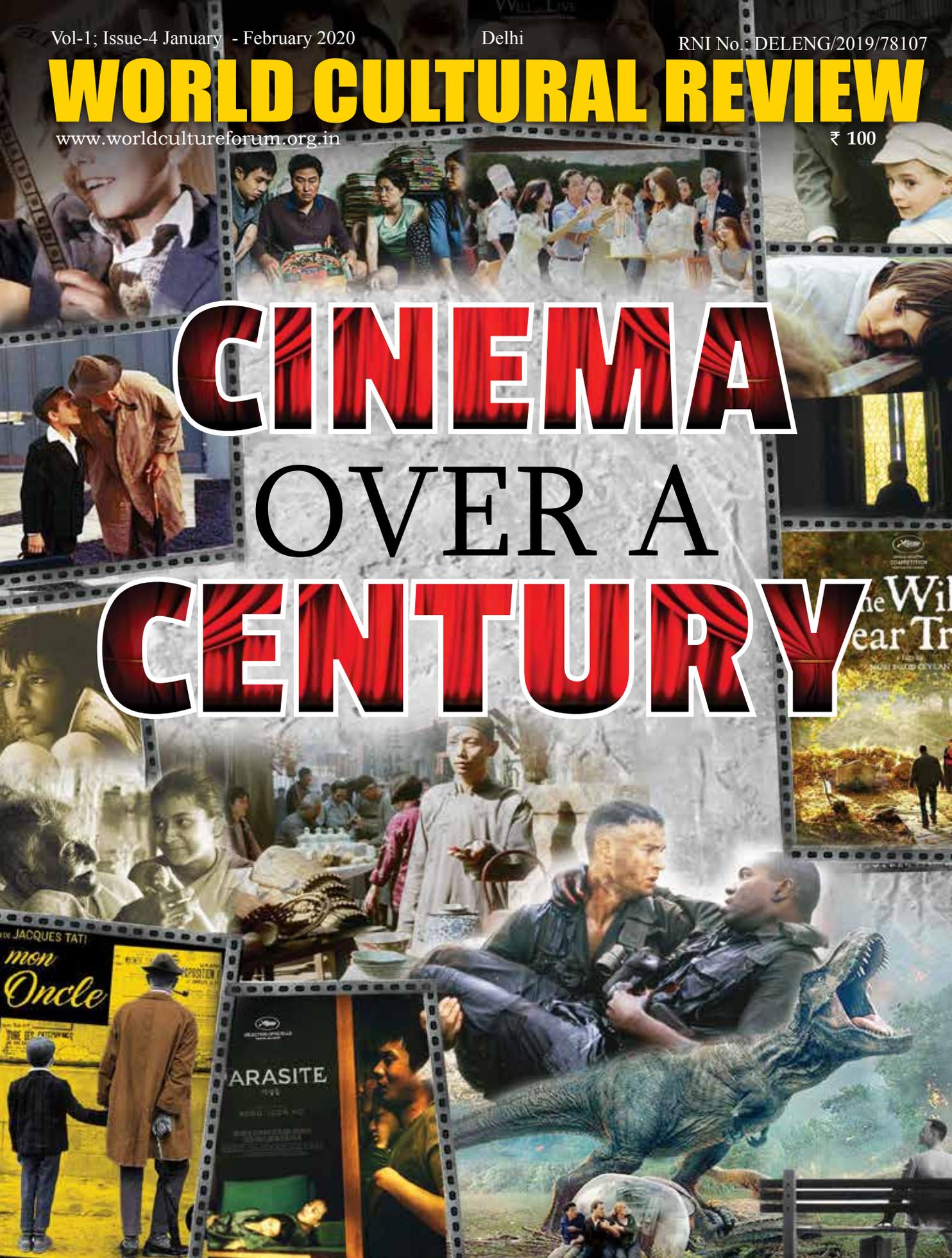


# WORLD CULTURAL REVIEW

[www.worldcultureforum.org.in](http://www.worldcultureforum.org.in)

₹ 100



# CINEMA

# OVER A

# CENTURY



## ABOUT US

World Culture Forum is an international Cultural Organization who initiates peacebuilding and engages in extensive research on contemporary cultural trends across the globe. We firmly believe that peace can be attained through dialogue, discussion and even just listening. In this spirit, we honor individuals and groups who are engaged in peacebuilding process, striving to establish a boundless global filmmaking network, we invite everyone to learn about and appreciate authentic local cultures and value cultural diversity in film. Keeping in line with our mission, we create festivals and conferences along with extensively researched papers to cheer creative thought and innovation in the field of culture as our belief lies in the idea – “Culture Binds Humanity. and any step towards it is a step towards a secure future.



## VISION

We envisage the creation of a world which rests on the fundamentals of connected and harmonious co-existence which creates a platform for connecting culture and perseverance to build solidarity by inter-cultural interactions.



## MISSION

We are committed to providing a free, fair and equal platform to all cultures so as to build a relationship of mutual trust, respect, and cooperation which can achieve harmony and understand different cultures by inter-cultural interactions and effective communications.





# EDITOR'S NOTE



**These films pertain to the value of hope and optimism in life and reinstate the famous saying by John Lenon "Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end."**

**Dear Readers,**

**I**t brings me immense pride and joy to present the fourth edition of World Cultural Review. This edition indulges in exploring the implicit connection between cinema and culture, through gauging cinema as being born within the contours of culture and acting like its mirror.

The vision of World Cultural Review is to promulgate acknowledgment of similarity and vicissitudes of cultures all over the globe along with the intent of understanding and instilling mutual respect for every culture in the global community. Through the wings of myriad cultural practices such as cuisine, clothing, festivities, languages, customs and various forms of artistic and cultural expressions which are the frequent features in review, World Cultural Review aims to provide a platform for an insight into the cultural design of societies that are spread all around the world. It furthers the value of placing every culture on an equal pedestal while remarking that every individual is the product of their culture and similarly, every culture is the product of the amalgamation of collective practices of the individuals that are consisted under its ambit.

World Cultural Review is the bimonthly magazine issued by World Culture Forum, an organization which envisages the creation of a world which rests on the fundamentals of harmonious cooperation and co-existence while creating avenues for connecting cultures and perseveres to build solidarity through inter-cultural interactions while being committed to provide free, fair and equal platform to all cultures so as to build a relationship of mutual trust, respect, and cooperation which can achieve harmony amongst and understanding of different cultures through inter-cultural interactions and effective communication.

As cross-cultural stimulations have been at the root of every important development that humanity has led and been subject to. The World Cultural Review creates an avenue to explore and further such stimulations that have enriched the lives of people and imparts the due reverence that every culture deserves due to its peculiarity. Instead of the common misconception regarding 'culture' as an involuntary repetition of the actions committed to replicate the practices of genealogical predecessors, World Cultural Review reinstates the prestige of culture as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of particular



people or society along with the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.

This edition starts with 'Cinema and Culture' which highlights the objective behind choosing cinema as the theme, it voices the implicit nature of the connection between cinema and culture by focusing on the facets of 'culture that cinema entails' and the 'culture that cinema creates'. It is followed by 'Cinema over a century' which traces the development of cinema, starting from the set of inventions which enabled film-making, the inception of cinematography and the trends of filmmaking that have followed in this art-form. It takes a decadal route to trace the nuances of the cinematic world across countries.

We have carefully selected a set of films ranging from popular recreational cinema to independent films and documentaries to showcase the role of cinema as a social document and a social commentary that contains the attitudes, emotions, traditions, and lifestyles of people across the world. We have tried to cover as many cinematic traditions that we could in the limited space but due to the vast nature of this subject, we have not been able to represent all. This edition contains reviews of those selected films

'Parasite' has created a buzz for itself after it's release and has been received as a commentary on capitalism, status anxieties and inequalities prevalent in the contemporary world, although, the film is set in South Korea and due to the universality of its message, it has been applauded by audience across the world. This is followed by the 2018 Turkish film titled 'The Wild Pear Tree' which has been critically acclaimed for its literary richness and awe-inspiring frames to support the narrative. This edition features Jenifer Peedom's documentary 'Sherpa' which is about the social movement led by the ethnic work for better working conditions for those who assist the expedition

to the highest peak of the world.

Films that have played the role of social commentaries such as Victor Erice's 'The spirit of beehive' which subliminally critiques the Francoist state in Spain, Iran's 'Marmoulak (The Lizard)' satirizing the susceptibility of people in the face of clergymen. As well as, Jacques Tati's 'Mon Uncle' which employs humor to comment on the superficial and flamboyant lifestyle prevalent in postwar France.

Films are also created with the intent of documenting the social, cultural and historical eventualities such as China's 'To Live' which portrays the life of citizens in the changing contexts during the cultural revolutions following the establishment of communist rule in the country, Satyajit Ray's 'Pather Panchali' showcases the rigid adherence to customs and traditions in rural Bengal in contrast with the innocence of the protagonist's childhood and Italy's 'Life is Beautiful' picturizes the tribulations of a father to shelter his son from the grim realities of Holocaust. Along with popular cinema such as 'Forest Gump' which highlights the protagonists coming of age during the major cultural, technological and political shifts in the United States of America and how he is unknowingly affected by these changes and instruments these developments.

This edition of World Cultural Review has been an exciting and fruitful exercise for the team at World Culture Forum. These films pertain to the value of hope and optimism in life and reinstate the famous saying by John Lennon "Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end."

**Prahlad Narayan Singh**  
**Editor**



Pic Courtesy: [www.learner.org/american-cinema/](http://www.learner.org/american-cinema/)

**C**ulture shares a symbiotic relationship with Cinema, as cinema acts like a mirror in the pursuit of self-recognition for culture. The nuances of culture can rarely escape the lens because movies often capture certain elements of the cultural setting for the time and place that they aim to reflect. Cinema inspires a captivating contemplation on society and provides an insight into the day to day lives of the members from a cultural community when it intends to. Cinema engages very closely with the cultural environment of the characters whose stories it narrates to pertain the illusion of reality, hence, cultural elements such as clothing, cuisine, language and traditional practices are closely observed and reenacted. As a popular art, set in the economic, cultural and political spheres, film inevitably bears the birthmarks of its passage into light and as a technological art, it is crucially defined by its capacity for the automatic registration of sights and sounds, it is composed of pieces of the culture it represents. In order to recover the full discourse that films advance, the audience must become a historian and an interpreter of art simultaneously, able to shift constantly between the objective examination of the context of a film and the subjective immersion in the experience it offers. (Andrew, 1985)

The connection between culture and cinema can be comprehended in two folds which encompass, the culture that cinema entails and the culture that cinema creates. Cinema entails a peculiar imagination of filmmakers and his/her crew regarding what comprises of culture, and how it affects the characters entrenched in it. On the other hand, there exists a degree to which cinema creates culture such that it appropriates and disapproves certain elements of culture along with its power to create a sense of communion amongst the audience who decide to watch the film together. Films have often supplemented family gatherings, dinner parties or get togethers and have always been an excuse for outing amongst enthusiasts who love to catch up on their favorite releases in a theatre/multiplex within the close vicinity of their residence. Motion pictures also provide the best evidence of what it was like to walk down the streets of Paris in the 1890s, what a Japanese tea ceremony was like in the 1940s, what the World Series in 1950 looked like, or how people in factories did their work or spent a Sunday afternoon in the park. All of these subjects could certainly be staged and distorted, and film can be transformed in many ways. But as a record of time and motion, films preserve gestures, gaits, rhythms, attitudes, and human interactions



in a variety of situations. One can glimpse images of simple actions, from the way a Buddhist monk in Ceylon folded his robe in 1912 to the way people boarded trolley cars in New York City in the 1930s. (Film as Social and Cultural History, n.d.)

The idea that films, along with other forms of mass or Popular culture, are 'eloquent social documents' reflecting the flow of contemporary history has been an implicit assumption of much writing about cinema, but explanations of how 'the film-making process taps some reservoir of cultural meaning' have remained relatively unformulated and untheorized. In the late 1940s, Siegfried Kracauer proposed that some movies, or some 'pictorial or narrative motifs' reiterated in them, might be understood as 'deep layers of collective mentality which extend more or less below the dimensions of consciousness'. Kracauer's proposition has remained central to what his contemporaries Martha Wolfenstein and

Nathan Leites called a 'psychoanalytic-mythological' mode of interpreting film's relationship to culture. Historian Marc Ferro, has encouraged historians to treat films as historically symptomatic, suggesting that they examine the 'unconscious' of a filmic text to reveal the biases, tastes or secret fears of the cultural moment in which it was produced. The concept of film as 'objectified mass dream', consensual myth or 'barometer of social and cultural life' has retained considerable influential power, as has the idea of reading cultural history through textual interpretation. Instinctively, this mode of analysis reaches for metaphor and allusion as clues to the kinds of contemporary political or moral conversations the film in question might address.

Audiences bring their individual and collective social circumstances with them to the social events such as cinema screening, and those dispositions condition their interpretative response. (Maltby,



2011) Similarly, films also impact the audience in unprecedented ways due to its ability to evoke contemplation and experience events from a third person perspective. Hence, the relationship between movies and culture involves a complicated dynamic; while movies certainly influence the mass culture that consumes them, they are also an integral part of that culture, a product of it, and therefore a reflection of prevailing concerns, attitudes, and beliefs.

### **Culture that Cinema Entails**

Apart from being an industrial art, Cinema is a manifestation of filmmaker's artistic expression in the form of successive images played simultaneously with sound, and this expression is most often than not rooted in the social, political and cultural environment of those who conceive the idea of a film in particular. One might argue that very few films are produced with the aforementioned intent and rather most films succumb to the calculation of market trends and people's interests. Although, the sanctity of that line of reasoning would be subject to criticism because even market trends and preferential interests are dictated by the cultural dimensions and level of dissemination of information that the members of a particular society are subjected to. Therefore, cinema is a remarkable medium to express political opinions, societal predicaments, cultural challenges and diverging world views. It subliminally accommodates various facets of social and interpersonal realities apart from only creating deception and fiction. Even fictional movies inculcate various cultural elements in the hypothetical world that they create, for instance, James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), which has been one of the highest grossing movies on box office, primarily due to its advance use of 3-D technology but also because irrespective of being based in the fictional planet of 'pandora', its story strongly resembled a critical outlook on the exploitative apathy of imperialism which was rampant in the 18th and 19th century and its ramifications still prevail in the form of neo-imperialism.

Similarly, coming of age movies like Robert Zemeckis' *Forest Gump* stroll the audience through the major developments in politics, market and technology for the time-frame that the protagonist is set in. Also, movies like Jean-Pierre Jaunet's *Amélie* and Nila Madhab Panda's *I am Kalam* capture the peculiarity of culture for

a better understanding of the protagonist.

### **Culture that Cinema creates**

Apart from cinema being rooted in culture, it is one of the most strongest form of influence on culture in this time and age especially with the growing access amongst people with the advent of digital innovation and online streaming platforms, wherein the access to cinema has transcended from the mold of visiting theatres/cineplexes or renting VCR/DVD's and people have access to a wide variety of cinema. This aspect of 'creating culture' has been led to major controversies and become subject of debate regarding 'cinema as the mirror of society' or 'cinema as an influence to society', along which filmmakers are criticized for glorifying certain vices prevailing in societies throughout the world and these allegations are countered by the argument that films merely reflect the realities of society. Although, cinema also glorify courage, strength, love and other virtues of humanity and inspires the audience. What receives inculcation into the wide screen has a strong impact of its perceiver but that impact ought not only be negative because that line of reasoning strips of 'agency' from the perceiver and render the audience as mere apes who would reenact anything they see on the screen, but that's far from truth. In fact, in most cases cinema provokes a progressive outlook towards society and offers a chance for the audience to sit back, find themselves on the screen and realize how their actions seem from the third person perspective. Cinema also offers members of community to get together and viewing a film of their liking. Films of any genre, from documentary to drama, can have a dramatic impact on real life. Chances are excellent that you've seen at least one film that has changed the landscape of our popular culture, even if you're not aware of it. These films that have changed our lives outside the theatre in tangible ways.

### **Conclusion**

Films have always been an occasion for people coming together, starting from production to presentation. At every stage of conceiving or perceiving films, the interactions that they have stimulated are remarkably the products of culture and its influencer. Films ought to take pride in this responsibility of projecting and instigating cultural progression, instead of shying away from it. ■

Ashray Kant, World Culture Forum

# CINEMA OVER A CENTURY: THE EVOLUTION OF CINEMA (1878-2019)

The lifespan of cinema exceeds a century, it inculcates various other art forms such as drama, music, storytelling, acting and photography (to name a few). Cinema accommodates the creative acumen to showcase one's imagination or portray the deep-seated realities of life world over, often projecting the schism between what is and what ought to be while questioning the symmetries of moral standards across cultures. It provides the space for mutual acknowledgement and learning from one another. Cinema is capable of addressing multiple sensory receptors amongst the audience, such as visual, aural and psychological which has been pivotal in its success as an art form. Cinema blends art, technology and literature along with various other subtle intrinsic skills to provide a medium of artistic expression which can engage the audience at their convenience and with relative ease to grasp the motive, plot and climax of the film.

Jim Piper, author of **"The Film Appreciation Book"** draws a distinction between movies and films, asserting that it is vital to have two words in language to address them individually, the premise of his distinction lies in thinking of movies (motion picture) as a merely for entertainment which are produced in abundance, consumed by the audience and forgotten whereas films refer to that cinema which has the potential to be a work of art and literature. Much of the history

of cinema revolves around the debate between what ought to be considered a 'movie' and what qualifies to be treated as a 'film'. According to Satyajit Ray "The optical toy had attracted two kinds of men. One was, of course, the future film-maker who saw in it a new medium of expression. The other was the businessman, who felt that the toy would provide a lucrative opening for the show business. As happens so often, the artist had no money (and the toy was an expensive one), and the businessman knew little about art. So, it came to pass that the two were united for their mutual benefit and conceived the industrial act of motion pictures. The marriage has been a lasting one, and the offspring many and varied. There are films – experimental ones, educational ones – which are not made with the intention of earning money. But these films form an infinitesimal proportion of the total world output. The vast majority of films are of the sort that we pay to see, that we love or hate or argue about, and these are the sort that have contained the best as well as the



Pic Courtesy: [www.amazon.in](http://www.amazon.in)

worst that cinema has provided in its fifty years of existence. These are the commercial feature films." Paul Rotha remarks cinema as "the great unresolved equation between art and industry. Cinema is the first and the most industrialized art form which has dominated the cultural life of twentieth and twenty first century.

