP
Dolby Digital 5.1 / Turkish

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http://www.cinemaguild.com/theatrical/wildpeartree_press.htm

SYNOPSIS

Sinan (Aydin Doğu Demirkol), an aspiring writer, returns home after university hoping to scrape together enough money to publish his first novel. He wanders the town encountering old flames and obstinate gatekeepers and finds his youthful ambition increasingly at odds with the deferred dreams of his gambling-addict father (Murat Cemcir). As his own fantasies mingle with reality, Sinan grapples with the people and the place that have made him who he is.

Following in the great tradition of family dramas like *Death of a Salesman* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *The Wild Pear Tree* weaves an evocative tale of creative struggle and familial responsibility with inspired performances, sumptuous imagery and surprising bursts of humor. It's one of Ceylan's most personal works to date, a film as rich, layered and uncompromising as the novel its headstrong hero is working to publish.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

To make contact with other entities, every person has to reach out of their sheltered cave and take a certain amount of risk. If one reaches out too much and goes too far, one may lose their own orientation, their own identity. And if one fears this too much, one will start refusing to reach out, restrain themselves and retreat, in turn suspending their own growth and development. Especially if one feels that one is marked by a difference that is essential for oneself but is unlikely to be affirmed in the social scheme, their volition will inevitably be damaged from a moral standpoint. The person will have a hard time understanding the contradictions brought about by their constantly and inevitably alienated life, starting to falter between the insufficiency of putting these contradictions into creative outlets, and the impossibility of denying them.

This film attempts to tell the story of a young man who senses with a feeling of guilt that he is different in a way that he cannot come to accept, that he is being dragged towards a destiny that he cannot embrace, as well as the rich mosaic of people surrounding him, without favoring or being unfair to anybody. As the saying goes, "what a father keeps hidden is revealed in the son." One cannot help but inherit certain traits from one's father: weaknesses, habits, tics, among other things. The film tells the story of a boy being inevitably dragged into the same destiny as his father, in a plot loaded with painful experiences.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Nuri Bilge Ceylan was born in Istanbul on January 26th, 1959. In 1976, he began studying chemical engineering at Istanbul Technical University, in a context of strong student unrest, boycotts and political polarization.

In 1978, he switched courses to Electrical Engineering at Boğaziçi University. There, he developed a strong interest in image, entering the photography club at the university. This is also where he fed his taste for visual arts and classical music, by means of the vast resources of the faculty librarians. He also began to take film classes and attend screenings at the Film Society, which reinforced his love of cinema, born years earlier in the dark rooms of the Istanbul Cinematheque.

After his 1985 Graduation, he traveled to London and Kathmandu, which allowed him to take the opportunity to reflect upon his future. He returned to Turkey for his 18 months military service and at that moment decided to dedicate his life to cinema.

Thereafter, he studied film at the University Mimar Sinan, and worked as a professional photographer to make a living. After two years, he decided to abandon his studies to practice. He started with acting, in a short film directed by his friend Mehmet Eryilmaz, while helping with the technical production process.

In late 1993, he began shooting his first short film, COCOON. The film was screened at Cannes in May 1995 and became the first Turkish short film to be selected for competition. Three full-length feature films followed, the "provincial trilogy": SMALL TOWN (1997), CLOUDS OF MAY (1999) and DISTANT (2002).

In all of these films, Ceylan took on just about every technical role himself: the cinematography, sound design, production, editing, writing and direction. DISTANT won the Grand Prix and Best Actor (for the two main actors) in Cannes in 2003, making Ceylan an internationally recognized director. Continuing his tour of festivals after Cannes, DISTANT won no less than 47 awards, including 23 international prizes, and thus became the most awarded film in the history of Turkish cinema. Several of his subsequent films were awarded at Cannes: THREE MONKEYS won Best Director in 2008 and ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA won the Grand Prix in 2011. In 2014, his seventh feature film, WINTER SLEEP, won the Palme d'Or.

FILMOGRAPHY

Cocoon (1995), short film
Small Town (1997)
Clouds of May (1999)
Distant (2002)
Climates (2006)
Three Monkeys (2008)
Once Upon a Time in Anatolia (2011)
Winter Sleep (2014)
The Wild Pear Tree (2018)

CAST

Aydin Dođu DEMİRKOL	Sinan
Murat CEMCİR	Idris
Bennu YILDIRIMLAR	Asuman
Hazar ERGÜÇLÜ	Hatice
Serkan KESKIN	Süleyman
Tamer LEVENT	Grandfather Recep
Akin AKSU	Imam Veysel
Öner ERKAN	Imam Nazmi
Ahmet RIFAT ŞUNGAR	Riza
Kubilay TUNÇER	Ilhami
Kadir ÇERMİK	Mayor Adnan
Özay FECHT	Grandmother Hayriye
Ercüment BALAKOĞLU	Grandfather Ramazan
Asena KESKİNCİ	Yasemin

