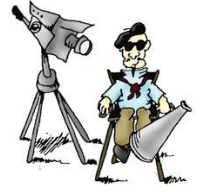


Dear Patron,



Since our first season in 1982–1983, the UW–Parkside Foreign Film Series has valued input from our loyal and engaged patrons regarding the films they would like to see in the next season.

Help us in the selection process by choosing **14** films that you would like to see by circling the number of the film at the bottom of this page. In making the final selections for next year's program, we rely heavily on the results of this survey. We read all comments and seriously consider all write-in film suggestions.

~~Place your completed ballot in the survey return box located on the ticket taking table at the Cinema entrance, or mail it to: Norman Cloutier, Director, UW-Parkside Foreign Film Series, 900 Wood Road, P.O. Box 2000, Kenosha, WI 53141-2000. We can accept survey returns through June 1. Keep the film descriptions.~~

~~The survey return box will be available to you before each film. We will not be able to accept any returns after the April 5 showing of *Secret Ingredient*. A tentative 2020–2021 lineup will be announced at the showings of our last film, *The Party*.~~

**~~A note about the last film in this year's program, *The Party*:~~**

~~Our last film of the program is always well attended and seating can get tight. For the showing of *The Party*, we ask if you would please not switch to our most popular show times, Thursday, Friday, and the Saturday 5 pm showing, particularly if you are bringing guests.~~

Sincerely,

UW-Parkside Foreign Film Series Committee

*Norm Cloutier*, Director (Professor Emeritus, Economics)

*Josef Benson* (Associate Professor, English)

Circle 14 films:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36

**Note regarding write-ins:**

Patrons may notice that a few highly acclaimed international films were *not* included in the survey. The most notable, of course, is *Parasite* (South Korea, 2019) which won both Best Picture and International Feature Film in the recent Oscars. But there are others, such as *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, *The Invisible Life*, and *Happy as Lazzaro*, all of which were praised by critics and audiences. We made a conscious choice to exclude films that either have already received extensive distribution or were produced by streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon, which makes them nearly impossible for us to book into the series.

Write-ins:

***The UW-Parkside Foreign Film Series is a program of the College of Arts and Humanities.***

Patrons interested in learning more about the sensitive content in films are encouraged to visit the Internet Movie Data Base <http://www.imdb.com/> and type the title of a film in the search box. Once on the film's IMDB page, click on **MORE**. Then click on **Parents Guide**. There you will find a rather exhaustive, if not clinical, accounting of the film's sensitive content. All the current films in the FFS program, and most of our past films (see Film History Database) are linked to their respective IMDB page, see <https://www.uwp.edu/therita/foreignfilmseries.cfm>.

Patrons who purchased tickets this year should be on our mailing list, but because you may have had a friend buy your ticket, some of you may not be on the list. By providing your name and address you will be assured of being included and having the first opportunity to purchase tickets for next year's series. You can help the series continue to prosper by **including the name and address of any of your friends who are interested in foreign films.**

Check one:  change of address  new addition to mailing list

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:  change of address  new addition to mailing list

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**General comments/suggestions/criticisms about the FFS:**

**The FFS Discussion Group**

**How many group sessions did you attend (circle one):**    0    1-2    3-4    >4

**If you attended any of the Discussion Group sessions, please give us your feedback on your experience. If you did not attend any sessions, but are interested in doing so in the future let us know what would increase the likelihood of your participation.**

**University of Wisconsin-Parkside**  
**Foreign Film Series**  
**Survey for the 2020–2021 Program**



1. **PAIN AND GLORY** (Spain, 2019) Pedro Almodóvar

Pedro Almodóvar has delivered yet another masterwork. Laced with autobiographical details, his new film is a beautiful, full-hearted celebration of the craft of filmmaking. Antonio Banderas plays Salvador, that is, Almodóvar. Meditative, heroin-induced flashbacks to Salvador's youth weave together throughout the narrative. Structured like a Russian doll, *Pain and Glory* reveals its truth by peeling away layers with thick cinematic artifice, acting as a barrier to the raw nerves beneath. There are twists and turns like any good melodrama; the surprises, however, come in the form of people and objects that re-enter Salvador's life, filling it with grace and meaning. Almodóvar is well-known for the punchy, color-blocked art design of his films, and *Pain and Glory* delivers right from the gorgeous paint swirl opening titles. The film is breathtaking to watch, even with the action confined to a handful of locations. While not a coming-of-age film *per se*, *Pain and Glory* gestures toward young Salvador's moment of self-recognition. This is a film about reassessment of the past but more so about renewal of the mind and body, about overcoming mental burdens, and about human resilience. At times, *Pain and Glory* may feel distant, controlled, or unwilling to show its hand, but by its close, it is a film that clings onto your heartstrings and does not let go.

2. **TRUTH AND JUSTICE** (Estonia, 2019) Tanel Toom

Director Tanel Toom's skillful adaptation of Estonia's landmark novel of the 20th century and Estonia's Academy Award entry, *Truth and Justice*, is a morality tale that has global iterations wherever man has struggled to dominate the land and his own nature. In the center of this multi-decade story is an idealistic young farmer, Andres, a bull-headed man determined to turn his problematic piece of land into a fruitful homestead despite the psychological toll exacted on his family. Trapped in the stereotypical Nordic male traits of intractable stoicism and emotional reserve, Andres is so fixated on building a life for himself and his children that he never considers their happiness. This is not merely a characteristic of the period (19<sup>th</sup> century) but a national attribute with continuing resonance and tied to the Estonians' attachment to their land. The struggle is never-ending. Through the haze of summer and the frozen winters, the questions of family, sacrifice, and generational aspirations will be familiar to American audiences who are acquainted with stories of settlers in their wagons struggling to dominate the American West in the dustbowl dramas of the Great Depression. *Truth and Justice* is a visually sumptuous saga, a widescreen sensory feast of the traditional kind, rich in ravishing candlelit interiors, majestic landscapes, soaring aerial shots, and heart-swelling musical fanfares. It may be painted with a broad brush, but the canvas is beautifully detailed.