As an art form and as a technology, the cinema has



been in existence for over a hundred years. Primitive cinematic devices came into being and began to be exploited in the 1890s, almost simultaneously in the United States, France, Germany, and Great Britain. Within twenty years the cinema had spread to all parts of the globe; it had developed a sophisticated technology, and was on its way to becoming a major industry, providing the most popular form of entertainment to audiences in urban areas throughout the world, and attracting the attention of entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, and politicians. As well as for entertainment, the film medium has come to be used for purposes of education, propaganda, and scientific research. Originally formed from a fusion of elements including vaudeville, popular melodrama, and the illustrated lecture, it rapidly acquired artistic distinctiveness, which is now beginning to lose as other forms of mass communication and entertainment have emerged alongside it to threaten its hegemony. The history of cinema encapsulates both its origins and its subsequent development, and above all its emergence as a popular art. It is popular art not in the conventional sense of art emanating from the 'people' rather than from cultured elites, but in the distinctively twentieth-century sense of an art

transmitted by mechanical means of mass diffusion and drawing its strength from an ability to connect to the needs, interests, and desires of a large, massified public.

Cinema emerged as the most relatable art form to audience where the characters were lively and inspired great resonance amongst the people who watched them, which was one of the primal cause behind its development as arguably the most industrialized art form. Cinema transformed from motion picture of a running horse to a four-dimensional cinematic experience we avail in the current times. This drastic development has been made possible through the interplay of art, technology and industry.

### **The Tale of Technology**

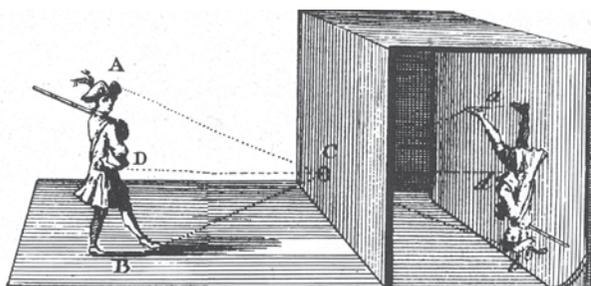
The development of cinema runs parallel with the innovation in technology and growing need among art-forms to engage the attention of audience, hence the symbiotic relationship between the three must be acknowledged to perceive the inception and advent of cinema. The advancements in technology starting from the invention of camera along with the fellow developments that led to capturing motion on camera are pivotal in the manifestation of cinema as we know

it today. The genesis of cinematography distinguishes two dates, in 1888 the technology became available and from 1900 onwards film language developed.

## Antecedents

Certain precursors that aided the imagination of cinematic devices, these antecedents varied in forms and practices, such as:

**Shadowgraphy:** also called ombromanie, is the art of performing a story or show using images made by hand shadows. It can be called «cinema in silhouette».



Pic Courtesy: en.wikipedia.org/Camera\_obscura

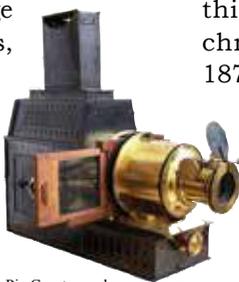
**Camera Obscura:** also referred to as pinhole image, is the natural optical phenomenon that occurs when an image of a scene at the other side of a screen (or, for instance, a wall) is projected through a small hole in that screen as a reversed and inverted image (left to right and upside down) on a surface opposite to the opening.

**Shadow Puppetry:** is an ancient form of storytelling and entertainment which uses flat articulated cut-out figures (shadow puppets) which are held between a source of light and a translucent screen or scrim. The cut-out shapes of the puppets sometimes include translucent colour or other types of detailing. Various effects can be achieved by moving both the puppets and the light source.



Pic Courtesy: adventure-in-a-box.com/

**Magic Lantern:** is an early type of image projector that used pictures—paintings, prints, or photographs—on transparent plates (usually made of glass), one or more lenses, and a light source. It was mostly developed in the 17th century and commonly used for entertainment purposes.



Pic Courtesy: cleanpng.com

## Stroboscopic “Persistence of Vision” Animation Devices:

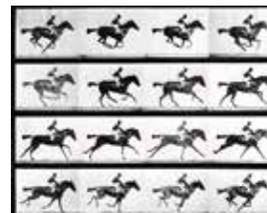
refer to animation devices which use an optical illusion that occurs when visual perception of an object does not cease for some time after the rays of light proceeding from it have ceased to enter the eye. The illusion has also been described as “retinal persistence”, “persistence of impressions”, simply “persistence” and other variations. These devices were of many kinds such as phénakisticope since 1832, zoetrope since 1866, flip book since 1868. The basic stroboscopic principle that allowed the creation of motion pictures was discovered by Joseph Plateau in Belgium around December 1832 and published in January 1833. His invention - later known as the phénakisticope or fantascope - was a cardboard disc with slits through which the viewer could watch a rapid succession of sequential drawings reflected in a mirror. If a phénakisticope disc spins fast enough it invisibly replaces each picture by the next one and the viewer sees figures in fluent motion. A very similar “Stroboscope Disc” was independently invented in Austria by Simon von Stampfer which mentioned several possible variations of stroboscopic invention, including a cylinder (similar to the later zoetrope) as well as a long, looped strip of paper or canvas stretched around two parallel rollers (somewhat similar to film) and a theatre-like frame (much like the later praxinoscope theatre).



Pic Courtesy: publicdomainreview

**Photography:** In 1839, Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, a French painter, perfected the positive photographic process known as daguerreotypy, and that same year the English scientist William Henry Fox Talbot successfully demonstrated a negative photographic process that theoretically allowed unlimited positive prints to be produced from each negative.

**Chrono-photography:** Francis Ronalds introduced photographic methods to make scientific recordings, this was the inception of chronophotography and in 1876, Wordsworth Donisthorpe patented a camera that was capable of taking 8 photos per second on glass plates, this camera was called ‘Kinesigraph’. Whereas,





the first motion sequence photograph was captured by Eadweard Muybridge in 1878 and was titled 'Horse in Motion'. This was an iconic development in the history of cinema as its result were very close to what many filmmakers would have hoped for but it required a great amount of apparatus. Étienne-Jules Marey invented a chronophotographic gun in 1882, which was capable of taking 12 consecutive frames a second, recording all the frames on the same picture. He used the chronophotographic gun for studying animals and human locomotion. Donisthorpe suggested that his kinesiograph and Edison's phonograph (a device mechanical recording and reproduction of sound) should be combined to produce life-size, talking and moving pictures.

## Genesis of Cinematography

The illusion of motion pictures is based on the optical phenomena known as persistence of vision and the phi phenomenon. The first of these causes the brain to retain images cast upon the retina of the eye for a fraction of a second beyond their disappearance from the field of sight, while the latter creates apparent movement between images when they succeed one another rapidly. Together these phenomena permit the succession of still frames on a motion-picture film strip to represent continuous movement when projected at the proper speed (traditionally 16 frames per second for silent films and 24 frames per second for sound films). There could be no true motion pictures until live action could be photographed spontaneously and simultaneously. This required a reduction in exposure time from the hour or so necessary for the pioneer photographic processes to the one-hundredth (and, ultimately, one-thousandth) of a second achieved in 1870. In 1887 in Newark, New Jersey, Hannibal Goodwin developed the idea of using celluloid as a base for photographic emulsions. The inventor and industrialist George Eastman, who had earlier experimented with sensitized paper rolls for still photography, began manufacturing celluloid roll film in 1889 at his plant in Rochester, New York. This event was crucial to the development of cinematography: series photography such as Marey's chronophotography could employ glass plates or paper strip film because it recorded events of short duration in a relatively small number of images, but cinematography would inevitably find its subjects in longer, more complicated events, requiring thousands

of images and therefore just the kind of flexible but durable recording medium represented by celluloid. The only remaining piece of the puzzle was combining the principles embodied in the apparatuses of Muybridge and Marey with celluloid strip film to arrive at a viable motion-picture camera. Such a device was created by French-born inventor Louis Le Prince in the late 1880s. He shot several short films in Leeds, England, in 1888, and the following year he began using the newly invented celluloid film. Although, William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, working in the laboratories of the Edison Company, created what was widely regarded as the first motion-picture camera. He designed a type of peep-show viewing device called the Kinetoscope, in which a continuous 47-foot



Pic Courtesy: voice-of-film.blogspot.com

(14-metre) film loop ran on spools between an incandescent lamp and a shutter for individual viewing. Starting in 1894, Kinetoscopes were marketed commercially for a price of \$250 to \$300 apiece. Edison Company established its own Kinetograph studio (a single-room building called the "Black Maria" that

rotated on tracks to follow the sun) in West Orange, New Jersey, to supply films for the Kinetoscopes that were being installed in penny arcades, hotel lobbies, amusement parks, and other such semi-public spaces. Kinetoscope exhibition in Paris inspired Lumière brothers, Auguste and Louis, to invent the first commercially viable projector. Their cinématographe, functioned as a camera and printer as well as a projector, which ran at the speed of 16 frames per second. It was first commercially demonstrated on December 28, 1895. Unlike the Kinetograph, which was battery-driven and weighed more than 1,000 pounds (453 kg), the cinématographe was hand-cranked, lightweight (less than 20 pounds [9 kg]), and relatively portable. This naturally affected the kinds of films that were

made with each machine: Edison films initially featured material such as circus or vaudeville acts that could be taken into a small studio to perform before an inert camera, while early Lumière films were mainly documentary views, or “actualities,” shot outdoors on location. In both cases, however, the films themselves were composed of a single unedited shot emphasizing lifelike movement; they contained little or no narrative content. During its inception, film industry was autonomous and unitary, with production companies leasing a complete film service of projector, operator, and shorts to the vaudeville market as a single, self-contained act. Starting about 1897, however, manufacturers began to sell both projectors and films to itinerant exhibitors who travelled with their programs from one temporary location (vaudeville theatres, fairgrounds, circus tents, lyceums) to another as the novelty of their films wore off at a given site. This new mode of screening by circuit marked the first separation of exhibition from production and gave the exhibitors a large measure of control over early film form, since they were responsible for arranging the one-shot films purchased from the producers into audience-pleasing programs. The putting together of these programs—which often involved narration, sound effects, and music—was in effect a primitive form of editing, so the itinerant projectionists working between 1896 and 1904 were regarded as the earliest directors of motion pictures. Britain’s first projector, the theatrograph (later the animatograph), had been demonstrated in 1896 by the scientific-instrument maker Robert W. Paul. In 1899 Paul formed his own production company for the manufacture of actualities and trick films, and until 1905 Paul’s Animatograph Works, Ltd., was England’s largest producer, turning out an average of 50 films per year. Between 1896 and 1898, two Brighton photographers, George Albert Smith and James Williamson, constructed their own motion-picture cameras and began producing trick films featuring superimpositions (The Corsican Brothers, 1897) and interpolated close-ups (Grandma’s Reading Glass, 1900; The Big Swallow, 1901). Smith subsequently developed the first commercially successful photographic colour process (Kinemacolor, c. 1906–08, with Charles Urban), while Williamson experimented with parallel editing as early as 1900 (Attack on a Chinese Mission Station) and became a pioneer of the chase film (Stop Thief!,

1901; Fire!, 1901). The shift from films as animated photographs to films as stories, or narratives, began to take place about the turn of the century and is most evident in the work of the French filmmaker Georges Méliès. Méliès was a professional magician who had become interested in the illusionist possibilities of the cinématographe; when the Lumières refused to sell him one, he bought an animatograph projector from Paul in 1896 and reversed its mechanical principles to design his own camera. The following year he organized the Star Film company and constructed a small glass-enclosed studio on the grounds of his house at Montreuil, where he produced, directed, photographed, and acted in more than 500 films between 1896 and 1913. Méliès began to experiment with brief multi-scene films, such as *L’Affaire Dreyfus* (The Dreyfus Affair, 1899), which followed the logic of linear temporality to establish causal sequences and tell simple stories. By 1902 he had produced the influential 30-scene narrative *Le Voyage dans la lune* (A Trip to the Moon). Adapted from a novel by Jules Verne, it was nearly one reel in length (about 825 feet [251 metres], or 14 minutes). Méliès treated the frame of the film as the proscenium arch of a theatre stage, never once moving his camera or changing its position within a scene. He ultimately lost his audience in the late 1910s to filmmakers with more sophisticated narrative techniques. The origination of many such techniques is closely associated with the work of Edwin S. Porter, a freelance projectionist and engineer who served as director-cameraman for much of Edison’s output, starting with simple one-shot films (*Kansas Saloon Smashers*, 1901) and progressing rapidly to trick films (*The Finish of Bridget McKeen*, 1901) and short multiscene narratives based on political cartoons and contemporary events (*Sampson-Schley Controversy*, 1901; *Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison*, 1901). Porter also filmed the extraordinary *Pan-American Exposition by Night* (1901), which used time-lapse photography to produce a circular panorama of the exposition’s electrical illumination, and the 10-scene *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902), a narrative that simulates the sequencing of lantern slides to achieve a logical, if elliptical, spatial continuity. Motion pictures exist in time as well as space, and the major problem for early filmmakers was the establishment of temporal continuity from one shot to the next. Porter’s *the Great Train Robbery* (1903)



is widely acknowledged to be the first narrative film to have achieved such continuity of action. Comprising 14 separate shots of noncontinuous, nonoverlapping action, the film contains an early example of parallel editing, two credible back, or rear, projections (the projection from the rear of previously filmed action or scenery onto a translucent screen to provide the background for new action filmed in front of the screen), two camera pans, and several shots composed diagonally and staged in depth—a major departure from the frontally composed, theatrical staging of Méliès.

### Introduction of Colour

The first person to demonstrate a natural-colour motion picture system was British inventor Edward Raymond Turner, who applied for his patent in 1899, received it in 1900, and was able to show promising but very mechanically defective results in 1902. Turner's camera used a rotating disk of three colour filters to photograph colour separations on one roll of black-and-white film. A red, green or blue-filtered image was recorded on each successive frame of film. The finished film print was projected, three frames at a time, through the corresponding colour filters. After Turner's demise, the development of the process was taken over by George Albert Smith, who by 1906 had developed a simplified version of Turner's invention named Kinemacolor, which had red and green filters in the apertures of its rotating shutter, so that alternating red-filtered and green-filtered views of the subject were recorded on consecutive frames of the panchromatic black-and-white film. The first motion picture exhibited in Kinemacolor was an eight-minute short titled *A Visit to the Seaside*, which was trade-shown in September 1908. Kinemacolor released the first drama filmed in the process, *Checkmated*, in 1910, and the first feature-length documentary, *With Our King and Queen Through India*, in 1912. In 1913, French film entrepreneur and inventor Léon Gaumont unveiled Chronochrome, a full-colour additive system. The camera used three lenses with colour filters to photograph red, green and blue colour components simultaneously on consecutive frames of one strip of 35 mm black-and-white film. The projector had a corresponding triad of lenses. To reduce the strain imposed on the film as the mechanism in



each device pulled it down three frames at a time, frame height was reduced from the usual four film perforations to three, resulting in a widescreen image format identical with the modern 16:9 aspect ratio.

After experimenting with additive colour systems that filmed and projected the two colour components simultaneously, rather than in rapid alternation (thereby eliminating Kinemacolor's colour flicker and false colour fringes around rapidly moving objects), the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation developed a subtractive colour print process. The first publicly shown film using this process was *The Toll of the Sea* (1922) starring Anna May Wong. Technicolor's system was popular for a number of years, but it was an expensive process: shooting cost three times as much as black-and-white photography and printing costs were also much higher. By 1932, colour photography in general had nearly been abandoned by the major studios, but



Pic Courtesy: [www.listal.com/](http://www.listal.com/)



Pic Courtesy: <https://www.bydeluxe.com/digital-cinema>

major features. During late 1927, Warner Brothers released *The Jazz Singer*, which was mostly silent but contained what is generally regarded as the first synchronized dialogue (and singing) in a feature film. The early sound-on-disc processes such as Vitaphone were soon superseded by sound-on-film methods. Gradually, this trend became the convention amongst all films, with the growing popularity of talkies (talking cinema). Audience got engaged within the movies due to the aural and visual attraction that they provided. This development drastically altered the trajectory of cinema as an art form as sound made it able to be more expressive and intriguing for the audience.

## The Advent of Digital Cinema

Digital cinematography, is the process of capturing film images using digital image sensors rather than through film stock, has largely replaced analogue film technology. As digital technology has improved in recent years, this practice has become dominant. The basis for digital cameras is metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) image sensors. The first practical semiconductor image sensor was the charge-coupled device (CCD), based on MOS capacitor technology. Following the commercialization of CCD sensors during the late 1970s to early 1980s, the entertainment industry slowly began transitioning to digital imaging and digital video over the next two decades. The CCD was followed by the CMOS active-pixel sensor (CMOS sensor), developed in the 1990s. Beginning in the late 1980s, Sony began marketing the concept of «electronic-cinematography,» utilizing its analogue Sony HDVS professional video cameras. The effort met with very little success. However, this led to one of the earliest high definition video shot feature movies, *Julia and Julia* (1987). *Rainbow* (1996) was the world's first film utilizing extensive digital post production techniques. Shot entirely with Sony's first Solid State Electronic Cinematography cameras and featuring over 35 minutes of digital image processing and visual effects, all post production, sound effects, editing and scoring were completed digitally. The Digital High Definition image was transferred to 35mm negative via electron beam recorder for theatrical release. Since the mid-2010s most of the movies across the world are captured as well

then Technicolor introduced a new process which recorded all three primary colours. The proliferation of television in the early 1950s contributed to a heavy mid-century push for colour within the film industry. In 1947, only 12 percent of American films were made in colour. By 1954, that number had risen to over 50 percent. The colour boom was aided by the breakup of Technicolor's near-monopoly on the medium. The last stand of black-and-white films made by or released through the major Hollywood studios came in the mid-1960s, after which the use of colour film for all productions was effectively mandatory and exceptions were only rarely and grudgingly made.