CREW

Director	Nuri BILGE CEYLAN
Screenplay	Akın AKSU, Ebru CEYLAN, Nuri BILGE CEYLAN
Photography	Gökhan TIRYAKI
Sound	Andreas MÜCKE NIESYTKA, Thomas ROBERT, Thomas GAUDER
Editing	Nuri BILGE CEYLAN
Assistant director	Yıldız ASANBOGA
Set design	Meral AKTAN
Costumes	Selcen DEMET KADIZADE
Casting	Erkut EMRE SUNGUR
Makeup	Mojca GOROGRANC PETRUSHEVSKA
Hair design	Emre ÖLMEZ
Production director	Ahmet DEMIRCAN
Producer	Zeynep ÖZBATUR ATAKAN
Co-producers	Alexandre MALLET-GUY, Fabian GASMIA, Stefan KITANOV, Labina MITEVSKA, Mirsad PURIVATRA, Mirsad PURIVATRA, Jon MANKELL, Anthony MUIR, Thomas ESKILSSON
Produced by	Zeyno Film, Memento Films Production, Detail Film, RFF International, Sisters and Brother Mitevski, 2006 Produkcija Sarajevo, Film i Vast, Chimney Pot
In coproduction with	ARTE France Cinéma, Imaj, Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu (TRT), Doha Film Institute, Nu-Look Yapım, Kale Grubu
With the support of	Eurimages, Turkish ministry of culture and tourism, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Bulgaria National Film Center, Macedonia's Film Agency, Film Foundation Sarajevo, MPA APSA Academy Film Fund
In association with	ARTE France
International sales	Memento Films International
U.S. Distribution	Cinema Guild

ON MAKING THE WILD PEAR TREE

by Nuri Bilge Ceylan

July 2015. We are lazing around in our summer house in Assos. It's Bairam and the beaches are extremely crowded. A few hours away, there is a small town amid pinewoods where I spent some of my childhood's best years. Even though its old charm and beauty are gone, the air is still clean. We figured we would go visit the place.

We hit the road with the children and abundant company. As we wandered through the surrounding villages, we came upon one in which some relatives of mine live.

There is this primary school teacher, married to one of my relatives, whom the villagers call "Master." He has an interesting personality, unconventional ideas, and a sense of conversation that I really enjoy. We ran into him there. He had just retired and settled back into his native village. He was fulfilling his long-time dream of raising livestock in a barren field owned by his father. Everybody knew that Master didn't get along with his old man. I must have shown some surprise because he tried to argue his way out by emphasizing his father's irredeemable incompatibility: "I have an older brother. If there were a worldwide calmness contest, he would certainly rank first. The old man even kicked him out the other day."

The relatives' house was crowded because of Bairam. After lunch, Master and I went out to the garden and sat on wooden logs. There was something deeply guilt-arousing about Master's talk, whether it was the things he told, his facial expression when he told them, or his way of smiling insistently even when he mentioned his worst hardships. He was so happy in his tiny world of 10 to 15 sheep and embellished it with such strange details that we were forced to get angry at ourselves for being melancholy despite possessing so many things.

When the sun began to go down, he wanted to take us to the field to see his newborn lambs. We left together with [my wife] Ebru, our kids, and a few other relatives. It was a beautiful day filled with all sorts of wonderful details: sheep, lambs, fountains, creeks, oak trees, the sound of rustling cottonwood leaves. The children had a lot of fun, too. They took the lambs in their arms and petted them, ate pears and blackberries that they plucked from trees maybe for the first time in their lives, saw turtles and rode donkeys. But there was something that caught my attention. While we listened with great interest to this man speak of the beauty of lambs, the color of meadows, and the smell of the earth with a terrific lust for life, the villagers looked straight ahead as if annoyed, almost ashamed. It was like some sort of silent protest. But Master didn't seem to care much about their attitude. He continued to speak with an unstoppable enthusiasm, laughing at his own words when needed and going on and on about lambs, the color of the grass, and the smell of the earth.

On our way back to Assos, Ebru and I spoke a bit about the people's attitude toward Master. Being familiar with this situation from my own father, I ascribed it to the fact that villagers consider these types of subjects to be empty, pointless, childish, and meaningless.