3. **FOR SAMA** (UK/Syria, 2019) Waad Al-Kateab and Edward Watts

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria could make one lose faith in humanity, but out of the ashes of this conflict comes *For Sama*, a remarkable documentary about a doctor (Hamza Al-Kateab) struggling to care for civilian war casualties in a makeshift hospital in the Syrian rebel stronghold of Aleppo while his journalist wife (Waad Al-Kateab) documents it while caring for their infant daughter (Sama). It is hard-hitting and graphic, yet it is also loving and warm, a remarkable blend of reporting and *cinema verite*. Though Waad al-Kateab films her family, she eschews sentimentality. As a journalist and a doctor, she and her husband occupy professions noted as much for their sobriety as for their service. When al-Kateab turns her camera on others, she focuses on the graphic, brutal, stomach-churning effects of al-Assad's assault on civilians. But just as crucially, and perhaps more compellingly, al-Kateab's reflexive filmmaking provides an uncannily relatable example of the mundane experience of war. Profound bravery exists alongside profound ordinariness. Friends still gather for dinner. They still tell their children bedtime stories. They still have to cook and clean and sleep. Their everyday aspirations — to build a garden and to send their children safely to school — demonstrate the brutality of the government's response, but they also invite viewers to picture themselves in the shoes of these modest political dissidents. One of the most heart-wrenchingly honest films of the year, *For Sama* is a leading contender for the 2020 Oscar for Best Documentary Feature. Unselfconsciously, it prompts audience members to ask themselves: How long would I defy tyranny if my world was coming down around me?

4. **MONOS** (Colombia, 2019) Alejandro Landes

Taking place in the dense jungles and foggy mountaintops of northern Colombia, this tense and deeply mad thriller is something between *Apocalypse Now*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, and *Embrace of the Serpent*. A thrilling survivalist saga, the film tracks a dysfunctional group of young militants as they traipse through perilous terrain, engaging in savage behavior while toying with their mortified American hostage but never revealing their motivations. By

stripping away the sociopolitical context, *Monos* provides a window into power-hungry mayhem on the fringes of society that could happen anytime, anywhere. A suspenseful encapsulation of alienated youth enmeshed in pointless battles that can only lead to further destruction, the film avoids injecting specific details about the surrounding the Civil War plaguing the country's hillsides. It depicts a dysfunctional society and guilt-ridden family in miniature, and demonstrates the shifting power dynamics of a cult, the craziness embedded in the minds of child soldiers, the resentments nursed in a military unit without a supervising commanding officer, and the very real danger of eating mushrooms grown in cow dung. Perhaps it is an allegory about Landes' homeland, Colombia, a country awakening as if from an endless dream of violence but with an uneasy suspicion that the seedlings of new violence are always there.

5. **VIOLA** (Argentina, 2012) Matías Piñeiro

Director Matias Piñeiro's wondrous *Viola* offers an invaluable lesson to other films in how to be lighthearted without being empty-headed. The film tells the story of a group of actresses performing in a production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as they get caught up in a web of romantic intrigue and revelation. Viola is a recent college grad who delivers on bike throughout Buenos Aires bootleg DVDs downloaded from the Internet by her enterprising boyfriend Javier, who runs this small-time profitable pirating racket. While making a delivery, Viola meets Cecilia and accepts an invitation to watch her all-female production of a Shakespeare classic. The modest plot gives the Shakespearean actresses a chance to perform onstage, rehearse, and freely talk backstage about their love-lives and fears in comparison to Shakespeare's play. Piñeiro's tight (65 mins), well-grounded achievement is a raw urban film about young female adults feeling their oats. *Viola* invites us to submit to its pleasures, which are ample and ultimately very simple. In lieu of stylistic fireworks or some sort of grand thesis statement, Piñeiro offers us nothing less than a window onto extreme beauty, which radiates through the faces of his actresses and the Shakespeare play that they intermittently recite in a variety of contexts: as dialogue in stage productions, as lines being rehearsed in private, and as words interpolated into everyday conversation.

6. **HEROIC LOSERS** (Argentina, 2019) Sebastián Borensztein

Adapting Eduardo Sacheri's 2016 novel *The Night of the Heroic Losers*, Argentine director Sebastian Borensztein's thoroughly entertaining film follows a group of working-class Buenos Aires neighbors who want nothing more than to open up a farming co-operative. Fermín, a retired local soccer star and the leader of the group, along with his wife and colleagues, decide to buy an abandoned grain silo and convert it into a cooperative that will free local farmers from the control of outside market forces. Their local bank manager convinces them to open an account at his bank. But this is August 2001, and Argentina is in the midst of a financial crisis. The next day, at the peak of the Argentine banking crisis, the government imposes a freeze on all bank accounts. When the bank closes, Fermín and the others lose everything. A year later, they learn that their cash was transferred to the account of a local lawyer. The disparate group of idealists is left with only one solution: rob those who robbed them. "We're not thieves," insists the ringleader of the heist. He may be wrong in the most literal sense, but nevertheless, he assembles a group of amateurs who just want their money back. Utilizing suspense, tragedy, and comedy, as it fast-forwards through a chain of events that leads up to a grand finale explosion, *Heroic Losers* makes for a well-executed Robin Hood-esque plot that relies on the charisma of its performers.

7. **THOSE WHO REMAINED** (Hungary, 2019) Barnabás Tóth

Many films deal with the suffering of the Holocaust years, but far fewer focus on those who managed to return from the camps. This achingly tender drama, Hungary's entry for Best International Feature Film at the 2019 Academy Awards, fills that gap. Set in the period between 1948 and 1953, the film focuses on the developing relationship between two traumatized survivors, Doctor Aládar (Aldo) Körner and Klára, who is many years Aldo's junior. Klára moves in with Aldo who acts as a foster father, sharing custody with her aunt. He makes the rules, however, and is strict about physical contact, especially when she crawls into bed with him at night. Gradually, both open up to each other. They talk about God, her parents, the sister she feels guilty about not being able to save from death, and, in a tender scene, he shares with her his photo album from before the war. Ultimately, their relationship helps them heal and provides them with someone to live for. At the same time, the film smoothly incorporates the menace of the Stalinist era with references to folks have been disappearing at night, the chilling stress on the word "Comrade," and the shamefaced confession of Aldo's colleague Pista, himself the foster father to two survivor daughters. Pista reveals that he has joined the Party and has been asked to inform on Aldo. *Those Who Remained* deftly captures the emotional fragility of Hungarians who survived World War II but lost loved ones and faced an uncertain future.