## Filling the Silence

The era from the 1890s to the late 1920s, is commonly referred to as the silent era of film. To enhance the viewers' experience, silent films were commonly accompanied by live musicians and sometimes sound effects and even commentary spoken by the showman or projectionist. In most countries, intertitles came to be used to provide dialogue and narration for the film. Experimentation with sound film technology, both for recording and playback, was virtually constant throughout the silent era, but the twin problems of accurate synchronization and sufficient amplification had been difficult to overcome. In 1926, Hollywood studio Warner Bros. introduced the «Vitaphone» system, producing short films of live entertainment acts and public figures and adding recorded sound effects and orchestral scores to some of its



as distributed digitally. Digital film cameras with 4k output are approximately equal to 35mm film in their resolution and dynamic range capacity, however, digital film still has a slightly different look to analogue film. Digital cinema, the use of digital technology to distribute or project motion pictures has also largely replaced the historical use of reels of motion picture film, such as 35 mm film. Whereas traditional film reels had to be shipped to movie theatres, a digital movie can be distributed to cinemas in a number of ways: over the Internet or dedicated satellite links or by sending hard drives or optical discs such as Blu-ray discs. Digital movies are projected using a digital projector instead of a conventional film projector. As digital cinema technology improved in the early 2010s, most of the theatres across the world converted to digital.

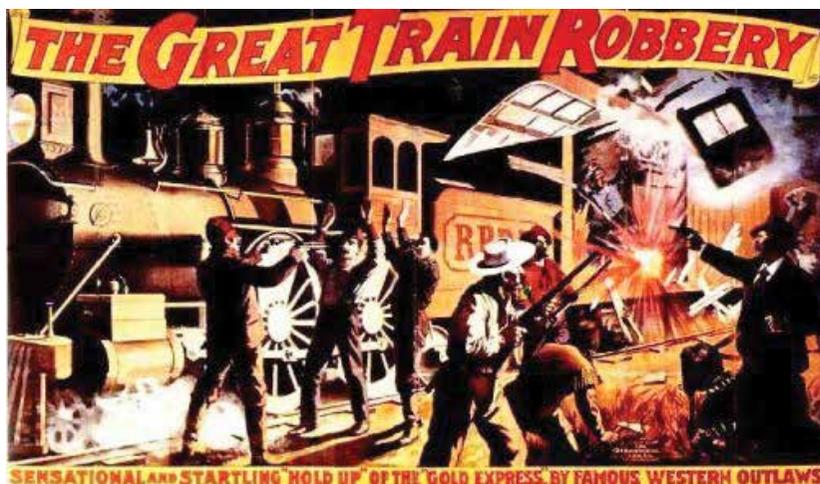
## **The Sound of Silence**

The earliest phase of commercial cinema is remarked as the 'Silent Era', but that doesn't mean the cinematic experience was bereft of sound or music, instead it refers to the age when the technology of sound synchronization with motion picture had not been developed for commercial use. Although, cinema was seldom witnessed in silence as theatres and opera houses which hosted film screenings often hired orchestras, musicians, narrators or even voice-over actors who would speak instead of the characters projected on the wide screen. Few remarkable films from this era were 'A trip to the moon' by Georges Méliès in 1902, Edwin S. Porter's 'The Great Train Robbery' in 1903, Charles Tait's 'Story of Kelly Gang' in 1906 which was the first feature-length multi-reel film in the world, Paul Panzer's 'The Thieving Hand' in 1908 and 'Cabira' by Giovanni Pastrone in 1914. The years of the First World War were a complex transitional period for the film industry. The exhibition of films changed from short one-reel programmes to feature films. Exhibition venues became larger and began charging higher prices. In the United States, these changes brought destruction to many film companies, the Vitagraph company being an exception. Film production began to shift to Los Angeles during World War I. The Universal Film Manufacturing Company was formed in 1912 as an umbrella company. New entrants included the Jesse Lasky Feature Play Company, and Famous

Players, both formed in 1913, and later amalgamated into Famous Players-Lasky. The biggest success of these years was David Wark Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). In France, film production shut down due to the general military mobilization of the country at the start of the war. Although film production began again in 1915, it was on a reduced scale, and the biggest companies gradually retired from production. Italian film production held up better, although so called «diva films», starring anguished female leads were a commercial failure. In Denmark, the Nordisk company increased its production so much in 1915 and 1916 that it could not sell all its films, which led to a very sharp decline in Danish production, and the end of Denmark's importance on the world film scene. The German film industry was seriously weakened by the war. The most important of the new film producers at the time was Joe May, who made a series of thrillers and adventure films through the war years, but Ernst Lubitsch also came into prominence with a series of very successful comedies and dramas. The general trend in the development of cinema was towards using the newly developed specifically filmic devices for expression of the narrative content of film stories, and combining this with the standard dramatic structures already in use in commercial theatre. Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915), brought out the moral dilemmas facing their characters in a subtle way. DeMille was also in close touch with the reality of contemporary American life. Maurice Tourneur was also highly ranked for the pictorial beauties of his films, together with the subtlety of his handling of fantasy, while at the same time he was capable of getting greater naturalism from his actors at appropriate moments as in *A Girl's Folly* (1917). Sidney Drew was the leader in developing "polite comedy", while slapstick was refined by Fatty Arbuckle and Charles Chaplin, who both started with Mack Sennett's Keystone company. They reduced the usual frenetic pace of Sennett's films to give the audience a chance to appreciate the subtlety and finesse of their movement, and the cleverness of their gags. By 1917 Chaplin was also introducing more dramatic plot into his films, and mixing the comedy with sentiment. In Russia, Yevgeni Bauer put a slow intensity of acting combined with Symbolist overtones onto film in a unique way. In Sweden, Victor Sjöström made a series of films that

combined the realities of people's lives with their surroundings in a striking manner, while Mauritz Stiller developed sophisticated comedy to a new level. In Germany, Ernst Lubitsch got his inspiration from the stage work of Max Reinhardt, both in bourgeois comedy and in spectacle, and applied this to his films, culminating in his *die Puppe* (The Doll), *die Austernprinzessin* (The Oyster Princess) and *Madame DuBarry*. In the 1920s, Soviet cinema was the most radically innovative. There, the craft of editing, especially, surged forward, going beyond its previous role in advancing a story. Sergei Eisenstein perfected the technique of so-called dialectical or intellectual montage, which strove to make non-linear, often violently clashing, images express ideas and provoke emotional and intellectual reactions in the viewer.

reluctant industrialists that “talking pictures”, or “talkies”, were the future. The change was remarkably swift and by the end of 1929, Hollywood was almost all-talkie, with several competing sound systems which were later standardized. Total changeover was slightly slower in the rest of the world, principally for economic reasons. Sound further tightened the grip of major studios in numerous countries: the vast expense of the transition overwhelmed smaller competitors, while the novelty of sound lured vastly larger audiences. In the case of the U.S., some historians credit sound with saving the Hollywood studio system in the face of the Great Depression. Thus, began what is now often called “The Golden Age of Hollywood”, which refers roughly to the period beginning with the introduction of sound until the late 1940s.



Pic Courtesy: [filmbinitio.blogspot.com/](http://filmbinitio.blogspot.com/)

## Introduction of Talkies

During late 1927, Warner Brothers released *The Jazz Singer*, which was mostly silent but contained what is generally regarded as the first synchronized dialogue (and singing) in a feature film; but this process was actually accomplished first by Charles Taze Russell in 1914 with the lengthy film *The Photo-Drama of Creation*. This drama consisted of picture slides and moving pictures synchronized with phonograph records of talks and music.

The early sound-on-disc processes such as Vitaphone were soon superseded by sound-on-film methods like Fox Movietone, DeForest Phonofilm, and RCA Photophone. The trend convinced the largely

Sound films started being produced in Asia from the 1930s. Notable early talkies from the cinema of Japan included Kenji Mizoguchi's *Sisters of the Gion* (Gion no shimai, 1936), *Osaka Elegy* (1936) and *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemums* (1939), along with Sadao Yamanaka's *Humanity and Paper Balloons* (1937) and Mikio Naruse's *Wife, Be Like A Rose!* (Tsuma Yo Bara No Yoni, 1935), which was one of the first Japanese films to gain a theatrical release in the U.S. However, with increasing censorship, the left-leaning tendency films of directors such as Daisuke Ito also began to come under attack. A few Japanese sound shorts were made in the 1920s and 1930s, but Japan's first feature-length talkie was *Fujiwara Yoshie no furusato* (1930), which used the 'Mina Talkie System'.

In 1935, Yasujiro Ozu also directed *An Inn in Tokyo*, which is considered a precursor to the neorealism genre. Ardeshir Irani released *Alam Ara*, the first Indian talking film, on March 14, 1931. As sound technology advanced the 1930s saw the rise of music in Indian cinema with musicals such as *Indra Sabha* and *Devi Devyani* marking the beginning of song-and-dance in India's films. Studios emerged across major cities such as Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai as filmmaking became an established craft by 1935, exemplified by the success of *Devdas*, which had managed to enthrall audiences nationwide.

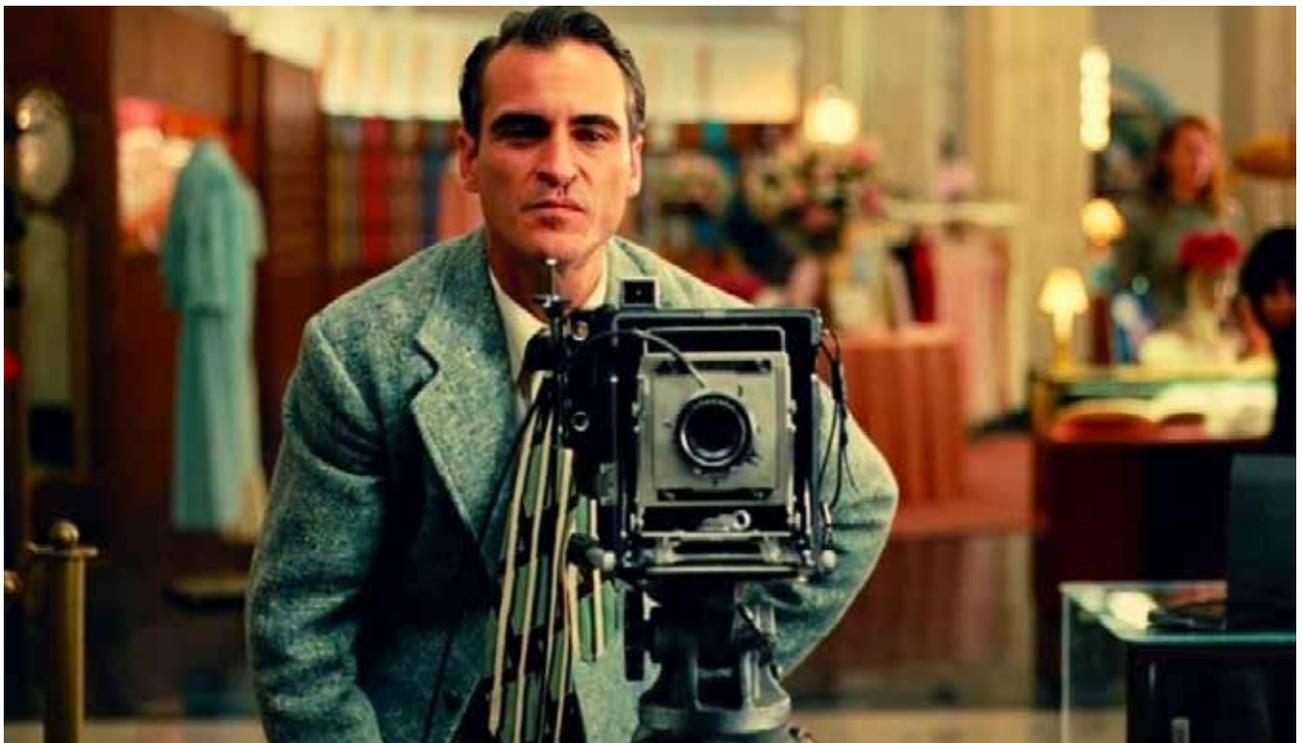
With the introduction of sound, the musical

film was born; the first classic-style Hollywood musical was *The Broadway Melody* (1929) and the form would find its first major creator in choreographer/ director Busby Berkeley. In France, avant-garde director René Clair made surreal use of song and dance in comedies like *Under the Roofs of Paris* (1930) and *Le Million* (1931). Universal Pictures began releasing gothic horror films like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* (both 1931). In 1933, RKO Pictures released Merian C. Cooper's classic "giant monster" film *King Kong*. The trend thrived best in India, where the influence of the country's traditional song-and-dance drama made the musical the basic form of most sound films virtually unnoticed by the Western world for decades, this Indian popular cinema would nevertheless become the world's most prolific.

### **The Wonder of Colour**

It was believed that colour films were first projected in 1909 at the Palace Theatre in London (the main problem with the colour being that the technique, created by George Smith, (Kinemacolor) only used two colours: green and red, which were mixed additively). But in fact, it was in 1901 when

the first colour film in history was created. This untitled film was directed by photographer Edward Raymond Turner and his patron Frederick Marshall Lee. The way they did it was to use black and white film rolls, but have green, red, and blue filters go over the camera individually as it shot. To complete the film, they joined the original footage and filters on a special projector. However, both the shooting of the film and its projection suffered from major unrelated issues that, eventually, sank the idea. Subsequently, in 1916, the technicolour technique arrived (trichromatic procedure (green, red, blue). Its use required a triple photographic impression, incorporation of chromatic filters and cameras of enormous dimensions). The first audio-visual piece that was completely realized with this technique was the short of Walt Disney "Flowers and Trees", directed by Burt Gillett in 1932. Even so, the first film to be performed with this technique will be "The Vanities Fair" (1935) by Rouben Mamoulian. Later on, the technicolour was extended mainly in the musical field as "The Wizard of Oz" or "Singin' in the Rain", in films such as "The Adventures of Robin Hood" or the animation film, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs".





Pic Courtesy: [www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au)

## Second World War and its Aftermath (1940's)

Gave way for the desire of wartime propaganda against the opposition which created a renaissance in the film industry in Britain, with realistic war dramas like *49th Parallel* (1941), *Went the Day Well?* (1942), *The Way Ahead* (1944) and Noël Coward and David Lean's celebrated naval film *In Which We Serve* in 1942, which won a special Academy Award. These existed alongside more flamboyant films like Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) and *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), as well as Laurence Olivier's 1944 film *Henry V*, based on the Shakespearean history *Henry V*. The success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* allowed Disney to make more animated features like *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942). The onset of US involvement in World War II also brought a proliferation of films as both patriotism and propaganda. American propaganda films included *Desperate Journey* (1942), *Mrs. Miniver* (1942), *Forever and a Day* (1943) and *Objective, Burma!* (1945). Notable American films from the war years include the anti-Nazi *Watch on the*

*Rhine* (1943), scripted by Dashiell Hammett; *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), Hitchcock's route of a script by Thornton Wilder; the George M. Cohan biopic, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942), starring James Cagney, and the immensely popular *Casablanca*, with Humphrey Bogart. Bogart would star in 36 films between 1934 and 1942 including John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), one of the first films now considered a classic film noir. In 1941, RKO Pictures released *Citizen Kane* made by Orson Welles. It is often considered the greatest film of all time. It would set the stage for the modern motion picture, as they revolutionized film storytelling. The strictures of wartime also brought an interest in more fantastical subjects. These included Britain's Gainsborough melodramas (including *The Man in Grey* and *The Wicked Lady*), and films like *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, *Heaven Can Wait*, *I Married a Witch* and *Blithe Spirit*. Val Lewton also produced a series of atmospheric and influential small-budget horror films, some of the more famous examples being *Cat People*, *Isle of the Dead* and *The Body Snatcher*. The decade probably also saw the so-called "women's pictures", such as *Now, Voyager*, *Random Harvest* and *Mildred Pierce* at the peak



of their popularity. 1946 saw RKO Radio releasing *It's a Wonderful Life* directed by Italian-born filmmaker Frank Capra. Soldiers returning from the war would provide the inspiration for films like *The Best Years of Our Lives*, and many of those in the film industry had served in some capacity during the war. Samuel Fuller's experiences in World War II would influence his largely autobiographical films of later decades such as *The Big Red One*. The Actor's Studio was founded in October 1947 by Elia Kazan, Robert Lewis, and Cheryl Crawford, and the same year Oskar Fischinger filmed *Motion Painting No. 1*. In 1943, *Ossessione* was screened in Italy, marking the beginning of Italian neorealism. Major films of this type during the 1940s included *Bicycle Thieves*, *Rome, Open City*, and *La Terra Trema*. In 1952 *Umberto D* was released, usually considered the last film of this type. In the late 1940s, in Britain, Ealing Studios embarked on their series of celebrated comedies, including *Whisky Galore!*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Man in the White Suit*, and Carol Reed directed his influential thrillers *Odd Man Out*, *The Fallen Idol* and *The Third Man*. David Lean was also rapidly becoming a force in world cinema with *Brief Encounter* and his Dickens adaptations *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*, and Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger would experience the best of their creative partnership with films like *Black Narcissus* and *The Red Shoes*. The cinema of China experienced a 'Golden Age' in the late 1940s. In 1946, Cai Chusheng returned to Shanghai to revive the Lianhua name as the "Lianhua Film Society." This in turn became Kunlun Studios which would go on to become one of the most important Chinese studios of the era, putting out the classics, *Myriads of Lights* (1948), *The Spring River Flows East* (1947), and *Crows and Sparrows* (1949). *Wenhua's* romantic drama *Spring in a Small Town* (1948), a film by director Fei Mu shortly prior to the revolution, is often regarded by Chinese film critics as one of the most important films in the history of Chinese cinema, it was named as the greatest Chinese-language film ever made by the Hong Kong Film Awards in 2004.

