

## The Wild Pear Tree [15] 2018|Turkey + others|188 min

UK release date	<b>30<sup>th</sup> November 2018</b>
Director	<b>Nuri Bilge Ceylan</b>
Screenplay	<b>Akin Aksu, Ebru Ceylan, Nuri Bilge Ceylan</b>
Cinematographer	<b>Gökhan Tiryaki</b>
Cast	<b>Aydın Doğu Demirkol</b> (Sinan Karasu); <b>Murat Cemcir</b> (Idris Karasu); <b>Bennu Yıldırım</b> (Asuman Karasu); <b>Hazar Ergüçlü</b> (Hatice); <b>Serkan Keskin</b> (Suleyman); <b>Tamer Levent</b> (Grandfather Recep).

Running at a little over three hours, Nuri Bilge Ceylan's long-awaited follow-up to *Winter Sleep* takes a similarly leisurely, discursive approach to narrative as did that Palme d'Or winner and, indeed, his earlier *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*. Typically, the tone tends mostly towards the quietly intimate, with 'big' dramatic moments being conspicuously absent, so that the film, for all its length and overall seriousness of purpose, never feels portentous or overblown.

It centres on Sinan (Aydın Doğu Demirkol), a literature graduate who returns from his studies in the coastal city of Çanakkale to his parents' home in the small rural town of Çan, where he hopes to raise enough cash to publish a book of essays and short stories (or what he describes as a "quirky auto-fiction meta-novel") inspired by his barely concealed dislike for the region and its inhabitants. Trouble is, his teacher father Idris (Murat Cemcir) is up to his neck in gambling debts, so that his mother (Bennu Yıldırım) and sister have become reluctantly accustomed to making do without food or electricity. So Sinan, unsure whether he'll succeed as a writer or be reduced, after army service, to teaching somewhere way out East, wanders around, visiting his grandparents, encountering old friends, looking for funding for his book, and generally becoming increasingly disenchanted both about his father and about life in the sticks.

To use the kind of definition its protagonist might deploy, *The Wild Pear Tree* could be described as an extended picaresque conversation piece, though that

risks making it sound incoherent, uneven or pretentious, none of which epithets are appropriate to Ceylan's characteristically Chekhovian gem. Talky in places it may be, but the dialogue is always rewarding not only in terms of the subjects discussed – which range from the mundanely quotidian to the unashamedly ethical and philosophical – but in the way it illuminates the various marvellously rounded characters. If Sinan and his parents are endowed with the most subtle nuances, all of the many minor characters are so deftly drawn as to be immediately vivid, intelligible and credible.

Thematically, the movie is Ceylan to the core, developing on ideas that have coursed through his work since his very earliest films: the tensions and comforts of family life; the contrast between rural and urban customs; the importance and difficulty of being honest with others and with oneself; how to find one's path in life; how to take responsibility and do the right thing; how to face up to one's own insignificance in the larger scheme of things. All this and more is dealt with at some point, but with the lightest of touches.

The performances are superb throughout, none more so than Demirkol as the far from entirely sympathetic Sinan. Few filmmakers are as adept at depicting the flawed male psyche as Ceylan; here, once again, his distinctive blend of analytical detachment, wry wit and unsentimental compassion has produced a remarkably complex and convincing portrait, both of an individual and of a society.

After: **Geoff Andrew, Sight and Sound, 5 October 2018**

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