8. **CORPUS CHRISTI** (Poland, 2019) Jan Komasa

While *Corpus Christi*, Poland's Oscar entry, is based on real stories of people pretending to be clergyman, it surprisingly redefines what it means to be a man of the cloth. What makes a priest a priest? Technically, the answer is devotion to God, completion of seminary training, and ordination by a bishop to deacon status. But director Jan Komasa's stunning,

quietly subversive *Corpus Christi* sees the question in more existential terms, permitting, Daniel, a well-meaning juvenile delinquent to skip all that spiritual preparation and con a small Polish community into accepting him as a kind of proxy while the parish's regular priest sobers up. Despite its density, the film is exceptionally pleasing and easy to watch. It explores universal themes, not only specific to the Catholic Church and believers but to whoever believes in humanity and people's ability to do good. It also makes viewers reassess the meaning of religious notions, such as salvation, judgment, guilt, making amends, temptations, and repentance for one's sins. For example, in one fun yet deep moment, Daniel hears a confession of a woman who is truly remorseful for beating her son, and as a penance, he solely orders her to "take her son biking." In another scene, the young priest gives advice to and philosophizing about religion with teens barely younger than himself. In the end, just like a whole parish could be charmed by Daniel's eagerness and earnestness, *Corpus Christi* is a movie that wants viewers to believe its story and root for its lead until the very end.

9. **HONEYLAND** (Republic of Macedonia, 2019) Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov

*Honeyland* is a documentary about a woman who ekes out a meager living raising bees and harvesting their honey in the remote mountains of what is now known as North Macedonia. The film by Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov is part fly-on-the-wall anthropology, part ecological fable and has received numerous awards at prestigious film festivals. Hatidze, a 50-something woman, is, along with her ill mother Nazife, the last true resident of their rural village. Stefanov and Kotevska, who filmed Hatidze for three years, happened upon a pivotal conflict that would alter Hatidze's life: the arrival of a nomadic family of nine who settled nearby with a few hundred cattle and a fierce determination to make a living. There are no villains here, just people trying to do their best for their families. This is a story of a vanishing way of life, in a forgotten corner of Europe, but also a character study of extraordinary intimacy and feeling. The film's cinematography brings the countryside to life, managing to make it both sensual and unforgiving in equal measures. Making Oscar history as the only documentary to be nominated in both the Best Documentary Feature and Best International Feature, this portrait of a vanishing way of life and a woman just trying to make her way in the world is stunningly beautiful and quietly powerful.

10. **ASH IS PUREST WHITE** (China, 2018) Jia Zhangke

Leading Chinese auteur Jia Zhangke's latest film is a story of love, sacrifice, and betrayal, spanning seventeen years of contemporary Chinese history. A fascinating chapter in Zhangke's ongoing chronicle of ordinary lives affected by unprecedented change in China, at first *Ash is Purest White* seems like a gangster story of slow-burning revenge. However, it is a tale characterized not by violent release, but by a steady and ultimately compassionate spirit of resolve. Qiao (played by Zhangke's wife) is the girlfriend of a mob boss named Bin. Together they have a lot of power in Datong, an old mining city that has become poor since the price of coal dropped. After Qiao saves Bin from a vicious mob attack, she is imprisoned for five years on a weapons charge. After her release, she goes searching for Bin, who has been mysteriously silent during that time. After failing to find him, she goes looking for some place where she can forget him. She travels thousands of miles on numerous trains from one dead end in China to the next, from the Three Gorges, where the government has displaced a million people to build a giant dam—the subject of Zhangke's 2006 film, *Still Life*—to the frontier wastelands of Xinjiang, where she follows a shifty entrepreneur. What she finds, and where Zhangke takes the story from there to the present day, becomes a plaintive rumination on time and the human heart's often misleading sense of direction. With Zhangke's films, there is always the illusion of pessimism, and it is certainly there, but *Ash Is Purest White* is a masterful mix, sprinkled with measures of humor and hope.

11. **AND THEN WE DANCED** (Georgia, 2019) Levan Akin

A passionate tale of love and liberation set amidst the conservative confines of modern Georgian society, *And Then We Danced* follows Merab, a devoted dancer who has been training for years with his partner Mary for a spot in the National Georgian Ensemble. The arrival of another male dancer, Lrakli, gifted with perfect form and equipped with a rebellious streak, throws Merab off balance, sparking both an intense rivalry and romantic desire that may cause him to risk his future in dance as well as his relationships with Mary and his family. Director Levan Akin delivers a vibrant and touching story full of bright colors, attractive characters, and lively music. This is a magnificent love letter to Georgian culture as the movie not only focuses on their traditional dance but also on the country's gastronomy, architecture, and city life. By framing this gentle coming-of-age tale around such a traditional piece of Georgian culture, Akin has made an inherently political film and rendered it in sensitive terms with a celebratory spirit, not to mention a culture rarely seen onscreen. This is exactly what cinema should do, open up our world and give us an experience of people in a different culture to our own while connecting us on a human level through that most universal of themes.

12. **SYNONYMS** (France/Israel, 2019) Nadav Lapid

Relocation becomes dislocation in director Nadav Lapid's intense, beguiling *Synonyms*. Winner of the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, the story follows a young Israeli man who moves to Paris in the hope of shedding his past and remolding his identity, yet instead finds his sense of self chipped away. This is an unsettling film about nationality and how society shapes people in a way that is difficult to entirely shake off. As an exercise in depicting the disjointed link between national and personal identity, *Synonyms* is dazzling. As a portrait of displacement in a world becoming both more globalized and more nationalistic, it is a testament. Co-produced by director Maren Ade (Toni Erdmann), and loosely based on Lapid's own experience as a young man who fled to Paris because he believed that he was born in the Middle East by mistake, the filmmaker's intriguing third feature continues his forensic, career-long fascination with the impossible knot that ties a person to their country. It may seem like an impertinent thought in the midst of a global refugee crisis, but *Synonyms* translates the main character's dilemma into an unshakable portrait of a man whose passport only gets him so far, who has grown tired of carrying the baggage that comes with being an Israeli, and who has been driven to the brink of madness by a world that forcibly identifies people by the place they were born. As an exercise in depicting the disjointed link between national and personal identity, *Synonyms* is dazzling.