### **1950's and 1960's: The Golden Age**

The Cold War era zeitgeist translated into a type of near-paranoia manifested in themes such

as invading armies of evil aliens, (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The War of the Worlds*); and communist fifth columnists, (*The Manchurian Candidate*). During the immediate post-war years, the cinematic industry was also threatened by television, and the increasing popularity of the medium meant that some film theatres would bankrupt and close. The demise of the "studio system" spurred the self-commentary of films like *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952). In 1950, the Lettrists avant-gardists caused riots at the Cannes Film Festival, when Isidore Isou's *Treatise on Slime and Eternity* was screened. After their criticism of Charlie Chaplin and split with the movement, the Ultra-Lettrists continued to cause disruptions when they showed their new hypergraphical techniques. The most notorious film is Guy Debord's *Howls for Sade* of 1952. Distressed by the increasing number of closed theatres, studios and companies would find new and innovative ways to bring audiences back. These included attempts to widen their appeal with new screen formats. Cinemascope, which would remain a 20th Century Fox distinction until 1967, was announced with 1953's *The Robe*. VistaVision, Cinerama, and Todd-AO boasted a "bigger is better" approach to marketing films to a dwindling US audience. This resulted in the revival of epic films to take advantage of the new big screen formats. Some of the most successful examples of these Biblical and historical spectacles include *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *The Vikings* (1958), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960) and *El Cid* (1961). During this period, a number of other significant films were produced in Todd-AO, developed by Mike Todd shortly before his death, including *Oklahoma!* (1955), *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956), *South Pacific* (1958) and *Cleopatra* (1963) plus many more. The fad for 3-D film would last for only two years, 1952–1954, and helped sell *House of Wax* and *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Producer William Castle would tout films featuring "Emergo" "Percepto", the first of a series of gimmicks that would remain popular marketing tools for Castle and others throughout the 1960s. In the U.S., a post-WW2 tendency toward questioning the establishment and societal norms and the early activism of the civil rights movement was reflected in Hollywood films such as *Blackboard*



Jungle (1955), On the Waterfront (1954), Paddy Chayefsky's Marty and Reginald Rose's 12 Angry Men (1957). Disney continued making animated films, notably; Cinderella (1950), Peter Pan (1953), Lady and the Tramp (1955), and Sleeping Beauty (1959). He began getting more involved in live action films, producing classics like 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1954), and Old Yeller (1957). Television began competing seriously with films projected in theatres, but surprisingly it promoted more filmgoing rather than curtailing it.

The Japanese New Wave began in the late 1950s and continued into the 1960s. Other famous Japanese filmmakers from this period include Kenji Mizoguchi, Mikio Naruse, Hiroshi Inagaki and Nagisa Oshima. This era of Japanese cinema was regarded as 'Golden Age' of the 1950s and 1960s, successful films included Rashomon (1950), Seven Samurai (1954) and The Hidden Fortress (1958) by Akira Kurosawa, as well as Yasujirō Ozu's Tokyo Story (1953) and Ishirō Honda's Godzilla (1954).

Indian cinema experienced its 'Golden Age' during 1950s and 1960s, it was producing 200 films annually, while Indian independent films gained greater recognition through international film festivals. One of the most famous was The Apu Trilogy (1955–1959) from critically acclaimed Bengali film director Satyajit Ray, whose films had a profound influence on world cinema, by his cinematic style. Michael Sragow of The Atlantic Monthly remarked that "youthful coming-of-age dramas that have flooded art houses since the mid-fifties owe a tremendous debt to the Apu trilogy". Subrata Mitra's

cinematographic technique of bounce lighting also originates from The Apu Trilogy. Satyajit Ray's success led to the establishment of the 'Parallel Cinema' movement, which was at its peak during the 1950s and 1960s. Other famous Indian filmmakers from this period include Guru Dutt, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Bimal Roy, K. Asif and Mehboob Khan.

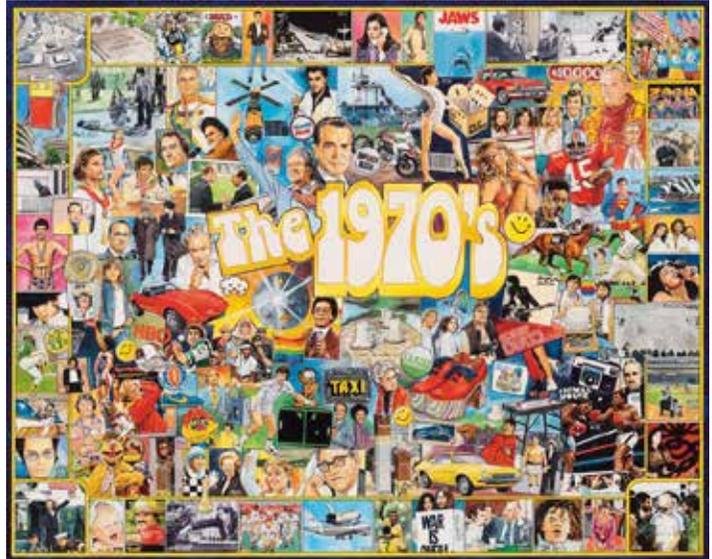
The cinema of South Korea also experienced a 'Golden Age' in the late 1950s and 1960s, beginning with director Lee Kyu-hwan's tremendously successful remake of Chunhyang-jon (1955). That year also saw the release of Yangsan Province by the renowned director, Kim Ki-young, marking the beginning of his productive career. Both the quality and quantity of filmmaking had increased rapidly by the end of the 1950s. South Korean films, such as Lee Byeong-il's 1956 comedy Sijibganeun nal (The Wedding Day), had begun winning international awards. In contrast to the beginning of the 1950s, when only 5 movies were made per year, 111 films were produced in South Korea in 1959. The year 1960 saw the production of Kim Ki-young's The Housemaid and Yu Hyun-Mok's Aimless Bullet, both of which have been listed among the best Korean films ever made.

### 1970's: Rise of Commercial Cinema

The New Hollywood was the period following the decline of the studio system during the 1950s and 1960s and the end of the production code. During the 1970s, filmmakers increasingly depicted explicit content and showed gunfight and battle scenes that included graphic images of bloody deaths – a good

example of this is Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972). Post-classical cinema had changed methods of storytelling of the New Hollywood producers. The new methods of drama and characterization played upon audience expectations acquired during the classical /Golden Age period: story chronology may be scrambled, storylines may feature unsettling "twist endings", main characters may behave in a morally ambiguous fashion, and the lines between the antagonist and protagonist may be blurred. The beginnings of post-classical storytelling may be seen in 1940s and 1950s film noir films, in films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and in Hitchcock's *Psycho*. 1971 marked the release of controversial films like *Straw Dogs*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *The French Connection* and *Dirty Harry*. This sparked heated controversy over the perceived escalation of violence in cinema. During the 1970s, a new group of American filmmakers emerged, such as Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Wood Allen, Terrence Malick, and Robert Altman. This coincided with the increasing popularity of the auteur theory in film literature and the media, which posited that a film director's films express their personal vision and creative insights. The development of the auteur style of filmmaking helped to give these directors far greater control over their projects than would have been possible in earlier eras. This led to some great critical and commercial successes, like Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, Coppola's *The Godfather* films, William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, Altman's *Nashville*, Allen's *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan*, Malick's *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*, and Polish immigrant Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*. It also, however, resulted in some failures, including Peter Bogdanovich's *At Long Last Love* and Michael Cimino's hugely expensive Western epic *Heaven's Gate*, which helped to bring about the demise of its backer, United Artists. The financial disaster of *Heaven's Gate* marked the end of the visionary «auteur» directors of the «New Hollywood», who had unrestrained creative and financial freedom to develop films. The phenomenal success in the 1970s of Spielberg's *Jaws* originated the concept of the modern «blockbuster». However, the enormous

success of George Lucas' 1977 film *Star Wars* led to much more than just the popularization of blockbuster film-making. The film's revolutionary use of special effects, sound editing and music had led it to become widely regarded as one of the single most important films in the medium's history, as well as the most influential film of the 1970s.



Hollywood studios increasingly focused on producing a smaller number of very large budget films with massive marketing and promotional campaigns. This trend had already been foreshadowed by the commercial success of disaster films such as *The Poseidon Adventure* and *The Towering Inferno*.

In world cinema, the 1970s saw a dramatic increase in the popularity of martial arts films, largely due to its reinvention by Bruce Lee, who departed from the artistic style of traditional Chinese martial arts films and added a much greater sense of realism to them with his Jeet Kune Do style. This began with *The Big Boss* (1971), which was a major success across Asia. However, he didn't gain fame in the Western world until shortly after his death in 1973, when *Enter the Dragon* was released. The film went on to become the most successful martial arts film in cinematic history, popularized the martial arts film genre across the world, and cemented Bruce Lee's status as a cultural icon. Hong Kong action cinema, however, was in decline due to a wave of "Bruceploitation" films. This trend eventually came to an end in 1978 with

the martial arts comedy films, *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* and *Drunken Master*, directed by Yuen Woo-ping and starring Jackie Chan, laying the foundations for the rise of Hong Kong action cinema in the 1980s.

The cinema of India, saw a decline in 'Parallel Cinema' and the rise of commercial Hindi cinema in the 1970s through the form of enduring masala films, a genre largely pioneered by screenwriter duo Salim-Javed, with films such as the Mumbai underworld crime drama *Deewaar* (1975) and the «Curry Western» movie *Sholay* (1975), which solidified Amitabh Bachchan's position as a lead actor.

The end of the decade saw the first major international marketing of Australian cinema, as Peter Weir's films *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *The Last Wave* and Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* gained critical acclaim. In 1979, Australian filmmaker George Miller also garnered international attention for his violent, low-budget action film *Mad Max*.

## 1980's: The Television Decade

During the 1980s, audiences began increasingly watching films on their home VCRs. In the early part of that decade, the film studios tried legal action to ban home ownership of VCRs as a violation of copyright, which proved unsuccessful. Eventually, the sale and rental of films on home video became a significant "second venue" for exhibition of films, and an additional source of revenue for the film industries. Direct-to-video (niche) markets usually offered lower quality, cheap productions that were not deemed very suitable for the general audiences of television and theatrical releases.

The Lucas-Spielberg started to dominate "Hollywood" cinema for much of the 1980s, and lead to much imitation. Two follow-ups to *Star Wars*, three to *Jaws*, and three *Indiana Jones* films helped to make sequels of successful films more of an expectation than ever before. Lucas also launched THX Ltd, a division of Lucasfilm in 1982, while Spielberg enjoyed one of the decade's greatest successes in *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* the same year. 1982 also saw the release of Disney's *Tron* which was one of the first films from a major studio to use computer graphics extensively. American independent cinema struggled more during

the decade, although Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980), *After Hours* (1985), and *The King of Comedy* (1983) helped to establish him as one of the most critically acclaimed American film makers of the era. Also, during 1983 *Scarface* was released, which was very profitable and resulted in even greater fame for its leading actor Al Pacino. Probably the most successful film commercially was Tim Burton's 1989 version of Bob Kane's creation, *Batman*, which broke box-office records. Jack Nicholson's portrayal of the demented Joker earned him a total of \$60,000,000 after figuring in his percentage of the gross.

British cinema was given a boost during the early 1980s by the arrival of David Puttnam's company Goldcrest Films. The films *Chariots of Fire*, *Gandhi*, *The Killing Fields* and *A Room with a View* appealed to a "middlebrow" audience which was increasingly being ignored by the major Hollywood studios. While the films of the 1970s had helped to define modern blockbuster motion pictures, the way "Hollywood" released its films would now change. Films, for the most part, would premiere in a wider number of theatres, although, to this day, some films still premiere using the route of the limited/roadshow release system. Against some expectations, the rise of the multiplex cinema did not allow fewer mainstream films to be shown, but simply allowed the major blockbusters to be given an even greater number of screenings. However, films that had been overlooked in cinemas were increasingly being given a second chance on home video.

During the 1980s, Japanese cinema experienced a revival, largely due to the success of anime films. At the beginning of the 1980s, *Space Battleship Yamato* (1973) and *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979), both of which were unsuccessful as television series, were remade as films and became hugely successful in Japan. In particular, *Mobile Suit Gundam* sparked the *Gundam* franchise of Real Robot mecha anime. The success of *Macross: Do You Remember Love?* also sparked a *Macross* franchise of mecha anime. This was also the decade when Studio Ghibli was founded. The studio produced Hayao Miyazaki's first fantasy films, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984) and *Castle in the Sky* (1986), as well as Isao Takahata's *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), all of which were very successful in Japan and received worldwide critical acclaim. Original video animation (OVA) films also began during this decade; the most influential



of these early OVA films was Noboru Ishiguro's cyb erpunk film Megazone 23 (1985). The most famous anime film of this decade was Katsuhiro Otomo's cyberpunk film Akira (1988), which although initially unsuccessful at Japanese theaters, went on to become an international success.

Hong Kong action cinema, which was in a state of decline due to endless Bruceploitation films after the death of Bruce Lee, also experienced a revival in the 1980s, largely due to the reinvention of the action film genre by Jackie Chan. He had previously combined the comedy film and martial arts film genres successfully in the 1978 films Snake in the Eagle's Shadow and Drunken Master. The next step he took was in combining this comedy martial arts genre with a new emphasis on elaborate and highly dangerous stunts, reminiscent of the silent film era. The first film in this new style of action cinema was Project A (1983), which saw the formation of the Jackie Chan Stunt Team as well as the «Three Brothers» (Chan, Sammo Hung and Yuen Biao). The film added elaborate, dangerous stunts to the fights and slapstick humor, and became a huge success throughout the Far East. As a result, Chan continued this trend with martial arts action films containing even more elaborate and dangerous stunts, including Wheels on Meals (1984), Police Story (1985), Armour of God (1986), Project A Part II (1987), Police Story 2 (1988), and Dragons Forever (1988). Other new trends which began in the 1980s were the «girls with guns» subgenre, for which Michelle Yeoh gained fame; and especially the «heroic bloodshed» genre, revolving around Triads, largely pioneered by John Woo and for which Chow Yun-fat became famous. These Hong Kong action trends were later adopted by many Hollywood action films in the 1990s and 2000s.

## 1990's:

The early 1990s saw the development of a commercially successful independent cinema in the United States. Although cinema was increasingly dominated by special-effects films such as Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991), Jurassic Park (1993) and Titanic (1997), the latter is amongst the highest-grossing film of all time directed by James Cameron. Quentin Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs (1992) had significant commercial success both at the cinema and on home video. Filmmakers associated with the Danish film movement Dogme 95 introduced a manifesto aimed to purify filmmaking. Its first few films gained worldwide critical acclaim, after which the movement slowly faded out. Few other movies which made a mark in the history of movies made in this decade were Shawshank Redemption and Forest Gump.

Major American studios began to create their own "independent" production companies to finance and produce non-mainstream fare. One of the most successful independents of the 1990s, Miramax Films, was bought by Disney the year before the release of Tarantino's runaway hit Pulp Fiction in 1994. The same year marked the beginning of film and video distribution online. Animated films aimed at family audiences also regained their popularity, with Disney's Beauty and the Beast (1991), Aladdin (1992), and The Lion King (1994). During 1995, the first feature-length computer-animated feature, Toy Story, was produced by Pixar Animation Studios and released by Disney. After the success of Toy Story, computer animation would grow to become the dominant technique for feature-length animation, which would allow competing film companies such as DreamWorks Animation and 20th Century Fox to effectively compete with Disney with successful films of their own. During the late 1990s, another cinematic



Pic Courtesy: Google images

transition began, from physical film stock to digital cinema technology. Meanwhile, DVDs became the new standard for consumer video, replacing VHS tapes.

### 2000's:

This decade involved many significant developments in the film industries around the world, especially in the technology used. Building on developments in the 1990s, computers were used to create effects that would have previously been more expensive, from the subtle erasing of surrounding islands in *Cast Away* (leaving Tom Hanks' character stranded with no other land in sight) to the vast battle scenes such as those in *The Matrix* sequels and *300*. The 2000s saw the resurgence of several genres. Fantasy film franchises dominated the box office with *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy (beginning in 1999), *The Chronicles of Narnia*, etc. Comic book superhero films became a mainstream blockbuster genre following the releases of *X-Men*, *Unbreakable*, and *Spider-Man*. *Gladiator* similarly sparked the revival of epic films, while the Bollywood-inspired *Moulin Rouge!* did the same for musical films in the Western world, where Indian musicals such as *Lagaan* and *Devdas* also began gaining mainstream exposure. The battle royale genre also began with the release of the Japanese film *Battle Royale*. In addition, film genres not known for their popular appeal in North America became increasingly attractive to filmgoers: films in foreign languages like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *The Passion of the Christ* and *Letters from Iwo Jima*; and documentary films like *An Inconvenient Truth*, *March of the Penguins*, *Super-Size Me*, and *Fahrenheit 9/11*, became very successful.

Computer animation replaced traditional

animation as the dominant medium for animated feature films in American cinema: DreamWorks Animation was the dominant animation studio in that decade. Pixar and 20th Century Fox Animation followed close behind (the latter after Fox Animation Studios was closed down on October 31, 2000). Further extending to the exploration of motion capture technology in such films as *The Polar Express*. Additionally, hand-drawn anime films gained more exposure outside of Japan with the release of *Spirited Away*.

### 2010's

Superhero films dominated the box office in this decade. Animated films in the 2010s remained predominantly computer-generated. Traditional animation styles lost favor among general audiences, although (2D) anime remained popular, especially with the success of *Your Name*, *The Secret World of Arrietty* and *One Piece: Film Z*. 3D films gained popularity, led by *Avatar* and *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs* in late 2009. In 2010, *Avatar* became the first film to gross more than US\$2 billion. 3D releases attained great success. 360-degree video also became widely available with the introduction of consumer virtual reality. Movies and television struggled to maintain their position, as online viewing grew rapidly. Internet piracy was a major concern for the industry. In 2012, Viacom launched a US\$1 billion lawsuit against YouTube for copyright infringement. In early 2012, the United States Congress began debating the SOPA and PIPA bills that were heavily lobbied by the entertainment industry. *Avengers: Endgame* grossed over \$2.7 billion worldwide, becoming the highest-grossing superhero film of all time and the highest-grossing movie of all time, surpassing 2009's *Avatar*. ■

Team, World Culture Forum

# PARASITE (2019)

**D**irected and written by Bong Joon-ho, a South Korean film director and screenwriter. He garnered international acclaim for his second feature film, the slasher crime drama *Memories of Murder* (2003), before achieving commercial success with his subsequent films, the dark comedy monster movie *The Host* (2006) and the science-fiction action film *Snowpiercer* (2013), both of which are listed among the highest grossing films of all time in South Korea.

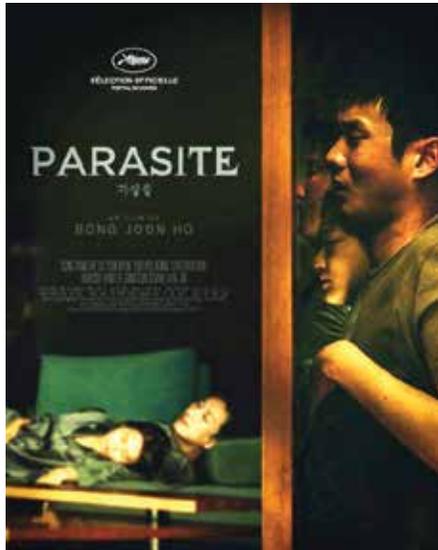
*Parasite*, a South Korean tragedy thriller, is one of the most critically acclaimed movies of the previous decade, thematised in the backdrop of class conflict and social inequality. It has received various accolades for its bold depiction of class struggle and unique screen play such as *Palme d'Or* at Cannes Film Festival 2019, Best Original Screenplay at the 73rd British Academy Awards and Oscars for Best Film, Best Director, Best International Film and Best Original Screenplay in 2020.