There are no conventions across these lands for rewarding distinctness or originality. People who feel different in an intrinsic, yet socially unacceptable way see their willpower pushed to its moral limits. Such people struggle to make sense of the contradictions inherent in their alienated existence and vacillate between the limitations of addressing these contradictions creatively and the impossibility of rejecting them. They perceive their difference as a crime that must be kept secret, as a disease, and carry it like a hump on their back throughout their lives. But their inner reality has unconditional control over them and spurts out in strange, absurd forms of disguise.

The bitter feelings that seized us as we were chatting on the way back made Ebru and I think that we may have struck on the premise of a film. At that point, we were reminded of Master's son, Akin, also a teacher. We had heard that Akin had failed to be assigned to a school and was working at a local newspaper in Çanakkale. We thought it might be good to stop by there to discuss these matters with him.

A week later, one Sunday in late July, I called Akin and met him in Çanakkale, located an hour away from Assos. We sat in one of those big, loose tea gardens by the sea and spoke for hours. I told him about the similarities between his father and mine, about their precious but tragic solitude, and about the fact that we were currently working on another script but may wish to make a film on this topic afterward. In order not to waste any time, I asked him to do some investigation for me and write down his memories of his childhood and his father while I dealt with the other film. I was well aware when I said this that Akin was interested in writing and had written one or two books already.

His mother had even given me a copy when I visited the village years ago, but to be honest, I hadn't read it. Though I had seen Akin on several occasions in the village and in Istanbul, we hadn't spoken much. He was an introverted and distant young man. He didn't participate in the conversation when I chatted with his father. But as we spoke in that tea garden in Çanakkale, I was surprised to see how intelligent and knowledgeable he was. First of all, he was very well-read and knew every book I mentioned. He had read much more than what could be expected from a 30-year-old. And while chasing after his own independence, he was pursuing an occupation that nobody was interested in where he lived: "literature." So he was another "loner" himself. The neurotic existence that had interested us in his father's world had shifted shape and turned up right in front of us once more. This would only serve to broaden our horizons for the film we might want to make.

Several months passed. We returned to Istanbul. Ebru and I continued working on the other script. Having heard nothing from Akin, I had completely forgotten about that project, until we received an 80-page manuscript from him in our mailbox sometime in early October. It was so fluidly written that I devoured it in no time and really liked it. Akin had written a marvelous text centered upon his relationship with his father from his childhood onward, also featuring other episodes from his life. I felt so close to some of the episodes that I suddenly had the desire to abandon the script we were working on and begin working on this one. I immediately showed the text to Ebru and she liked it a lot too. It was a surprisingly honest text with a confessional tone. The narrator didn't protect or glorify himself in any way, and laid completely bare his weakest, most despicable feelings—brutal realities that anyone else would be terrified to share. Akin's ruthlessly realistic outlook on himself allowed for a much more mature discussion, skipping time-wasting preliminary chitchat. Even though he didn't let it show in Çanakkale, the text proved that Akin had perfectly understood my pitch to him and the reasons why I wanted to make this film, and even challenged my point of view with an unexpected boldness that carried everything one step further.

We decided to invite Akin to Istanbul to see if we could work on the script together. Akin arrived. Every single day for a whole month, Akin, Ebru, and I got together in my office to talk and work and tried to build an entirely new framework by utilizing what Akin had written. Akin's text unfolded over a very long timeframe spanning childhood and youth, but we gravitated toward a story set in the present tense. We also chose to place the character of the son at the center in lieu of the father. We decided to develop the father's character in terms of his relationship with his son and convey his important features through their collision. After spending a month building a rough framework we would expand upon, we continued to work via email for the next seven to nine months. The shooting script emerged that way but was never finalized; we were always searching for a better balance during the shoot and the edit.

In the meantime, I also read Akin's books, written when he was a 23-year-old college student in Çanakkale, and was utterly surprised. There were stories in them that I really loved, including one called "The Wild Pear's Solitude," which inspired the film's title. We used many descriptions from that story in a village school scene depicting the father's youth that was meant to be the film's "prologue," but I unfortunately had to take that scene out in the edit. Since the book contained abundant details about our subject, we added a lot of elements from it to the script. Even though many of them were left out during the edit for the sake of a more organic structure, there are still some details from the book that made it into the film.

In the end, we were unable to stop ourselves and wrote so much that the script that came out was even longer than *Winter Sleep* [2014]. Because of the story's flexible, bendable form, I wanted to shoot everything we had written and go into the edit with plenty of material in order to mold the final structure there. For that reason, many of the scenes we shot and some characters unfortunately didn't make it into the film. They were forced to sacrifice themselves for a certain balance or a certain harmony that I thought could only be determined in the edit. I hope they have been sacrificed for a good cause.

This article originally appeared in the Turkish journal ONS and was translated by Yonca Talu for Film Comment.