13. **WOMAN AT WAR** (Iceland, 2018) Benedikt Erlingsson

*Woman at War* is an intelligent feel-good film that tackles urgent global issues with humor as well as a satisfying sense of justice. Benedikt Erlingsson's glorious follow-up to *Of Horses and Men* features an environmental activist modestly taking on the world, one electric pylon at a time. The film opens with gorgeous shots of the rugged countryside and follows choir conductor/environmental activist Halla as she works covertly to disrupt an aluminum plant by damaging power pylons, navigating her secret identity as her exploits go viral. Yet to focus on her direct action is to miss another important part of the story, Halla's efforts to adopt a little four-year-old girl, Nika. Halla is too old to adopt most anywhere in the world but not in Ukraine. Slowly, we get to know this well-intentioned and modestly equipped crusader more intimately. Living in a handsomely appointed home where pictures of Nelson Mandela and Gandhi decorate her workspace, Halla rides her bike to work, wears a congenial smile, and leads a responsible life when she is not climbing up rooftops and dropping exposé leaflets to help turn civic opinion against the government's evil ecological plans. Erlingsson deals with elemental matters here, the destruction of the environment, the degradation of politics into a sideshow, and the yearning for human connections. Deftly balancing its whimsical comedic tone and dramatic heft, *Woman at War* has received numerous awards on the international film festival circuit. It is a unique, engaging thrill ride with plenty of heart.

14. **CHAMPIONS** (Spain, 2018) Javier Fesser

Marco is separated from his wife Sonia and just got fired from his job. Driving drunk, he rams into the back of a police car. Marco is ordered to either spend two years in prison or complete ninety days of community service, in the form of coaching Los Amigos, a basketball team of people with disabilities. Described as a "group of twenty-year-olds who behave as though they are six," Marco, reluctantly at first, forges them into a competitive tournament-winning team and realizes that he has a lot to learn from these players. The film is inspired by a team in Valencia created with people with intellectual disabilities that has won twelve Spanish championships between 1999 and 2014. It is standard, crowd-pleasing stuff, replete with a big, climactic game featuring a heavy orchestral score and slow-motion action, but its execution is energetic and impressively slick, leaning heavily toward laughs rather than relying on maudlin drama. Played by actors with mental disabilities, the basketball team members come across as far more emotionally balanced and candid and far less ruthless than the supposedly "normal" figures. The script is more patronizing to Marco than it is to them. The film's most impressive feat is the way it celebrates otherness at the same time as it criticizes traditional attitudes to it. A box office hit in Spain, *Champions* may also be an act of cultural penance for the Spaniards. At the 2000 Paralympics Games, the Spanish national basketball team won the gold medal with a team that included only two players with disabilities.

15. **TOO LATE TO DIE YOUNG** (Chile, 2018) Dominga Sotomayor Castillo

The third feature from Chilean director Dominga Sotomayor Castillo was inspired by her own childhood and looks at the summer of 1990, right after the fall of Pinochet at the end of 1989. Though not overtly political, the film focuses on a sixteen-year-old in a bucolic, commune-like setting. The epoch's cautious, somewhat uncertain optimism finds its parallels in the travails of a young girl who, like her country, slowly tries to come into her own. A sense of slow transition flows through the film as it touches upon the lives of teenagers Sofía and Lucas who experience the changes of young adulthood even as the environment they exist within shows little day-to-day variation. With no electricity or the incursions of modern technology, the film looks at a kind of simple living where the days have a rambling quality with children playing in tree houses and drinking from streams. The film stays within this organic and self-sufficient world, never leaving it for the conventional urban lives and spaces its members have presumably left behind. Gentle narrative strands

exist, such as that of Sofia's estranged relationship with her father and her hope that her mother will join them for the new-year celebrations and stay with her in the city after the celebration. However, the story elements are never forceful, letting the film truly breathe in its in-between moments. An ambitious feat of storytelling delivered with a sensitivity to mood and emotion, this loving, textured, coming-of-age film earned Dominga Sotomayor best director honors at the Locarno International Film Festival, making her the first woman to win the honor in the fest's seventy-one-year history.

16. **TRANSIT** (Germany/France, 2018) Christian Petzold

In this adaptation of Anna Seghers' 1942 novel about a German concentration camp survivor seeking passage to North America in Nazi-occupied France Petzold takes a brazen, bounding risk right off the bat by stripping Segher's story of any external period symbols, relocating it to a kind of liminal, sunburned present day. *Transit* invites viewers to trace their own speculative connections between Seghers' narrative and the contemporary rise in neo-Nazism and anti-refugee sentiment. A student of fascism's impact on the psyche, Petzold strips away the familiar Nazi context in order to view this narrative in its purest form and turn the book's occupiers into generic "fascists." The film is sleek and confident in the same Hitchcockian mold as Petzold's 2015 companion piece *Phoenix*. Intelligently conceived by production designer K.D. Gruber, *Transit's* Marseille is a world of shabby 21st-century architecture and outfitting, cleared of any hint of post-midcentury technology — and made alien by the unexpectedly scorched palette and desolate Cinemascope expansiveness, even in the pokiest interiors, of Hans Fromm's exquisite lensing. As the film slowly puts its formalistic and thematic cards on the table, it becomes clear that its storytelling technique is really just a reflection of its core themes. An unsparing depiction of the maddening redundancy of life under a slow-churning government bureaucracy, *Transit* asks the question of personhood after the state has officially stripped it away.

17. **SLUT IN A GOOD WAY** (Canada, 2018) Sophie Lorain

Less saucy than its title suggests, this film is an absorbing dramedy about friends, gossip, feelings, and sex. As its playfully English-language title implies, *Slut in a Good Way* turns the tables on mass-media conditioning, offering an upbeat and unpretentious female-centered look at the gratification, and consequences, of adolescent "oats sowing." Countless books, gender studies papers, and personal essays have pored over the meaning of the term *slut* for as long as there has been feminism. Yet, the gendered term is still one that women have to face. Ditching many of the high school movie tropes for idiosyncratic raunchy comedy, Sophie Lorain's film deliberately calls out the double standard that still exists while letting her flawed young characters still have fun. The three girls at the center of the film stumble through crushes, bad sex, blurred lines between friends, and sexual partners. As much as the guys talk behind the girls' backs, the movie shows that girls are just as guilty in calling each other sluts. Certain scenes play up conventions of romantic comedies. Other moments poke fun at the animalistic aspects of our mating rituals, like when boys gather to ogle the new girls in town. *Slut in a Good Way* is fun in a great way, the kind of movie that leaves moviegoers on an upbeat note and with a smile. Lorain's direction is free-flowing and the characters are wonderfully rendered by the film's young cast.