## Plot

*Parasite* narrates a tale of two families namely, Kim and Park family, each consisting of four members, as in, father, mother, son and daughter. Although, the Kim family has been set as the protagonists in the film who live in a small basement apartment located in the slums of South Korea. The members of Kim family are victims of social stratification as their poverty prohibits them from pursuing formal education and are engaged in precarious employment of folding pizza boxes for a local pizzeria. On the other hand, the Park family, are wealthy, living in a vast, elegant home with green lawns and gleaming floors and a basement stocked with every imaginable need. The paths of these families cross when Min-hyuk, a friend of Kim Ki-woo (son of Kim family) visits Kim family in their humble residence and gifts them a scholar's rock, which

symbolised the promise of wealth and wisdom to the family. Min-hyuk and Kim Ki-woo go out to celebrate Min-hyuk's selection to pursue his studies abroad, where he suggests Kim Ki-woo to take over his job as a tutor to Park family's daughter Park Da-hye by posing as university student. When asked why Min-hyuk was offering this job to Kim Ki-woo and not his fellow university students, Min-hyuk confesses that he is in love with his student, Da-hye and plans to propose her when he gets back from his studies abroad. Kim ji-woo accepts his friend's suggestion and forges documents to pose as a university student. Lured by easy money, he encourages his sister, Kim Ki-jeong to likewise fake her

credentials and get hired as an art therapist for the Parks' young son, Park Da-song. The siblings then conspire to replace the existing staff at Park residence with their remaining family members, and they successfully plot their father, Kim Ki-taek to be employed as Park family's chauffeur and their mother, Chung-sook as the Park residence's housekeeper. When the Parks leave home to go on a camping trip for Da-song's birthday, the Kim family revel in the luxuries of the mansion. While celebrating the rare occasion of having the mansion to themselves, Kim family indulges in a conversation where they express their happiness regarding the



change in their lives and the Chung-sook, Kim family's mother expresses that she would always want to be humble and kind even if they someday become rich and prosperous. Amidst their conversation, they hear a door bell which alarms them and they find out that Moon-gwang, the previous housekeeper of the mansion who was replaced by Chung-sook unexpectedly shows up at the door. The members of Kim family deliberate if they should open the door and let her in to which Chung-sook asserts that they should let her in and irrespective of this not being the popular decision amongst the members of Kim family. In the spirit of being kind, Chung-sook, opens the door and lets Moon-gwang



inside. As soon as Moon-gwang enters the mansion, she rushes towards a secret bunker below the basement of the house, where her husband, Geun-sae, who has been living in the basement bunker for over four years to hide from loan sharks. Chaos ensues as Moon-gwang finds out the truth about the Kim family, and she threatens to tell the Parks if they do not, in turn, keep her secret. A fight soon breaks out between the families. Mrs. Park suddenly calls, informing Chung-sook that due to the inclement weather, they have cancelled their camping trip and are coming home. The Kims barely manage to clean up and lock up Geun-sae and Moon-gwang back into the basement before the Parks return home. Moon-gwang nearly escapes, but Chung-sook pushes her down the stairs of the basement, causing a fatal concussion. Mrs. Park tells Chung-sook that years ago Da-song suffered a traumatic seizure when he witnessed a 'ghost' (Geun-sae) rising from the basement, and that the Parks have celebrated Da-song's birthday outside of their place ever since. As the remaining Kims hide under the centre table of Park's mansion, Ki-taek overhears Mr. Park complaining about the smell of his body. They soon manage to escape undetected, only to find their home flooded upon returning; Ki-taek retrieves the family's valuables while Ki-woo retrieves the Scholar's rock. They would spend their night at a gymnasium along with other residents of their neighbourhood affected by the flood. The next day, Mrs. Park throws a lavish party for Da-song's birthday, and invites the Kim family. Ki-woo heads down to the bunker with the scholar's rock, intending to put the couple out of their misery. He finds Moon-gwang dead, but is attacked by Geun-sae, who escapes the basement and bludgeons Ki-woo with the rock. Seeking to avenge Moon-gwang's death, he takes a kitchen knife and stabs Ki-jeong in the chest in front of the horrified guests. Upon seeing Geun-sae, Da-song's traumatic memory triggers a severe seizure. Panic ensues as Chung-sook tackles Geun-sae and after a brief struggle, impales him with a skewer. As Ki-taek tends to the bleeding Ki-jeong, Mr. Park demands him to hand him the car keys to drive Da-song to the hospital. Ki-taek throws the car keys, which lands under the dying Geun-sae. As Mr. Park retrieves the keys, he recoils from Geun-sae's body odour. Ki-taek, upon witnessing Mr. Park's reaction, fatally stabs Mr. Park in the chest before escaping. Weeks later, it is revealed that Ki-woo has survived the attack and wakes up from his coma. He and

Chung-sook are put on probation for fraud, while Ki-jeong has died from her wounds and Ki-taek has gone missing. Ki-woo continues to visit the Parks' home, which has now been sold, and sees a message in Morse code from the flickering lights. It is from Ki-taek, who is now living in the bunker. Ki-woo writes a letter to his father, vowing that he will one day earn enough money to purchase the house, free his father, and reunite as a family together. Movie ends with the scene depicting Kim Ki-woo fulfilling the promise made to his father in the letter and he manages to buy the mansion where he moves along with his mother, and Kim Ki-taek walks out of the secret bunker in to sun's light and finds his wife and son waiting for him in the garden where he reaches out to his son, pulls him into his arms and breaks down to tears.

## Review

Parasite is gripping irrespective of the language barrier, there is a sense of captivating energy that Bong Joon-ho's direction adds to this tragic thriller such that keeps audience guessing and shocking them with every next sequence. Amongst all the beautifully cinematized scenes, there is a particular sequence where Chung-sook (mother of Kim family) kicks Moon-gwang (the housekeeper of Park family) down the stairs, right after she expresses to her family that even if she would come into being rich, she would always be kind. This particular scene showcases the helplessness that humans face against the security of their material well being and how often because of that helplessness, we end up doing what we commit ourselves against. That staircase is symbolic to the social ladder which all humans inevitably are a part of and when our position in the social ladder faces a tumult, we don't hesitate from resorting to immoral means. It mirrors our hypocrisy and helplessness against the system we find ourselves in. The disgust that Park Dong-ik holds towards Kim Ki-taek because of the way he smelled and the apathy towards where he comes from and the failure to acknowledge Kim Ki-taek as a fellow human being instead of treating him as his employee who gets a wage to perform the duties towards him, drives Kim Ki-taek to that Park Dong-ik's life, this was a drastic turn of events in the film which would not have been suspected. Another, fascinating aspect of the film lies in the dedication of Kim Ki-woo (son of Kim family) towards his father, Kim Ki-taek and his will to rescue him. ■ Team, World Cultural Forum

# PATHER PANCHALI

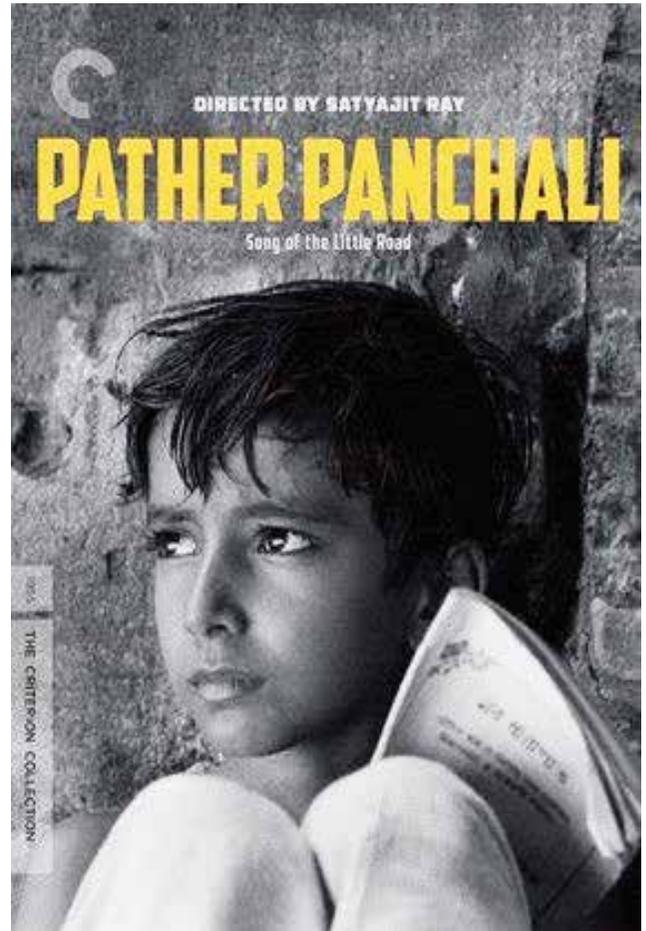
## (SONG OF THE LITTLE ROAD), 1955



**D**irected by Satyajit Ray, an Indian filmmaker, screenwriter, music composer, graphic artist, lyricist and author, widely regarded as one of the greatest filmmakers of all time. Starting his career as a commercial artist, Ray

was drawn into independent filmmaking after meeting French filmmaker Jean Renoir and viewing Vittorio De Sica's Italian neorealist film *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) during a visit to London. Ray directed 36 films, including feature films, documentaries and shorts. He was also a fiction writer, publisher, illustrator, calligrapher, music composer, graphic designer and film critic. He authored several short stories and novels, meant primarily for young children and teenagers. He was awarded an honorary degree by Oxford University. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded him an Honorary Academy Award. Ray is the first and the only Indian, yet, to receive the honour. Twenty-four days before his death, Ray accepted the award in a gravely ill condition, calling it the best achievement of his movie-making career.

*Pather Panchali* (*Song of the Little Road*) is an Indian Bengali-language drama film, based on Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's 1929 Bengali novel of the same title and is Satyajit Ray's directorial debut. The first film in *The Apu Trilogy*, *Pather Panchali* depicts the childhood of the protagonist Apu (Subir Banerjee) and his elder sister Durga (Uma Dasgupta) and the harsh village life of their poor family. The tale of Apu's life is continued in two subsequent instalments of Ray's trilogy: *Aparajito* (*The Unvanquished*, 1956) and *Apur Sansar* (*The World of Apu*, 1959). *Pather Panchali* is regarded as a turning point in Indian cinema, as it was among the films that pioneered the Parallel Cinema movement, which espoused authenticity and social realism. It was



Pic Courtesy: letterboxd.com

premiered on 3 May 1955 during an exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art, *Pather Panchali* was released in Calcutta later during the same year to an enthusiastic reception. A special screening was attended by the Chief Minister of West Bengal and the Prime Minister of India. Critics have praised its realism, humanity, and soul-stirring qualities. The film received many accolades such as India's National Film Award for Best Feature Film in 1955 and Best Human Document Award at 1956 Cannes Film Festival, establishing Satyajit Ray as one of India's most distinguished filmmakers.

## CAST

Kanu Banerjee as **Harihar Roy**  
Karuna Banerjee as **Sarbajaya Roy**  
Subir Banerjee as **Apurba Roy (Apu)**  
Runki Banerjee as **Durga Roy (child)**  
Uma Dasgupta as **Durga Roy (teenager)**  
Chunibala Devi as **Indir Thakrun, the old aunt**  
Tulsi Chakraborty as **Prasanna, school teacher**  
Haren Banerjee as **Chinibas**



Pic Courtesy: csmonitor.com

### Plot

In Nischindipur, situated in rural Bengal, during the 1910's, Harihar Roy earns a meagre living as a pujari (priest), but aspires of a better career as a poet and playwright. His wife Sarbajaya takes care of their children, Durga and Apu, and Harihar's elderly cousin, Indir Thakrun. Because of their limited resources, Sarbajaya resents having to share her home with the old Indir, who often steals food from their already bare kitchen. At times, Sarbajaya's taunts become offensive, forcing Indir to take temporary refuge in the home of another relative. Durga is fond of Indir and often gives her fruit she has stolen from a wealthy neighbour's orchard. One day, the neighbour's wife accuses Durga of stealing a bead necklace, Durga denies this allegation and blames Sarbajaya for encouraging her tendency to steal.

As the elder sibling, Durga cares for Apu with motherly affection, although, she spares no opportunity to tease him. Together, they share the simple joys of life such as, sitting quietly under a tree, viewing pictures in a travelling vendor's bioscope, running after the candy man who passes through the village, and watching a jatra (folk theatre)

performed by a troupe of actors. Every evening they are delighted by the sound of a distant train's whistle. One day, they run away from home to catch a glimpse of the train, only to discover Indir sitting dead on their return.

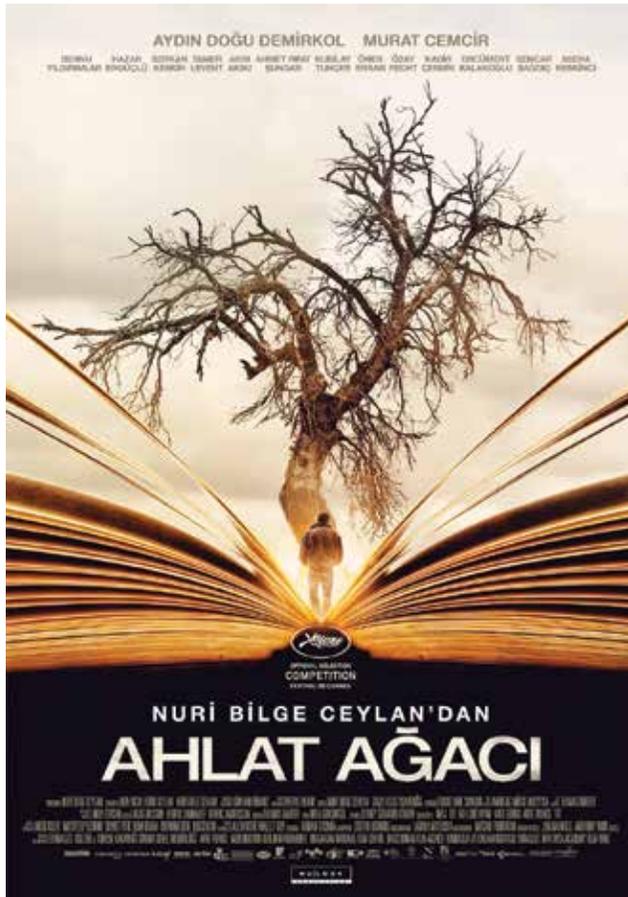
Unable to earn a good living in the village, Harihar travels to the city to seek a better job. He promises Sarbajaya that he will return with money to repair their dilapidated house. During his absence, the family sinks deeper into poverty. Sarbajaya grows increasingly lonely and bitter. One day during the monsoon season, Durga plays in the downpour for too long, catches a cold and develops a high fever. Adequate medical care being unavailable, the fever becomes worse, and on a night of incessant rain and gusty winds, she dies. Harihar returns home and starts to show Sarbajaya the merchandise he has brought from the city. Sarbajaya, who remains silent, breaks down at the feet of her husband, and Harihar cries out in grief as he discovers that he has lost his daughter. The family decide to leave their ancestral home. As they start packing, Apu finds the necklace that Durga had earlier denied stealing; he throws it into a pond. Apu and his parents leave the village on an ox-cart.

### Review

Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay's novel *Pather Panchali* is a classic bildungsroman (coming-of-age story) in the canon of Bengali literature. The novel depicts a poor family's struggle to survive in their rural ancestral home and the growing up of Apu, the son of the family. *Pather Panchali* is a successful adaptation of this classical novel into an ageless film of dramatic proportions. *Pather Panchali* has a universal humanist appeal as it contains moments of grief and sadness, but, for the most part, it concentrates on the beauty of the world around us. Instead of resorting to melodrama to depict the miseries of life, the film decides to take them on with a straight face and full of human dignity. The film celebrates the innocent minimalistic joys of childhood and engages with the commoner's perspective of life and its eventualities. The film captures the true essence of rural life in Bengal, evoking an empathy with the characters and makes an honest portrayal of superstitions and its stigmas prevalent in Indian society. ■

Team, World Culture Forum

# THE WILD PEAR TREE



Pic Courtesy: festival-cannes.com

**D**irected by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, a Turkish film director, photographer, screenwriter and actor. Ceylan's films have been critically acclaimed, and he was awarded the Palme d'Or, the highest prize at the Cannes Film Festival, in 2014, for his film *Winter Sleep*. Ceylan's love of photography started at the age of 15. While studying at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, he participated in cinema and photography clubs and he took passport-style photos to make some money. After graduating from university with a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering, he went to London and Kathmandu, Nepal. After returning to Ankara, Turkey, he decided to pursue military service and while he was in the army, he discovered that cinema

would give shape to his life. Ceylan's films deal with the estrangement of the individual, existentialism, the monotony of human lives, and the details of everyday life. He uses static shots and long takes, usually in natural settings, as well as play with sound, including the use of menacing silences. He is known for filming his protagonist from behind, which, in his view, leaves the audiences to speculate on the brooding emotions of characters whose faces are obscured. Ceylan's first films were made on low budgets, with casts generally consisting of amateur actors, most of whom were his family and neighbours.

*The Wild Pear Tree*, is a 2018 Turkish drama film, it was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival and was also selected as the Turkish entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 91st Academy Awards, but it was not nominated. Nuri Bilge Ceylan describes the project as being inspired by a father and son who were neighbors of his near Çanakkale, Turkey, where he grew up. The son, Akın Aksu, agreed to contribute to the screenplay, and also plays the character of Imam Veysel in the movie. The finished script is largely drawn from Aksu's own life and his two autobiographical novels, though Ceylan describes the film as being partly based on his relationship with his own father. The film's title comes from Aksu's short story *The Loneliness of the Wild Pear Tree*.