18. **BURNING** (South Korea, 2018) Lee Chang-dong

The word "burning" may just as well describe the smoldering resentment felt by the characters in the beguiling new drama from South Korean master Lee Chang-dong. Based on a ten-page short story by Haruki Murakami and set in modern day South Korea, this psychological mystery thriller centers on three characters: Jongsoo, a young man from modest means who dreams of being a writer, and Haemi, a young woman from Jongsoo's childhood who reconnects with him. The third character is Ben, a Gatsby-like figure who shows up with Haemi after an impromptu trip to Kenya. It is clear that Ben and Haemi are now an item but Jongsoo does not trust Ben. There is something off about him. Jongsoo slowly becomes our protagonist as he scrabbles around to get a grip on his rudderless life and convinces himself that he has fallen in love with Haemi. As Jongsoo's suspicion of Ben increases, a more overt mystery element of the film occurs and Jongsoo determines to find the answer. Audiences need to pay close attention as every detail in this film counts. While the movie is not designed as a thriller, it slowly evolves into one as it progresses, carving itself into the viewer's mind without much notice. There are stretches of time when the storyline appears uneventful but Chang-dong sprinkles subtle hints throughout the film. Amidst a central mystery and air of uncertainty, *Burning* is a fascinating character study about class, greed, guilt, and jealousy and how characters are driven by each of these.

19. **ANCHOR AND HOPE** (UK/Spain, 2017) Carlos Marques-Marcet

Spanish-born Kat and English Eva are a gleefully, almost nauseatingly happy couple who live on a funky reconditioned barge on which they chug along the canals of London. Neither has a particularly well-paying job. Kat wants to get deeper into boat-building but would rather drink pints at a pub, while Eva teaches salsa. They get by on a steady diet of intense love, tequila, and hot sex. Their beloved cat, Chorizo, dies, leaving a big pet-sized hole. Kat's best friend Roger comes to visit from Barcelona, and Eva starts longing to have a child. Kat is less enthusiastic about the baby idea, but goes with the

flow when Eva suggests they ask a willing Roger to donate sperm for their home insemination. As the pair put their plan feverishly into action, Eva's liberal, ex-hippy mother Germaine has difficulty getting on board and it becomes increasingly clear that one of them may not be as enthused and committed to the idea of parenthood as the other. Like the canal boat that slowly chugs around some little-seen yet fetchingly picturesque areas of the city, the film has a slow and unhurried pace, pushing the central characters and their predicament to the forefront. The dialogue is utterly spontaneous, free-floating, and the core present as well-intentioned, smart, funny young people determined to live a little differently from the previous generation. All those elements conspire to make *Anchor and Hope* a deeply engaging film that lets viewers peek into a world in which they do not really mind lingering.

20. **BIRDS OF PASSAGE** (Colombia, 2018) Cristina Gallego and Ciro Guerra

Set in the arid coastal Guajira region of Colombia among an indigenous and staunchly independent people known as the Wayuu clan, *Birds of Passage* takes place in a twenty-year period immediately after the years of a bloody civil war and ends just before the start of the 1980s narcocracy headed by Pablo Escobar. From the directors who made *Embrace of the Serpent* (2015), the story begins in 1960 with a young Wayuu man needing a dowry to marry his intended and arranging for a shipment of marijuana to American Peace Corps stoners. From there, he becomes the region's lead narco-trafficker. When an alliance with a cousin ends in unnecessary mayhem, the wheels of reprisals and mistrust begin to turn rapidly. The Wayuu's simple lifestyle is highlighted. Conversations with dead ancestors and dream interpretations guide the clan's courses of action, all of which provides *Birds of Passage* with a ghostly, occasionally surreal atmosphere. We get a distinct sense of entrapment, stuck as these people are between the ocean and a world they do not understand. In the age of documentaries on Escobar and others, Colombians have grown tired of filmmakers exploiting their troubled past, but Gallego and Guerra's inspired take on the blood feud yarn and mob thriller is really unique. *Birds of Passage* is an enthralling, powerful statement and lamentation on the drugs trade's inevitable encroachment on indigenous peoples and how gangsters casually destroy them.

21. **THE GROUND BENEATH MY FEET** (Austria, 2019) Marie Kreutzer

In this engaging film from director Marie Kreutzer, a talented business consultant, Lola, who specializes in saving companies from bankruptcy through drastic measures, has a harder time keeping her private life from going under. Handsomely staged and impressively acted, the film starts off as a coolly detached observational film about a thirtyish businesswoman whose entire persona is based on coldly calculating costs and benefits without letting her feelings interfere. Her responsibility for her mentally ill older sister and her complicated relationship with her boss-cum-lover, inevitably start to cause hairline fractures in Lola's impeccably groomed facade. The film is a quietly devastating indictment of our increasingly impersonal times, not to mention a stark reminder of what women face in the workplace. Lola's life has become a joyless exercise in self-control, whether she is working out, climbing the corporate ladder, or making love. *The Ground Beneath My Feet* consistently serves as a powerful showcase for the talented Valerie Pachner as Lola, who manages a performance that is both distant and achingly vulnerable. In *Lola*, we see the cracking facade of a woman who appears to have it all but cannot stop her life from going off the rails. Through all the catastrophes that obstruct her path, the sound of Lola's shoes hitting the ground serves as a guiding marching drum. Her steps are loud and always forward, never stopping to dwell on the past, even if sometimes, like the rest of us, she should.

22. **END OF THE CENTURY** (Argentina, 2019) Lucio Castro

Written and directed by Argentinian filmmaker Lucio Castro, *End of the Century* is the natural descendant of lush romances like *Call Me by Your Name*, and will certainly endure as one of the most evocative films of the decade. Two travelers—Ocho, an aspiring poet from New York, and Javi, a Spanish director from Germany—spend a single day together in Barcelona in the opening act. Though they converse as if they had just met and hook up with the awkward nervousness of first-time lovers, it is clear that there is nothing casual or chance about their encounter. Their chemistry gives it away. Each layer added to the story—a second act prologue of their first meeting and a third act finale of their future—provides no answers and further complicates things, expanding the boundaries and limitations of time and space in order to properly represent their enigmatic relationship to one another. This is a love story drenched in a nostalgic magical realism that constantly shifts its own logic, as if recognizing the futility of containing its uncontainable romance. Castro's pacing is superb, with each frame held on only as long as is comfortable. The runtime is brisk (94 mins), but the film never overstays its welcome and passes by fluidly and abstractly, like a contemplated memory with the last act providing a beautiful one-two punch that will leave audiences reeling.



23. **SIERANEVADA** (Romania, 2016) Cristi Puiu

This richly engrossing film unfolds over a day in a cramped apartment in Bucharest, Romania where a family has gathered to commemorate the death of an elderly patriarch. The solemnity of the Orthodox ceremony hardly constricts the bickersome chatter and unruly emotions of three generations of relatives. We meet a cataract of mourning aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins, who count among their number an obstinate 9/11 truther, a philandering alcoholic, a pugnacious former communist, and a twenty-something party girl who thinks it wise to bring along her strung-out junkie friend; needless to say, chaos ensues. As the talk veers from elaborate 9/11 conspiracy theories to the repellent glamorization of life under the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, the film becomes both an acerbic essay on the subjectivity of truth and a multigenerational microcosm of Romanian society. To describe it in these terms is to risk bleeding the film of its thorny, unpredictable energy. With about six things going on in each deceptively clever handheld frame, the film never drags. At once, smart, uproarious, and politically charged, *Sieranevada* has the appearance of a docudrama, so true to life does it often feel, but it is no less a triumph of style and of craft. In its deadpan acknowledgement of the beautiful absurdity of family life, the film becomes by turns pit-of-stomach-sad, flight-of-fancy funny, and pin-in-heart moving.

24. **I DO NOT CARE IF WE GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS BARBARIANS** (Romania, 2018) Radu Jude

Radu Jude's ambitious new meta satire turns its attention to both the 1940s and the present, to Romania's role in the Holocaust under the military dictatorship of Ion Antonescu and to the subsequent whitewashing of the country's wartime image. In a military museum, in front of a glass case filled with old rifles and guns, actress Loana Lacob wanders into frame and introduces herself. She explains that she will be playing the role of Mariana Marin, not the 1980s Romanian poet, but a theatrical director who has been tasked with designing a public spectacle relating to Romanian history. Instead of something uncomplicatedly patriotic, Mariana mounts a meticulously researched reenactment of a much disputed 1941 atrocity, in which the collaborationist leader Ion Antonescu (who would later be executed for war crimes) ordered the murder of tens of thousands of Jews following the capture of Odessa by Romanian troops. With the reenactment, Mariana hopes to snare the conscience of a population sliding into the comfortable selective amnesia of nationalism, much as we all are witnessing around the world today, for example, in Poland. Jude's Brechtian break of the fourth wall serves to place the notion of veracity at the forefront of the audiences' mind – you are primed to consider the accuracy of statements and positions as well as performed actions.

25. **MAIDEN** (UK, 2018) Alex Holmes

As the camera drops us into a fiercely turbulent sea, a voiceover says, "The ocean is always trying to kill you." That is the dramatic start of *Maiden*, director Alex Holmes' rousing documentary, which flips gracefully between past and present as it turns a decades-old yachting race into an inspiring feminist adventure. Who in their right mind would ever want to watch a documentary about yacht sailing? The answer would be anyone who enjoys stories about defying regimes and altering the future of an entire industry. The film centers on Tracy Edwards, who at the age of twenty-four, led the first all-female sailing crew to compete in the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race in 1989. This endeavor, thought to be both impossible and more than a bit preposterous by the crew's male competitors, serves as the crux of the film's thematic foundation but speaks equally to the ingenuity of the human spirit and female empowerment. What separates the film from its countless genre-mates is the pacing, constructed in a sleek, flawless fashion, blurring by without an inkling of a dull moment. The film is distinctly barebones with hardly a minute wasted. The film portrays the struggles of humanity and how bravery can incite societal change on an incremental level, while also honoring individuals like Tracy Edwards, revolutionaries who were unafraid to face adversity for the truth that they believed in and succeeded despite their encounters with danger and misfortune. *Maiden* simultaneously functions as a timeless ode to passion and a reflective account of a fascinating highpoint in the history of women's involvement in the sports industry.

26. **A SIMPLE FAVOR** (Canada, 2018) Paul Feig

Based on the Darcey Bell novel of the same name, *A Simple Favor* is a sinuous thriller with as many twists and turns as a mountain road. Director Paul Feig's signature wry humor permeates this sleek film adaptation. Stephanie is a widowed mom who is constantly smiling and perky. She is someone who is so overzealous in her quest to be liked that she winds up being rather unlikable. One day, Stephanie's friend, Emily, calls with a favor: Could Stephanie pick up her son from school and watch him for a few hours? Emily's hunky husband, Sean, is away in London for a family emergency. Stephanie, ever agreeable, says yes. Then Emily never comes home. Stephanie then uses her skills with online digital platforms to search for her best friend. As the police hunt for Emily, Stephanie grows close to Sean, but things begin to unravel as both women's pasts expose dark secrets. Feig has made a name for himself with outrageous comedies like *Bridemaids*, but he has also proved that he is amply equipped to handle suspense. Here, Feig ditches laugh-out-loud moments and physical gags in a sinister domestic thriller. The film is full of panache, from its sexy French score to its

glistening gin martinis, and it weaponizes style, using it to keep audiences off balance as the mystery unfolds. Secrets are revealed, great-looking people wear fabulous clothes, and it is all perfectly twisty and engrossing. It all makes for a taut, absorbing, and divinely chic cinematic ride.