## Plot

Sinan is an aspiring young writer who has just finished college. Returning to his hometown of Çan, he sets about trying to find local funding to publish his debut manuscript, which he calls a "quirky auto-fiction meta-novel," but finds that the locals are uninterested. He also discovers that his eccentric father, Idris, has allowed his gambling addiction to disastrously reduce the family's fortune and stature. Worried about his career prospects and finding himself socially isolated in his rural hometown, Sinan wanders the countryside and engages in a series of testy conversations with various relatives and locals, including an established writer and two Imams who hold differing opinions about religion's place in the modern world.

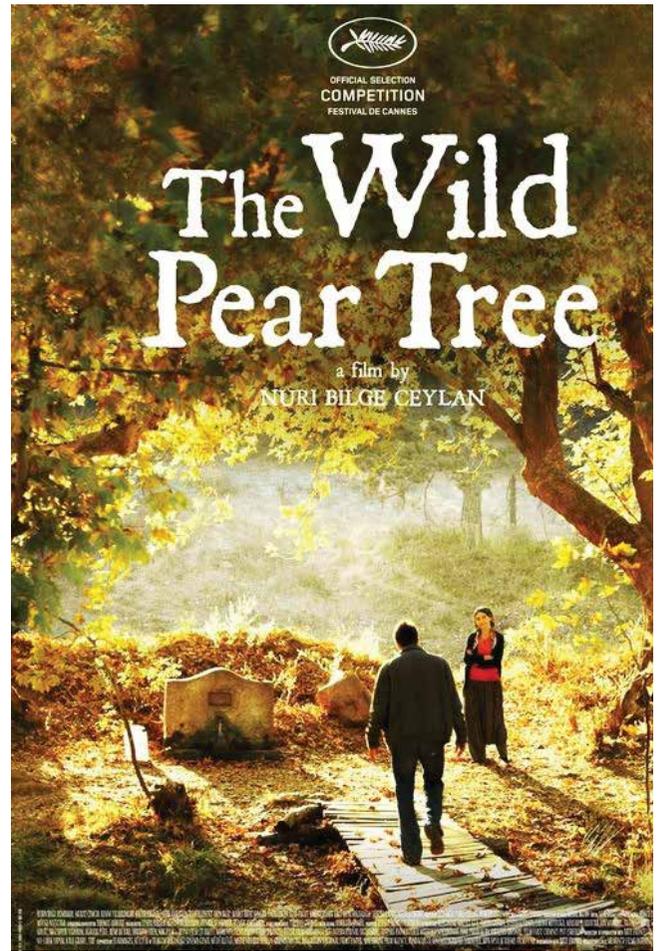
## CAST

Aydın Doğu Demirkol as **Sinan Karasu**  
Murat Cemcir as **İdris Karasu** (Sinan's father)  
Bennu Yıldırım as **Asuman Karasu** (Sinan's mother)  
Hazar Ergüçlü as **Hatice**  
Serkan Keskin as **Süleyman**  
Tamer Levent as **Recep** (İdris's father, Sinan's grandfather)  
Akin Aksu as **İmam Veysel**  
Ahmet Rifat Şungar as **Ali Rıza**  
Kubilay Tuncer as **İlhami**  
Öner Erkan as **İmam Nazmi**  
Özay Fecht as **Hayriye** (Asuman's mother, Sinan's grandmother)  
Kadir Çermik as **Mayor Adnan**  
Ercüment Balakoğlu [tr] as **Ramazan** (Asuman's father, Sinan's grandfather)  
Sencar Sağdıç as **Nevzat**  
Asena Keskin as **Yasemin Karasu** (Sinan's younger sister)

Eventually, disgusted by his father's degenerate gambling and suspecting him of stealing money, Sinan sells his father's beloved dog for the money to have his book published. He then leaves town for his required military service. When he returns, he finds that his father has abandoned his family, and is now living as a rural shepherd. The two reconnect in a friendly conversation where İdris reveals that he has given up his long-running quixotic attempt to dig a well on his arid property, and that he has read and enjoyed Sinan's book (making him the only person who appears to have done so). In a surreal moment, it appears that Sinan has hung himself in the abandoned well, but the film then abruptly cuts to İdris awakening. Looking about for his absent son, he walks over to the well to find Sinan at the bottom, continuing to dig.



Pic Courtesy: serbestiyet.com



Pic Courtesy: themovieaffler.com

## Review

Ceylan infuses the film with elements of absurdism and magic realism, sprinkling dream and fantasy sequences into the drab, naturalistic atmosphere. The protagonist often reflects a man whose aspirations outstrip his prospects and whose romantic temperament threatens to curdle into corrosive cynicism. "The Wild Pear Tree" contains hints of grim comedy and sharp, yet subtle, social criticism. While the film and its characters avoid explicit political commentary, the world they inhabit is one that has been corrupted by money, power and self-dealing. Other sources of value such as religious, artistic, democratic have been hollowed out and cannibalized by greed. There are few teaching jobs available for Sinan, but plenty of opportunities with the army and the police, fighting "in the east" or beating up leftists closer to home. ■

Team, World Culture Forum



# SHERPA (2015)

**F**ilmed by Jenifer Peedom, an Australian filmmaker, who received praise for her documentaries which focus on the dedication and spirit of those who take up grandiose adventures. She had co-directed Solo (also known as Solo: Lost at Sea and Solitary Endeavour on the Southern Ocean) in 2009 which narrates the story of Australian adventurer Andrew McAuley who attempted a solo kayak crossing from Tasmania to New Zealand. Her other praise worthy documentaries are Sherpa (2015) and Mountains (2017), they attempt to explore high peaks around the world while telling the relationship between humans and mountains across time.

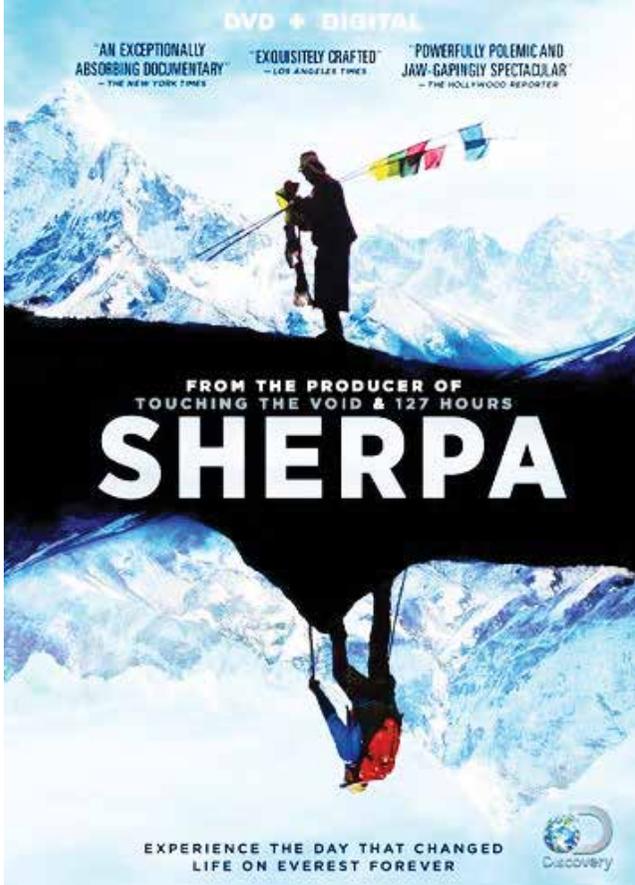
Sherpa focuses on Phurba Tashi, a Sherpa who has made 21 Mount Everest ascents and leads the team for New Zealander Russell Brice's expedition company, Himalayan Expedition. Tashi's wife and family in Khumjung do not want him to keep risking his life climbing just for the money. The film explores some of the Sherpa culture and their spiritual relationship with the mountain, as well as the heavy work and risks Sherpas take in making multiple ascents to take equipment and supplies up the mountain and make the climb possible for foreign climbers. After the ice avalanche kills 16 Sherpas, the focus shifts to the differing perspectives and understandings of the various groups in the following days. The Sherpas stage a protest meeting and most do not want to climb - some out of respect for the dead and others in order to push for better working conditions. Brice believes a small group of Sherpas have threatened to harm any Sherpas who do continue and for this reason decides to cancel his expedition, although Tashi notes that he is unaware of any such threats. The 2014 climbing season is cancelled and the closing titles note that Tashi honoured his family's wishes and retired. It also notes that the 2015 season was cancelled due to avalanches in the wake of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake.

## Details of the Documentary

The documentary starts with time-lapse shots of clouds caressing the snow clad peaks of majestic Himalayan ranges then cuts to the everyday events at

Everest Base Camp, where Sherpas are seen preparing for the climb to make arrangements for mountaineers from all over the globe before the break of dawn. They are seen passing through smoke created by the rituals practiced before the climb. The day to day life of Sherpa community during the climbing season has been the point of focus, narrated through Phurba Tashi Sherpa, who would have held the world record of being the only man to reach the summit 22 times if he had climbed the mountain during 2014. His wife expresses that she is scared whenever he leaves during the climbing season, fearing that he might never come back and feels thankful every time he returns. Her brother had died while climbing Everest; she doesn't wish a similar fate for her husband. Although, Phurba is adamant towards his desire to climb the mountain and aid the expedition for other climbers. He believes that his whole community is benefitted by this because everyone (porters, hotel owners, guides) involved gets an opportunity to earn their livelihood to take care of their families for the rest of the year. Phurba shares that whenever he reaches the peak of the summit, he prays and offers thanks to the mountain for letting him climb it successfully.

Mount Everest is revered as Chomolunga, the mother God of Earth amongst the Sherpa community. The documentary deals with the relationship between mountain, the Sherpas and mountaineers from around the world. The expedition to Mount Everest Summit is a multi-million dollar industry and it costs up to \$ 100,000 and the lion share of the amount generated lands in the hands of the government and expedition companies, leaving very little for the Sherpa community who does all the ground work to make the expedition possible. It also features the footage from 1953 of Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary from the first ever steps on the summit, which marked a controversy by not giving due recognition to Tenzing Norgay wherein Edmund Hillary and John Hunt, the British army officer who led the expedition, were knighted but Tenzing only received the George medal, an award created in 1940 for acts of bravery by civilians. Such discrimination of dehumanizing Sherpa community still persisted until recent times where they were only seen as a community which helps mountaineers climb



wherein, 14,000 tons of ice blocked the route of the climb. This avalanche led to a series of protest against the precarious labor conditions for sherpas. For all the stakeholders involved in the Everest expedition, this meant different things as for the government of Nepal and expedition companies were perplexed because it was impossible to carry out this expedition without the help of Sherpas and for the tourists it meant inability to pursue their goal of reaching the summit irrespective of investing a great amount of money.

Although, for Sherpas this was a tragedy and an occasion to ascend beyond the mold of being smiling mules for the expedition companies who profit of their lives and labor. They stood up for their rights and refused to climb the mountains for that season until better compensation as offered to the families whose lives were claimed in the avalanche along with better pensions and insurance. The Sherpa community proved that they would not be the scapegoat for profit of western led expedition companies and the government. Phurba, acknowledges the hardships that foreign travelers must go through to be able to afford this expedition but realizes that the even Sherpa community has a tough choice ahead of us where they would have to choose between wages that will help them lead a fulfilled life throughout the year or asserting the government to provide better working conditions for Sherpas which would be significant for the future of the community.

## Review

Sherpa is a gripping documentary with awe-inspiring spectacles of Himalayas, hardships of the community and their rise for their assertion. Jennifer Peedom was very successful in absorbing the plight of the community and reflecting them on screen with the help of her camera, the documentary turned out to be way more interesting than what it had pitched to be, originally Peedom and her crew tried to reflect the determination of Sherpa community through covering Phurba Tashi Sherpa's 22nd climb to the Everest summit and a female mountaineer's first attempt to do the same but the natural calamity and political turmoil turned this documentary into more enhanced representation of the plight of Sherpa community. Tenzing Norga once said: "One doesn't conquer ever conquer Chomolunga (Everest) by climbing it, rather one merely crawl to the top like an infant." ■

Ashray Kant, World Culture Forum

Pic Courtesy: bestbuy.com

and not being acknowledged as an ethnic community with peculiar norms and traditions.

Tenzing Norgay created the popular image of Sherpas as always smiling, friendly and heroic figures which the community has lived up to with pride and little recognition but in 2013, a brawl broke out between the Sherpas and foreign mountaineers over a curse word that was uttered against a Sherpa. This grabbed the attention of media all across the globe and the traveler alleged that the Sherpas tried to kills him which led to a lot of criticism against the act. This defamation against the community was perhaps the reason behind Jenifer Peedom choosing to make a documentary over them but what her crew witnessed while they were shooting for the film, turned out to be way more tragic and thought provoking than the brawl.

Phurba works with Brice Russell who is the expedition operator to one of the 38 companies which promise mountaineers to fulfill their wish of climbing the highest peak on earth. For the 8 weeks of climbing season, Everest base camp turns into a thriving village and overcrowding near the summit has been a common occurrence. Khumbu icefall is the only point of access to the peak of the mountain from south side and this point of the climb is extremely unpredictable and treacherous. On 18th April, 2014 an avalanche hit the route to the summit claiming lives of 16 Sherpas

# THE SPIRIT OF BEEHIVE (1973)



Pic Courtesy: art.com

**D**irected by Victor Erice, a Spanish filmmaker who is revered for his two feature fiction films, *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), which is regarded as one of the greatest Spanish films ever made, and *El Sur* (1983). Erice was born in Karrantza, Biscay. He studied law, political science, and economics at the University of Madrid. He also attended the Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía in 1963 to study film direction. He wrote film criticism and reviews for the Spanish film journal *Nuestro Cine*, and made a series of short films before making his first feature film.

*The Spirit of Beehive* was the directorial debut by Víctor Erice and is regarded as a masterpiece of Spanish Cinema. It is a critical portrait of 1940s rural Spain. The film focuses on the young girl Ana and her fascination with the 1931 American horror film *Frankenstein*, as well as exploring her family life

and schooling. The film has been called a “bewitching portrait of a child’s haunted inner life”. It has received many accolades such as Best Film, Best Actor and Best Director at Cinema Writers Circle Awards in Spain and Best Director by Association of Latin Entertainment Critics.

## Plot

Six-year-old Ana is a shy girl who lives in the manor house in an isolated Spanish village on the Castilian plateau with her parents Fernando and Teresa and her older sister, Isabel. The film is set in the year of 1940, and the civil war has just ended with the Francoist victory over the Republican forces. Her aging father spends most of his time absorbed in tending to and writing about his beehives; her much younger mother is caught up in daydreams about a distant lover, to whom she writes letters. Ana’s closest companion is Isabel, who loves her but cannot resist

## CAST

Fernando Fernán Gómez as **Fernando**  
 Teresa Gimpera as **Teresa**  
 Ana Torrent as **Ana**  
 Isabel Tellería as **Isabel**  
 Ketty de la Cámara as **Milagros, la criada**  
 Estanis González as **Guardia civil**  
 José Villasante as **The Frankenstein Monster**  
 Juan Margallo as **The Fugitive**  
 Laly Soldevila as **Doña Lucía, the teacher**  
 Miguel Picazo as **the Doctor**



Pic Courtesy: bfi.org.uk

playing on her little sister's gullibility.

A mobile cinema brings Frankenstein to the village and the two sisters go to see it. The film makes a deep impression on Ana, in particular, the scene where the monster plays benignly with a little girl, then accidentally kills her. She asks her sister: «Why did he kill the girl, and why did they kill him after that?» Isabel tells her that the monster did not kill the girl and is not really dead; she says that everything in films is fake. Isabel notoriously shares that the monster is like a spirit, and Ana can talk to him if she closes her eyes and calls him.

Ana's fascination with the story increases when Isabel takes her to a desolate sheepfold, which she claims is the monster's house. Ana returns alone several times to look for him and eventually discovers a wounded republican soldier hiding in the sheepfold. Instead of running away, she feeds him and even brings him her father's coat and watch. One night the Francoist police come and find the republican soldier and shoot him. The police soon connect Ana's father with the fugitive and assume he stole the items from him. The father discovers which of the daughters had helped the fugitive by noticing Ana's reaction when he produces the pocket watch. When Ana next goes to visit the soldier, she finds him gone, with blood stains still on the ground. Her father confronts her, and she runs away.

Ana's family and the other villagers search for her all night, mirroring a scene from Frankenstein. While she kneels next to a lake, she sees Frankenstein's monster approaching from the forest and kneeling beside her. The next day, they find Ana physically unharmed. The doctor assures her mother that she will gradually recover from her unspecified "trauma," but Ana instead withdraws from her family, preferring



to stand alone by the window and silently call to the spirit, just as Isabel told her to.

## Review

Francisco Franco came to power in Spain in 1939, after a bloody civil war that overthrew a leftist government. The war split families and left a society divided and intimidated into silence in the years following the civil war. The film was made in 1973, when the Francoist State was not as severe as it had been at the beginning; however, it was still not possible to be openly critical of the Francoist State. Artists in all media in Spain had already managed to slip material critical of Francoist Spain past the censor. This film follows the same tradition of codifying criticism and uses symbolism for the sake of expression,

the disintegration of the family's emotional life can be seen as symbolic of the emotional disintegration of the Spanish nation during the civil war. The barren empty landscapes around the sheepfold have been seen as representing Spain's isolation during the beginning years of the Francoist State. In the film, Fernando describes in writing his revulsion at the mindless activity of the beehive. This is possibly an allusion to human society under Francoism: ordered, organised, but devoid of any imagination. The beehive theme is carried into the manor house which has hexagonal panes to its leaded windows and is drenched in a honey-coloured light. Ana represents the innocent young generation of Spain around 1940, while her sister Isabel's deceitful advice symbolises the 'Nationals' (the Nationalist faction soldiers led by Franco, and their supporters), accused of being obsessed with money and power. ■

Team, World Culture Forum



# MARMOULAK (THE LIZARD) 2004

Pic Courtesy: imdb.com



his first documentary on war Martyrs which won the best documentary award in Tashkent Film Festival. He taught Cinema and direction in Young Cinema Society and Film making Educational Center for some years and arranged many workshops on cinema. He made his first feature film Oboor (Passage) in 1988. Since then he has made more than 18 feature films, including two co-productions with Japan (“Wind Carpet” (2001) which was the best seller in Iranian market). His feature films and TV series are of the most popular films in Iranian Market and well received and awarded in the international Film Festivals. He received an honorary PhD of Art from the Iranian ministry of art & culture in 2017.