27. **LES MISÉRABLES** (France, 2019) Ladj Ly

The French Revolution has long been over, but in director Ladj Ly's *Les Misérables*, which premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival, a modern-day revolution takes root in the banlieues of Paris. And rather than disgruntled bread thieves and anti-monarchy rebels, this one galvanizes a fleet of young Afro-Parisians armed with Molotov cocktails and firecrackers. When a police squad tasked with patrolling the streets ventures into Les Bosquets, a notoriously crime-ridden, predominantly Black Muslim neighborhood outside Paris, a violent incident detonates a string of riots. In this community, the police operate with a fascistic sense of entitlement and power over the lives of others. Ly creates a thriller operating as a savage indictment of social policies and underhand police tactics and corruption. Those sworn to serve and protect are allowed free rein to unnerve and harass. Paid to be our public servants, they swan about as our masters. "I do what I want," the white leader of the unit tells a fifteen-year-old French-Arab girl he has menaced in broad daylight. Riveting and pitched somewhere between *The Battle of Algiers* and *Do the Right Thing*, Ly's immersive use of slum locations, compelling scenario, and brooding atmosphere make for an impressive debut film and vital reminder how a lack of social justice generates unending and unnecessary misery. Coming as it does in the days of the Yellow Vests protests, this powerful film illustrates French society as a tinderbox on the verge of explosion.

28. **BUOYANCY** (Australia, 2019) Rodd Rathjen

As many as 200,000 boys and men are believed to be essentially enslaved in the Thai fishing industry. This film reveals the desperate plight of those captives through the experience of Chakra, a fourteen-year-old boy who dreams of leaving his hardscrabble rice-farming life in rural Cambodia. He decides to run away to nearby Thailand, where he has heard that well-paying factory jobs are easy to come by. After a tough journey involving scrambling over darkened desert hillsides, Chakra arrives in Thailand. After being loaded onto a boat, it soon becomes clear that he has been bought as chattel by the captain who puts him to work in the backbreaking, repugnant work of trawling for fish, sorting through the stinking catch in the baking sun, and packing it into barrels stored in the ship's hold. The vessel is so far out in the Gulf of Thailand, and returns to shore so rarely, that the ocean, usually an image of freedom and abandon, becomes a prison, with the creaking, reeking trawler as confining as a cage. The brutality of Chakra's imprisonment is only half of director Rodd Rathjen's concern. He also tracks the disintegration of Chakra's very humanity and chronicles the fall from grace that even the mildest-mannered young man can experience, as hunger, abuse, and pervasive violence erode any semblance of decency or morality. *Buoyancy* is a taut and urgent message movie that tracks the horror of human trafficking in a journey that starts out with the promise of advancement but ends up a regression to a primitive, brutish state of being, in which only the cruelest survive.

29. **ÁGA** (Bulgaria, 2018) Milko Lazarov

A small gem of focused filmmaking, *Ága* tells a minimal story about an elderly Yakut couple living in a yurt amid the frozen expanses of northeastern Siberia. Its impact relies very heavily on Kaloyan Bozhilov's majestic widescreen cinematography. There is a balance of isolation and expanse in the film that cannot be feigned, a sense of the enormity of existence measured against the fragile nature of single lives. The result is both wondrous and chilling. In this frozen landscape, Nanook and his wife Sedna live in a yurt, barely hanging on. At one time they had reindeer, but now the reindeer, like all other living things, have nearly disappeared. And so they eke out an existence. Nanook goes out daily and sets traps that only sporadically work. He chips large holes in the ice to fish, but even then often comes up dry. Though the story eventually takes some dramatic turns, what makes the biggest impact are not the plot points but the evocative visualization of a way of life that filmmaker Lazarov admits is more true to the spirit of the Yakut people than any specific activities. No matter what its origin, the unforgettable thing about *Ága* is the way its beautifully shot and impeccably composed images hold us, both the epic outdoor shots and the warm intimate moments inside. Quiet and unobtrusive, this is a film that knows how to make an impression.

30. **ZAMA** (Argentina, 2017) Lucrecia Martel

Don Diego de Zama is a full-blooded Spaniard, and as an assistant magistrate on a long administrative posting in Asunción, Paraguay, he serves the king of a colonial power in which he has never set foot. Tall and lean and fond of his powdered wig and many-sided hats, Zama desperately attempts to look important or purposeful until he realizes that no one is watching. A functionary who serves no function, he files the occasional incident report and spends his days adrift, pining for a transfer that is constantly rebuffed. Over this pleurably eccentric movie, Diego, with his noble head held high, his tragically ill-fitting wig, and slow-growing despair, continues to wait while simultaneously being assailed by

slights, insults, rejections, humiliations, a comically inquisitive llama, and catastrophic physical violence. Diego's tribulations are almost worthy of a Christian martyr except that he is suffering for sins of his own making. Though Zama is both an embodiment and a deadpan critique of colonialism and its attendant violence, slavery, and racism, he is also a sap who has drawn a poor lot. All that he desires is a transfer to bigger, frankly whiter, more cosmopolitan environs, but both co-workers and local tribesmen constantly thwart his attempts to flee this distant posting. No matter how many favors he hands out, how many people he swindles, eventually Zama realizes that he will not be leaving this backwater any time soon. So he reinvents himself as a guide to a band of soldiers and in doing so creates his own way out. While masterfully hypnotic, *Zama* is a film about failure, pride, pathos, and absurdity.

31. **THE CHAMBERMAID** (Mexico, 2018) Lila Avilés

With her exacting eye for detail, director Lila Avilés' *The Chambermaid* is a rare and special thing. The astute observational drama about a young woman (Eve) working in one of Mexico City's posh hotels invites us to step into the shoes of invisible laborers. Attuned to aspects of gender, race, and class, this understated yet observational film focuses on a young woman's hopes and dreams, however modest. Eve aspires to be promoted to the 42nd floor, with its exclusive executive suites. She yearns for a red dress left behind by a guest, patiently waiting several days before the unclaimed garment can be hers. She also makes time on her breaks to reach her daughter by phone, wishing for a situation that gave her more time with family at home. Avilés is more interested in the minutiae of her character's life than making larger social commentary. The film unlocks a world full of hope and disappointment, a workday that may bring peril or boredom. Less epic in scale than last year's *Roma*, it is just as emotionally potent and perhaps even more successful at questioning the power dynamics of a workplace that has lost its sense of compassion. Importantly, it depicts the dynamic between the staff, as in Eve's budding friendship with a co-worker named Minitoy, or the vaguely romantic glances exchanged with a bashful window-washer, one of the few people who actually seems to see Eve. Thanks to this incredibly patient and empathetic film, we do too, a lesson likely to transform the way we perceive an entire category of our fellow humans.