Marmoulak (The Lizard) is a 2004 Iranian satire comedy drama film, written by Peyman Ghasem Khani, starring Parviz Parastui as Reza «the lizard» Mesghali, a small-time thief. The film satirizes the clergy, religion, Iranian society, and life in general. The film addresses the susceptibility of mankind in the face of religion. This film was released 2 months after production was complete, during Norooz holidays in Iran, and had a very short, but successful run. The director faced many problems while getting the movie released as many clerics found the movie offensive, due to its controversial story, the film was taken down after about 3 weeks.

## Plot

Reza Mesghali, known as Reza the Lizard, is a thief renowned among criminal circles for his ability to climb walls with bare-hands (which is how he derives his name, “the Lizard”, or “Marmoulak” in Persian). At the very beginning of the film, he is arrested and charged with armed robbery, a crime that is revealed towards the ending of the film, he did not commit. Nonetheless, he is sentenced to life in prison, and he finds a strict warden at the jailhouse, who says that his intention is to “make a person out of prisoners”; thus, they will be led

**D**irected by Kamal Tabrizi, an Iranian filmmaker who was born in Tehran. He was as a photographer & reporter among the 1979 hostage takers at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Kamal Tabrizi had graduated from Tehran University of Art at Faculty of Cinema and Theater. After graduating from Cinema & TV from Art University in Tehran; He went to the war front of Iran-Iraq war (1981~1989) as a director and photographer and has made



## CAST

Parviz Parastui as- **Reza 'Marmoulak' Mesghali**  
Bahram Ebrahimi as- **Bahram Ibrahimi**  
Shahrokh Foroutanian as- **Hajji Reza Ahmadi**  
Farideh Sepah Mansour as- **Motazedi's Mother**  
Maedeh Tahmasebi as- **Ozra**

into heaven; "by force," if necessary.

Reza is very restless at the prison and his restlessness comes to the point where he steals medicine from the infirmary in order to commit suicide but he is unable to go through with the act, however, he is stopped by his cellmate, who in the course of fighting with Reza causes the medicine bottle to break and cut his arm. Reza is sent to the hospital to recover, where he meets a cleric, being treated in the hospital, also by the name of Reza. During his stay, the two become friends, and Reza 'Marmoulak' Mesghali overcomes his dislike of the Islamic clergy to accept the mullah after he is told a profound statement which stays with him for the rest of the film - "There are as many ways to reach God as there are people in the world."

Before he is discharged back into the prison, Reza 'Marmoulak' Mesghali steals the cleric's clothing, and impersonating him enables him to escape the prison and contact one of his friends, who tells him to go to a small border village and contact a man who will give him a fake passport to cross the border with. In the meantime, the warden is informed that Reza has escaped, and seeing this as a personal blemish on his record, pursues the criminal to the border village. Arriving by train at the village, Reza is taken in by the villagers who mistake him as the new mullah who was supposed to join their mosque.

The film documents Reza's attempts to get in contact with the criminal underworld to obtain his false passport, while the police pursue him at the behest of the warden; and all along Reza tries to avoid tipping off the villagers to his actions. In the course of this, he becomes something of a hero in the eyes of the villagers, who misinterpret his attempts to track down his false passport as his visiting the homes of poor people and giving them charity. These actions continue to draw the praise of the villagers, convincing those who have abandoned faith in their religion to come to the mosque once again to hear the sermons of Reza 'Marmoulak' Mesghali, most of which are derived from his brief contact with the cleric

in the prison's hospital.

At the end of the film, Reza is finally tracked down by the warden, and on the night of a religious celebration at the mosque, he is arrested, without the villagers noticing. He hands over his robes to a small boy who had watched him over the course of the entire film, possibly the only person in the village who had guessed his identity all along, and goes peacefully with the warden and the police officer back to the prison in Tehran. As they are entering the car, the officer attempts to handcuff Reza, an attempt stopped by the warden and followed by his famous line, "That's not needed anymore".

The film ends with a shot inside the mosque, now being finally full of eager prayers because of Reza. as the police car leaves for Tehran, the prayers look at it; probably wondering about the petty thief in it, while waiting for the great Mullah. This frame is frozen, and the same words spoken by the mullah in the hospital and the most important message of the film are heard for one last time; this time expressing Reza's destiny: "There are as many ways to reach God as there are people in the world."

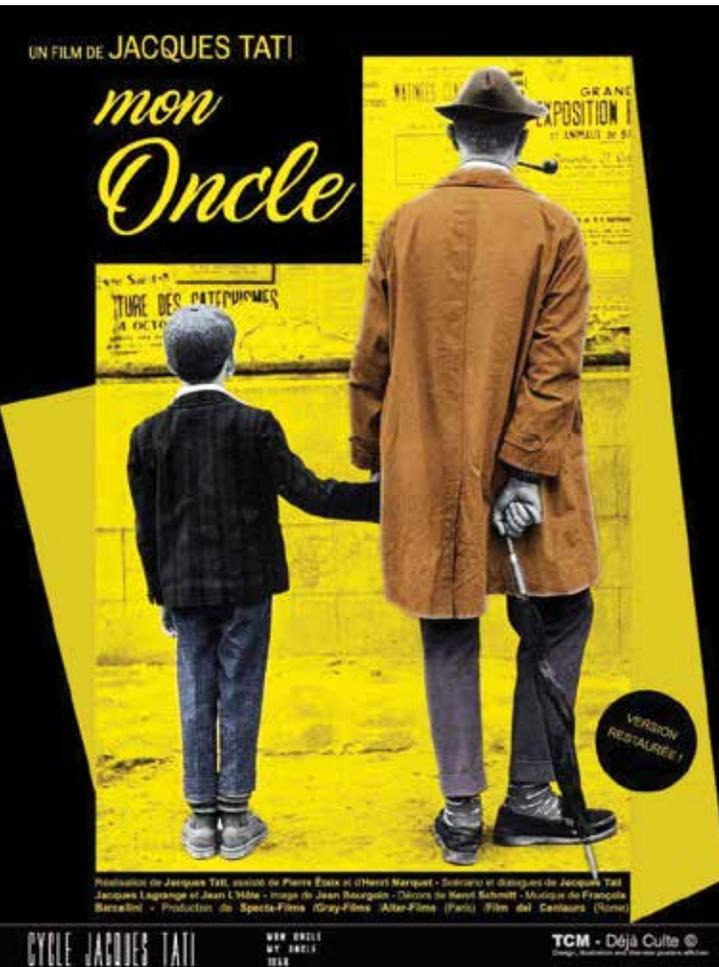
## Review

This film makes a strong use of humor to reflect the susceptibility of society in the name of religion and at the same time expresses the innate attribute amongst everyone to inspire people for good, irrespective of one's past. It expresses how humans, wear their identity on their sleeves and how their attire and conduct can drastically alter the impression others might have of them. The aspect of changing other people's outlook with one's change of attire can be perceived in two ways wherein; this might reflect the shallowness of society regarding the perception they have of others or it can be perceived as the ability of transmutation of the soul with a simple act. The film doesn't fail to tickle the audience into giggles and carries a lightness of viewing while encompassing thought provoking elements. Kamal Tabrizi's direction and Peyman Ghasem's story has made a perfect blend of humour, satire and philosophical contemplation. The clergy man's quote "There are as many ways to reach God as there are people in the world" has a similar prevalence in Upanishad which says "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti" (The truth is one, but wise people pursue it differently). ■

Team, World Culture Forum



# MON UNCLE (MY UNCLE) 1958



Pic Courtesy: posterspy.com

**D**irected by Jacques Tati, a French mime, filmmaker, actor, and screenwriter. He worked as a comic, actor, writer and director during his career as a filmmaker. He is regarded as one of the greatest French Directors for the six feature films that he has directed. His 1967 *Playtime* was revered by being enlisted as one of the greatest films ever made. During early 1930's when the global economic crisis had reached

France, he left both the Racing Club de France and his apprenticeship at Cadres Van Hoof. Giving up a relatively comfortable middle-class lifestyle for one of a struggling performing artist during this difficult economic time, he developed a collection of highly physical mimes that would become his *Impressions Sportives* (Sporting Impressions). Each year from 1931 to 1934 he would participate in an amateur show organised by Alfred Sauvy. He has written, directed and acted in films like *L'École des facteurs* (School for Postmen), *Jour de fête* (The Big Day), *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* (Monsieur Hulot's Holiday), *Playtime*, *Trafic* (Traffic), *Parade* and *Forza Bastia*.

*Mon Uncle* (My Uncle) is a 1958 comedy film which centres on the socially awkward yet lovable character of Monsieur Hulot and his quixotic struggle with post-war France's infatuation with modern architecture, mechanical efficiency and consumerism. As with most Tati films, *Mon Oncle* is largely a visual comedy; colour and lighting are employed to help tell the story. The dialogue in *Mon Oncle* is barely audible, and largely subordinated to the role of a sound effect. The drifting noises of heated arguments and idle banter complement other sounds and the physical movements of the characters, intensifying comedic effect. The complex soundtrack also uses music to characterize environments, including a lively musical theme that represents Hulot's world of comical inefficiency and freedom. The film received many accolades such as the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, a Special Prize at the 1958 Cannes Film Festival, and the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

## Plot

Monsieur Hulot is the dreamy, impractical, and adored uncle of nine-year-old Gérard Arpel, who lives with his materialistic parents, M. and Mme. Arpel, in an ultra-modern geometric house and garden, Villa Arpel, in a new suburb of Paris, situated just beyond the crumbling stone buildings of the old

## CAST

Jacques Tati as **Monsieur Hulot**  
 Jean-Pierre Zola as **Monsieur Arpel**  
 Adrienne Servantie as **Madame Arpel**  
 Alain Bécourt as **G rard Arpel**  
 Lucien Fr gis as **Monsieur Pichard**  
 Betty Schneider as **Betty (landlord's daughter)**  
 Jean-Fran ois Martial as **Walter**  
 Dominique Marie as **Neighbor**  
 Yvonne Arnaud as **Georgette (the maid)**  
 Adelaide Danieli as **Madame Pichard**  
 R gis Fontenay as **Braces dealer**  
 Claude Badolle as **Flea market dealer**  
 Max Martel as **Drunken man**  
 Nicolas Bataille as **Working man**



neighbourhoods of the city. G rard's parents are entrenched in a machine-like existence of work, fixed gender roles, the acquisition of status through possessions, and conspicuous displays to impress guests, such as the fish-shaped fountain at the centre of the garden that, in a running gag, Mme. Arpel activates only for important visitors.

Each element of Villa Arpel is stylistically rather than functionally designed, creating an environment completely indifferent to the comfort, or lack of comfort, of its occupants. In choosing modern architecture to punctuate his satire, Tati once stated, "Les lignes g om triques ne rendent pas les gens aimables" ("geometrical lines do not produce likeable people"). From inconveniently-located stepping stones, to difficult-to-sit-on furniture, to a kitchen filled with deafeningly loud appliances, every facet of Villa Arpel emphasizes the impracticality of a dedication to superficial aesthetics and electrical gadgets over the necessities of daily living.

Despite the superficial beauty of its modern design, the Arpels' home is entirely impersonal, as are the Arpels themselves. In fact, M. and Mme. Arpel have completely subordinated their individuality to maintain their social position and their shiny new possessions. Tati emphasizes his themes surrounding the Arpel lifestyle (as well as M. Arpel's automaton workplace, Plastac) with monochromatic shades and cloudy days.

By contrast, Monsieur Hulot lives in an old and run-down city district. He is unemployed, and gets around town either on foot or on a V loSoleX motorized bicycle. G rard, utterly bored by the sterility and monotony of his life with his parents, fastens himself to his uncle at every opportunity. Hulot, little more than

a child himself at times, is completely at home with G rard, but also completely ineffectual at controlling his horseplay with his school friends, who take delight in tormenting adults with practical jokes. Exasperated at their relative's perceived immaturity, the Arpels soon scheme to saddle him with the twin yokes of family and business responsibilities.

## Review

Mon Uncle expresses the tumult of superficiality in the modern world, where people are drifting away from the simple joys of life and instead choosing to live with customs and lifestyles which are flamboyant. The humour in the film is set around the mischiefs of children, simplicity of Monsieur Hulot and the unacknowledged idiosyncrasies of the adults which is due to a superficial dogmatic lifestyle. The film is hilarious but not in the way that it may bound to break the audience into laughter but instead its humour tickles the brain and occasionally makes the audience giggle. Jacques Tati employs the style of humor that was prevalent in the 1930's through Charlie Chaplin and Ren  Clair and much like these comics, Tati supplements humour with a social commentary which is similar to his antecedents but yet peculiar in a unique way. ■

Team, World Culture Forum



**D**irected by and starring Roberto Benigni, an Italian actor, comedian, screenwriter and director. Benigni made his acting debut in 1977's *Berlinguer ti voglio bene*, which he also wrote, and his directorial debut was the 1983 anthology film *Tu mi turbi*. In 1986, Benigni made his first English-language film, *Down by Law*, written and directed by Jim Jarmusch, with whom Benigni would make two more films: *Night on Earth* (1991) as well as *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003). In 1988, Benigni was acclaimed for the film *Il piccolo diavolo*, which he directed, wrote and starred in. Costarring American actor Walter Matthau and Braschi, the film was shot in alternating takes in both Italian and English. Benigni continued to have success and acclaim as a director with *Johnny Stecchino* (1991) and *Il mostro*, and portrayed Inspector Clouseau's son in *Son of the Pink Panther* (1993), an American Italian co-production filmed in English, directed by Blake Edwards. In 1997, Benigni wrote, directed and starred in *La vita è bella*, for which he won the Academy Award for Best Actor at the 71st Oscars Ceremony (the film also won Best Foreign Language Film).

*La vita è bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*) is a 1997 Italian comedy-drama film co-written by Vincenzo Cerami who was inspired by the story of Rubino Romeo Salmoni's book 'In the End, I Beat Hitler', which incorporates elements of irony and black comedy and by Roberto Benigni's father, who spent two years in a German labour camp during World

War II. Benigni plays Guido Orefice, a Jewish Italian bookshop owner, who exercises his fertile imagination to shield his son from the horrors of internment in a Nazi concentration camp. This film was a critical as well as a financial success. It grossed over \$230 million worldwide, becoming one of the highest-grossing non-English language movies of all time, and received widespread acclaim, despite criticisms for using the subject matter for comedic purposes. It received many accolades such as the Grand Prix at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival, nine David di Donatello Awards (including Best Film), five Nastro d'Argento Awards in Italy, two European Film Awards, and three Academy Awards (including Best Foreign Language Film and Best Actor for Benigni).

### Plot

In 1939, in the Kingdom of Italy, Guido Orefice is a young Jewish man who arrives to work in the city (Arezzo, in Tuscany) where his uncle Eliseo operates a restaurant. Guido is comical and sharp, and falls in love with a girl named Dora. Later, he sees her again in the city where she is a teacher and set to be engaged to a rich, but arrogant, man, a local government official with whom Guido has regular run-ins. Guido sets up many "coincidental" incidents to show his interest in Dora. Finally, Dora sees Guido's affection and promise, and gives in, against her better judgement. He steals her from her engagement party, on a horse, humiliating her fiancé and mother. They are later



## CAST

Roberto Benigni as- **Guido Orefice**  
Nicoletta Braschi as- **Dora Orefice**  
Giorgio Cantarini as- **Giosué Orefice**  
Giustino Durano as- **Uncle Eliseo**  
Horst Buchholz as- **Doctor Lessing**  
Marisa Paredes as- **Dora's mother**  
Sergio Bustric as- **Ferruccio**  
Amerigo Fontani as- **Rodolfo**  
Giuliana Lojodice as- **the Headmistress**  
Pietro Desilva as- **Bartolomeo**  
Francesco Guzzo as- **Vittorino**  
Raffaella Lebboroni as- **Elena**

married and have a son, Giosué, and run a bookstore.

When World War II breaks out, Guido, his uncle Eliseo, and Giosué are seized on Giosué's birthday. They and many other Jews are forced onto a train and taken to a concentration camp. After confronting a guard about her husband and son, and being told there is no mistake, Dora volunteers to get on the train in order to be close to her family. However, as men and women are separated in the camp, Dora and Guido never see each other during the internment. Guido pulls off various stunts, such as using the camp's loudspeaker to send messages, symbolic or literal, to Dora assuring her that he and their son are safe. Eliseo is executed in a gas chamber shortly after their arrival. Giosué narrowly avoids being gassed himself as he hates to take baths and showers, and did not follow the other children when they had been ordered to enter the gas chambers and were told they were showers. Guido explains to Giosué that the camp is a complicated game in which he must perform the tasks Guido gives him. Whoever gets to one thousand points first will win a tank. He tells him that if he cries, complains that he wants his mother, or says that he is hungry, he will lose points, while quiet boys who hide from the camp guards earn extra points. Giosué is at times reluctant to go along with the game, but Guido convinces him each time to continue. In some scenes, Guido takes advantage of the appearance of visiting German officers and their families to show Giosué that other children are hiding as part of the game, and he also takes advantage of a German nanny thinking Giosué is one of her charges in order to feed him as Guido serves the German officers. Guido and Giosué are almost found out to be prisoners by another server until Guido is found teaching all of the German children how to say "Thank you" in Italian.

Guido maintains this story right until the end when, in the chaos of shutting down the camp as the Allied forces approach, he tells his son to stay in a box until everybody has left, this being the final task in the competition before the promised tank is his. Guido goes to find Dora, but he is caught by a German soldier. An officer makes the decision to execute Guido, who is led off by the soldier. While he is walking to his death, Guido passes by Giosué one last time and winks, still in character and playing the game. The next morning, Giosué emerges from the sweat-box, just as a US Army unit led by a Sherman tank arrives and the camp is liberated. Giosué is overjoyed about winning the game (unaware that his father is dead), thinking that he won the tank, and an American soldier allows Giosué to ride on the tank. While travelling to safety, Giosué soon spots Dora in the procession leaving the camp and reunites with his mother. While the young Giosué excitedly tells his mother about how he had won a tank, just as his father had promised, the adult Giosué, in an overheard monologue, reminisces on the sacrifices his father made for him and his story.

## Review

"Life Is Beautiful" is not about holocaust, the Nazis or the Fascists, but about the human spirit. It is about rescuing whatever is good and hopeful from the wreckage of dreams. It indulges in hope for a better future, the necessary human conviction, and delusion, that things will be better for our progenies than they are right now. The film might be perceived to be sidestepping from politics in favor of simple human ingenuity. Although, it finds the right notes to negotiate the delicate subject matter of 'holocaust', as Benigni isn't really making comedy out of the Holocaust, but instead, he is showing how Guido uses the only gift at his command to protect his son. If he had a gun, he would shoot at the Fascists. If he had an army, he would destroy them. He is a clown, and comedy is his weapon. It showcases how humans' resort to optimism in challenging situations to help them cope and remain calm, for the ones we love. The film regards determination and resilience shown by the protagonist to convince his son about the temporality of their plight, and moral choice he exercises by sheltering his son from the perplexity of the times that they live in, so that he doesn't end up forming an ill opinion about people and life in general. ■ **Team, World Culture Forum**



# FORREST GUMP (1994)

**D**irected by Robert Zemeckis, an American director, film producer and screenwriter frequently credited as an innovator in visual effects. He first came to public attention in the 1980s as the director of *Romancing the Stone* (1984) and the science-fiction comedy *Back to the Future* film trilogy, as well as the live-action/animated comedy *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988). In the 1990s, he directed *Death Becomes Her* and then diversified into more dramatic fare, including 1994's *Forrest Gump*. Zemeckis' films are usually characterized by an interest in state-of-the-art special effects, including the early use of the insertion of computer graphics into live-action footage in *Back to the Future Part II* (1989) and *Forrest Gump*, and the pioneering performance capture techniques seen in *The Polar Express* (2004), *Monster House* (2006), *Beowulf* (2007), *A Christmas Carol* (2009), and *Welcome to Marwen* (2018).

*Forrest Gump* is a comedy-drama film written by Eric Roth, based on the 1986 novel by Winston Groom which is also titled the same. The story depicts several decades in the life of the protagonist who is a slow-witted but kind-hearted man from Alabama who witnesses and unknowingly influences several defining historical events in the 20th century United States. The film received acclaim for Robert Zemeckis' direction, Tom Hanks' performance, visual effects, music and its script. *Forrest Gump* has received accolades such as Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Visual Effects, and Best Film Editing as well as other Golden Globes, People's Choice Awards, and Young Artist Awards.

**Plot:** The movie begins with a shot of white feather drifting with the wind lands at a bus stop in Savannah, Georgia which is picked up by the protagonist, Forrest Gump who puts it in his copy of a children's book titled 'Curious George', followed by an iconic dialogue in a southern American accent where he tries

to strike a conversation with fellow commuters by saying "My momma always said that life was like a bag of chocolates, you never know what you're going to get", he continues talking about his childhood in the form of a monologue. The listeners at the bus stop change regularly throughout his narration, each showing a different attitude ranging from disbelief and indifference to rapt veneration. The film flashbacks into the protagonist's memories of his childhood, during 1951 in Greer Alabama, young Forrest is fitted with leg braces to correct a curved spine, and is unable to walk properly. He lives alone with his mother, who runs a boarding house out of their home that attracts many tenants, including young Elvis Presley, who plays guitar for Forrest and incorporates his jerky dance movements into his famous performances. On his first day of school, Forrest meets a girl named Jenny Curran, and the two become best friends.

In his late teenage years, Forrest is often bullied because of his physical disability and marginal intelligence. While fleeing from some bullies, his braces fall off, revealing Forrest to be a very fast runner. This talent eventually allows him to receive a football scholarship at the University of Alabama in 1963; he witnesses Alabama Governor George Wallace's stand in the schoolhouse door, becomes a top running back, is named on the All-American team, and meets United States President John F. Kennedy at the White House in Washington D.C. Following that, then Forrest remembers the Kennedy assassination, when somebody shot the President in 1963 and somebody shot his younger brother in 1968. After the completion his college graduation, Forrest enlists into the U.S. Army, where

he befriends a fellow soldier nicknamed "Bubba", who convinces Forrest to go into the shrimping business with him after their service. In 1967, they are sent to Vietnam, serving with the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta region. After a few routine operations, their platoon is ambushed while





## CAST

Forrest Gump - **Tom Hanks**  
Young Forrest Gump - **Michael Conner Humphreys**  
Jenny Curran - **Robin Wright**  
Lieutenant Dan Taylor - **Gary Sinise**  
Benjamin Buford "Bubba" Blue - **Mykelti Williamson**  
Mrs. Gump - **Sally Field**  
Forrest Gump, Jr. - **Haley Joel Osment**  
Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant - **Sonny Shroyer**

on patrol, and Bubba is killed in action. Forrest saves several wounded platoon-mates including his lieutenant, Dan Taylor, who loses both his legs and is awarded the Medal of Honour for his heroism by United States President Lyndon B. Johnson.

After returning from his service in Vietnam, he addresses an anti-war "March on the Pentagon" rally, where he meets Abbie Hoffman and briefly reunites with Jenny, who has been living a hippie lifestyle. He also develops a talent for ping-pong, and becomes a sports celebrity as he competes against Chinese teams in ping-pong diplomacy, earning him an interview alongside John Lennon on The Dick Cavett Show. Following that, then Forrest remembers that somebody shot John Lennon in 1980. In New York City, he spends the holidays and the 1972 new year with Lieutenant Dan, who has become an embittered cripple. Forrest soon meets United States President Richard Nixon and is put up in the Watergate complex, where he accidentally exposes the Watergate scandal, forcing Nixon to resign in 1974. Forrest Gump is officially discharged from the army after the war ends.

Returning to Greenbow, Forrest endorses a company that makes ping-pong paddles. He uses the earnings to buy a shrimping boat in Bayou La Batre, fulfilling his promise to Bubba. Lieutenant Dan joins Forrest in 1974, and they initially have little success. After their boat becomes the only one to survive Hurricane Carmen, they pull in huge amounts of shrimp and create the Bubba Gump Shrimp Company, after which Lieutenant Dan finally thanks Forrest for saving his life. Lieutenant Dan invests into Apple Computer, Inc. and the two become millionaires, but Forrest also gives half of the earnings to Bubba's family, giving them a better life. Forrest then returns home to see his mother as she dies of cancer. In 1976, Jenny recovering from years of substance abuse returns to visit Forrest, and after a while he

proposes to her. That night she tells Forrest she loves him and the two make love, but she leaves the next morning. Heartbroken, Forrest goes running, and spends the next three years in a relentless cross-country marathon, becoming famous again before returning home to Greenbow.

In the present, Forrest reveals that he is waiting at the bus stop because he received a letter from Jenny, who asked him to visit her. The strangers say that the address on the letter is only a few blocks away, and Forrest immediately takes off. As Forrest is finally reunited with Jenny, she introduces him to their son, named Forrest Gump, Jr. Jenny tells Forrest she is sick with an unknown incurable virus, so Forrest has Jenny and Forrest Jr move back to Greenbow with him. Jenny and Forrest finally marry, with Lt. Dan serving as best man while wearing his new prosthetic legs. Sadly, Jenny is overcome by the virus and dies a year later. At her grave sometime later, Forrest tells Jenny that he had her father's house bulldozed to the ground, and that little Forrest is doing well. The film ends with Forrest seeing his son off on his first day of school. Forrest notices that Jr has his Curious George book, as he wants to take it to school for show-and-tell. When Forrest opens the book, the white feather from the beginning of the film falls to the ground. He waves goodbye to Forrest Jr as the school bus leaves, and then sits down on a log as the wind blows and carries the feather away into the sky.

## Review

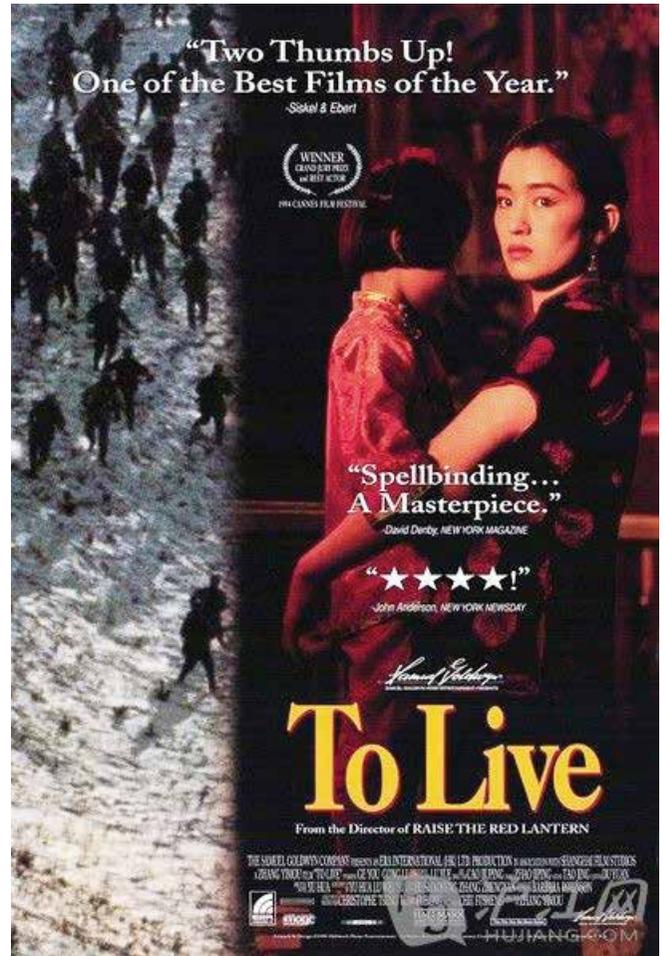
Robert Zemeckis captures the essence of Winston Groom's novel which aims to portray that one changes the world by merely being themselves. This coming of age film is an absolute favourite across generations because it encapsulates a gripping nostalgia and a provoking excitement. The film shares the lightness of being that Forrest Gump phenomenologically experiences and it pushes audience into thoughts. The aspect of how it engages with the second half of the 20th century for American History is fascinating because many of those events literally changed the world as we know it today. Forrest Gump is layered and with every watch, it embraces the discourse that it has set for itself, as while re-watching the film one is freed from the captivating performance and the wonderfully written character of Forrest Gump played by Tom Hanks and contemplate on fellow characters such as Jenny, Lt. Dan and many others. ■

Team, World Culture Forum

# TO LIVE (1994)

**D**irected by Zhang Yimou, a Chinese film director, producer, writer and actor, and former cinematographer. He is amongst the Fifth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, and made his directorial debut in 1987 with *Red Sorghum*. Zhang has won numerous awards and recognitions, with Best Foreign Film nominations for *Ju Dou* in 1990, *Raise the Red Lantern* in 1991, and *Hero* in 2003, Silver Lion and Golden Lion prizes at the Venice Film Festival, Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, and the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival. Zhang directed the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games, which received considerable international acclaim. During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, Zhang left his school studies and went to work, first as a farm labourer for 3 years, and later at a cotton textile mill for 7 years in the city of Xianyang. During this time, he took up painting and amateur still photography, selling his own blood to buy his first camera. In 1978, he went to Beijing Film Academy and majored in photography. He has an Honorary Doctorate Degree from Boston University and also one from Yale University. Hence, Zhang's recurrent theme is the resilience of Chinese people in the face of hardship and adversity, a theme which has been explored in such films as *To Live* (1994) and *Not One Less* (1999). His films are particularly noted for their rich use of colour, as can be seen in some of his early films, like *Raise the Red Lantern*, and in his wuxia films like *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*.

*To Live* (also titled *Lifetimes*) is a Chinese drama film based on the novel of the same name by Yu Hua. The film was denied a theatrical release in mainland China by the Chinese State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television due to its critical portrayal of various policies and campaigns of the Communist government. *To Live* was screened at the 1994 New York Film Festival before eventually receiving a limited release in the United States on November 18, 1994. The film has been used in the United States as a support to teach Chinese history in high schools and colleges. The film received many accolades such



Pic Courtesy: imdb.com

as Grand Prix, Prize of Ecumenical Jury and Best Actor at Cannes Film Festival (1994) along with Best Foreign Language film at British Academy Films and Television Awards (1995).

## Plot

In the 1940s, Xu Fugui (Ge You) is a rich man's son and compulsive gambler, who loses his family property to a man named Long'er. His behaviour also causes his long-suffering wife Jiazhen (Gong Li) to leave him, along with their daughter, Fengxia and their unborn son, Youqing. Fugui eventually reunites with his wife and children, but is forced to start a shadow puppet troupe with a partner named

## CAST

Ge You as **Xu Fugui** (Lucky & Rich)  
Gong Li as **Jiazhen** (Precious Family)  
Liu Tianchi as **adult Xu Fengxia**  
Xiao Cong as **teenage Xu Fengxia**  
Zhang Lu as **child Xu Fengxia**  
Fei Deng as **Xu Youqing** (Full of Celebration)  
Jiang Wu as **Wan Erxi** (Double Happiness)  
Ni Dahong as **Long'er** ("Dragon the Second")  
Guo Tao as **Chunsheng** (Spring-born)

Chunsheng. The Chinese Civil War is occurring at the time, and both Fugui and Chunsheng are conscripted into the Kuomintang's Republic of China armed forces during a performance. Midway through the war, the two are captured by the communist People's Liberation Army (PLA) and serve them by performing their shadow puppet routine for the communist revolutionaries. Eventually Fugui is able to return home, where he finds out that due to a week-long fever, Fengxia has become mute and partially deaf.

Soon after his return, Fugui learns that Long'er did not want to donate any of his wealth to the communist "people's government", preferring instead to burn all of his property. No one helps put out the fire because Long'er was a gentry. He is eventually put on trial and is sentenced to be executed. As Long'er is pulled away, he recognizes Fugui in the crowd, and tries to talk to him as he is dragged towards the execution grounds. Fugui is filled with fear and runs into an alleyway before hearing five gunshots. He runs home to tell Jiazhen what has happened, and they quickly pull out the certificate stating that Fugui served in the communist People's Liberation Army. Jiazhen assures him that they are no longer gentries and will not be killed.

The story moves a decade into the future, to the time of the Great Leap Forward. The local town chief enlists everyone to donate all scrap iron to the national drive to produce steel and make weaponry for re-annexing Taiwan. As an entertainer, Fugui performs for the entire town nightly, and is very smug about his singing abilities. Soon after, some boys begin picking on Fengxia. Youqing decides to get back at one of the boys by dumping spicy noodles on his head during a communal lunch. Fugui is furious, but Jiazhen stops him and tells him why Youqing acted the way he did. Fugui realizes the love his children have for each other.

The children are exhausted from the hard labor they are doing in the town and try to sleep whenever they can. They eventually get a break during the festivities from meeting the scrap metal quota. The entire village eats dumplings in celebration. In the midst of the family eating, of Youqing's schoolmates call him to come prepare for the District Chief. Jiazhen tries to make Fugui get him to sleep but eventually relents and packs her son twenty dumplings for lunch. Fugui carries his son to the school, and tells him to heat the dumplings before eating them, as he will get sick if he eats cold dumplings and he must listen to his father to have a good life.

Later in that day, the older men and students rush to tell Fugui that his son has been killed by the District Chief. He was sleeping on the other side of a wall that the Chief's Jeep was on, and the car ran into the wall, injuring the Chief and crushing Youqing. Jiazhen, in hysterics, is forbidden to see her son's dead body, and Fugui screams at his son to wake up. Fengxia is silent in the background. The District Chief visits the family at the grave, only to be revealed as Chunsheng. His attempts to apologize and compensate the family are rejected, particularly by Jiazhen, who tells him he owes her family a life. He returns to his Jeep in a haze, only to see his guard beating Fengxia for breaking the Jeep's windows. He tells him to stop, and walks home.

The story moves forward again another decade, to the Cultural Revolution. The village chief advises Fugui's family to burn their puppet drama props, which have been deemed as counter-revolutionary. Fengxia carries out the act, and is oblivious to the Chief's real reason for coming: to discuss a suitor for her. Fengxia is now grown up and her family arranges for her to meet Wan Erxi, a local leader of the Red Guards. Erxi, a man crippled by a workplace accident, fixes her parent's roof and paints depictions of Mao Zedong on their walls with his workmates. He proves to be a kind, gentle man; he and Fengxia fall in love and marry, and she soon becomes pregnant. Chunsheng, still in the government, visits immediately after the wedding to ask for Jiazhen's forgiveness, but she refuses to acknowledge him. Later, he is branded a reactionary and a capitalist. He comes to tell them that his wife has committed suicide and he intends to the same. He has come to give them all his money. Jiazhen refuses to take it. However, as Chunsheng leaves, Jiazhen commands him to live, reminding him



Pic Courtesy: jonathanrosenbaum.net

that he still owes them a life.

Months later, during Fengxia's childbirth, her parents and husband accompany her to the county hospital. All doctors have been sent to do hard labour for being over educated, and the students are left as the only ones in charge. Wan Erxi manages to find a doctor to oversee the birth, removing him from confinement, but he very weak due to starvation. Fugui purchases seven steamed buns (mantou) for him and the family decides to name the son Mantou, after the buns. However, Fengxia begins to hemorrhage, and the nurses panic, admitting that they do not know what to do. The family and nurses seek the advice of the doctor, but find that he has overeaten and is semiconscious. The family is helpless, and Fengxia dies from hypovolemia (blood loss). The point is made that the doctor ate 7 buns, but that by drinking too much water at the same time, each bun expanded to the size of 7 buns: therefore, Fengxia's death is a result of the doctor's having the equivalent of 49 buns in his belly.

The movie ends six years later, with the family now consisting of Fugui, Jiazhen, their son-in-law Erxi, and grandson Mantou. The family visits the graves of Youqing and Fengxia, where Jiazhen, as per tradition,

leaves dumplings for her son. Erxi buys a box full of young chicks for his son, which they decide to keep in the chest formerly used for the shadow puppet props. When Mantou inquires how long it will take for the chicks to grow up, Fugui's response is a more tempered version of something he said earlier in the film. However, in spite of all of his personal hardships, he expresses optimism for his grandson's future, and the film ends with his statement, "and life will get better and better" as the whole family sits down to eat. Although the ending has been criticized as sentimental, the resignation and forced good cheer of Fugui and especially Jiazhen belie a happy ending.

## Review

To Live is a story of hope in the face of despair, where the characters are constantly affected by the political developments in their country but they manage to retain 'hope' in every situation that they face. It portrays the day to day life of people in China during the onset of Communism and the decades following it. It showcases the participation of people in the cultural revolutions and the its impact on people's lives. ■

Team, World Culture Forum



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