32. **THE GREAT BUDDHA +** (Taiwan, 2017) Hsin-yao Huang

Sporting an ingeniously cinematic concept that's nimbly executed by writer-director Huang Hsin-yao, this ballad of sad losers mixed with satire directed at parochial politics is convulsively funny yet uncompromisingly bleak. Two small-town nobodies who get cheap thrills from car dash-cam videos lay eyes on more than they can handle in *The Great Buddha+*, a black comedy that is a digital-era homage to Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. Shot predominantly in crisp black and white that is tonally reminiscent of early-Jim Jarmusch, the picture is set in the small rural Southern Taiwan village home to laid-back Belly Button. When not making a meager living collecting trash, he hangs out with security guard Pickle, watching color dashcam footage pilfered from the car belonging to his elitist, American-educated boss, Kevin. But the voyeuristic distraction inevitably uncovers darker truths surrounding Kevin and the equally corrupt village. Along the way, director Huang, who expanded the film from his similarly named 2014 short, periodically chimes in to offer helpful character backstories and dry commentary, occasionally introduced with "Dear audience members ..." While amusingly breaking that fourth wall, Taiwan's official Oscar submission also does not shy away from acknowledging the formidable wall that exists between the privileged and the exploited. Having swept the Taipei Film Awards, *The Great Buddha+* is savagely satirical and gorgeously surreal.

33. **WILD ROSE** (UK, 2018) Tom Harper

In *Wild Rose*, Rose-Lynn (Jessie Buckley) is a supernova, a talent to latch onto and watch as she ascends into the stratosphere. This underdog tale of musical dreams and working-class realities is the perfect vehicle for Buckley to show off her substantial talent. Rose-Lynn, a misfit from Glasgow, wants nothing more than to be a country music singer in Nashville. As if that path is not complicated enough, Rose-Lynn is a mother of two and an ex-con in an ankle tether who spends her days working as a housekeeper. Though it has the underpinnings of a typical rags-to-riches music tale, *Wild Rose* avoids both clichés and the road typically traveled by these films. It is not just the Glasgow setting that gives it its teeth. It is Buckley's heartbreaking, heart-stopping performance, and her character's strict adherence to the old country music ethos of three chords and the truth. Rose-Lynn is a killer performer onstage. She lights up the room with her natural and arresting presence and she fills up that room with an angelic voice that will stop you in your tracks. The performance numbers in *Wild Rose* are filled with energy and grace and beautifully framed shots of a star in the making. Films that remind audiences of the dangers of being blinded by ambition are not uncommon, but *Wild Rose* is a charming tale about a star in the making and it has Buckley firmly in the spotlight.

34. **NON-FICTION** (France, 2018)

Director Olivier Assayas' (*Clouds of Sils Maria* and *Personal Shopper*) interest in the forces of globalization proves very much present in this witty, resonant, richly perceptive portrait of people caught in the throes of a fast-changing country. The tone of *Non-Fiction* tends toward the farcical, and the pacing is so brisk that one might miss the intricacy of its narrative design, the intelligence with which it unravels its ideas, and the sinuous grace of Assayas' filmmaking. From the first frame, the viewer is plunged into the middle of conversations that are dense, even dizzying, with clashing opinions: Kindle vs. books, print vs. web, art vs. entertainment, and so on. And the characters, with their espresso sipping and wine savoring, their smokes and sexual dalliances, their constant discoursing, and casually gorgeous apartments spilling over with books, at times tiptoe toward the insufferable. But Assayas is fully aware of their flaws, their yearnings, and exasperating contradictions. They are thrillingly complex. Broad philosophies thaw into personal neuroses as the film downshifts near Woody Allen territory, its various intellectual concerns achieving a human velocity that gets funnier and more self-referential with each line. An inextricably French romp, this film is about the frustrations of trying to leave your mark on a culture where photos disappear as soon as you have seen them; the most vicious murders are executed on message boards, and your mistress has not seen a single Ingmar Bergman film. *Non-Fiction* is a strangely calming reminder that change is the only true constant, and that steering the current is a lot easier than fighting it.

35. **ASAKO I & II** (Japan, 2018)

In this film, accomplished Japanese director Ryûsuke Hamaguchi tells the story of a young woman, Asako, who falls in love with Baku, a free-spirit. One day, Baku suddenly disappears. Two years later, Asako meets Ryohei. He looks just like Baku, but has a completely different personality. *Asako I & II* has a kind of counter-*Vertigo* theme, a tale of mirror-image obsession, but where this kind of thing is usually about the possessive male gaze and passively enigmatic female beauty, here things are reversed; it's about the female gaze and male beauty. Asako wanted sexy love-god Baku, but settled for dependable, reliable Ryôhei in the idealized romantic image she carries around. And in fact, it is Ryôhei who feels entitled to having the supernaturally ideal life. He is extremely handsome and nice. At heart, this is a film about looking for the past in the present, and about how hard it can be to shake that impulse. There may be two men in Asako's little black book, but as the title indicates, there are really two of her as well. *Asako I & II* ultimately works as a mellow date movie with some big insights about relationships.

36. **SUNSET** (Hungary, 2019) László Nemes

*Sunset* takes place in a rapidly industrializing Budapest of the 1910s as the shadow of war hangs over Europe. The film follows destitute milliner Írisz as she returns to her hometown from Trieste in an attempt to untangle the roots of her rotten family tree. Her parents were killed in a fire when she was two, she was put up for adoption and, as such, she has many questions about who she is and where she came from. There may even be an estranged brother lurking in the shadows. This is an ultra-compelling page turner of a film in which each scene delivers us to the next crumb in the winding trail. It is more like a sunrise than sunset, as Írisz moves from a state of total darkness to one where she is gradually bathed in the light of personal knowledge, however sinister and violent that occasionally may be. Director László Nemes' artful approach to history, a rich aesthetic that brings together exacting camera movements, long takes, detailed *mise-en-scene*, and emotionally charged close-ups, renders the past scary and immediate as few other movies have. This perspective also makes a perfect fit for the film's subject matter, Hungary's societal breakdown in the period leading up to World War I. Nemes's fusion of form and content makes *Sunset* an instructive masterpiece. Innovative and invigorating, the film provides insights into our own period of societal breakdown.