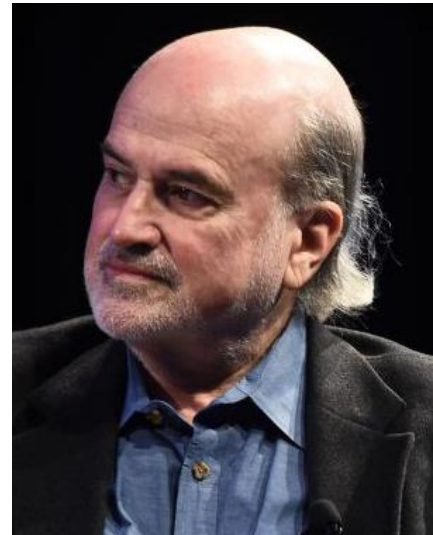


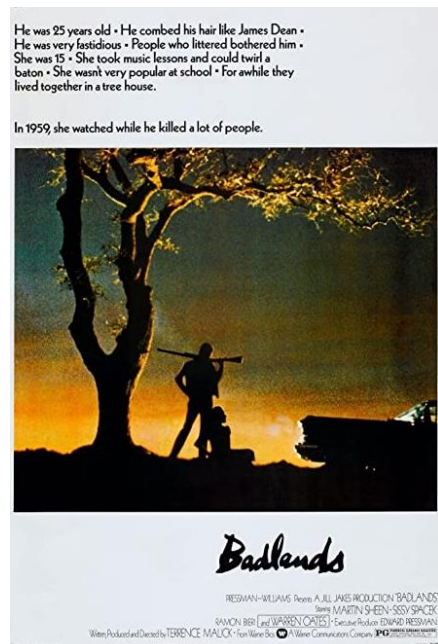
Today we finish talking about our trio of great film directors. Our last director is **TERRENCE MALICK**, who is an American film director. Unlike David Lean (who died in 1991, at the age of 83) and Stanley Kubrick (who died in 1999, at the age of 71), Terrence Malick is still alive and still directing films today - he is currently working on a film about the life of Jesus. But he is 76 years old, so we have to hope he stays in good health - because he is a huge genius and all of his films are fantastic. And the fact that he is such a huge genius makes it a huge shame that, just like Lean and Kubrick, he spent years not directing any films. But whereas Kubrick took 11 years between making 'Full Metal Jacket' and 'Eyes Wide Shut', while Lean took 14 years between directing 'Ryan's Daughter' and directing 'A Passage to India', Terrence Malick took a full 20 years off from directing, between 1978 and 1998. What was he doing in all of that time, when he could have been making amazing films? But maybe we wouldn't have the films he's made since 1998 if he hadn't taken those 20 years off. We'll never know.



Before he took such a huge break from directing films, Malick established himself as a really talented director with just two films - **BADLANDS**, made in 1973, and **DAYS OF HEAVEN**, in 1978. Both films were really striking for just how beautiful they were - even though they were telling some very hard stories: in 'Badlands' about a young man and someone who had barely stopped being a girl killing five people in South Dakota, and in 'Days of Heaven' about a husband and a wife trying to make a living working on other people's farms.

And after 'Days of Heaven' was released...nothing. Malick started work on a film about the origins of life on Earth (a bit like Kubrick had, 10 years before, in '2001: A Space Odyssey') but abandoned the project and moved to Paris, and started writing films, rather than directing them. And anyone who knew anything about film wondered, 'What's happened to Terrence Malick? Why isn't he making more films?' Well, they had a long wait - but finally, Terrence Malick's third film came out in 1998. It was called **THE THIN RED LINE** and it was about American soldiers fighting in the Pacific during **WORLD WAR II**.

Everyone wanted to be in this movie because everyone wanted to be directed by Terrence Malick - he had become a legend by simply not making any films. So the film had an all star cast. But no one knew what the film would end up looking like. Malick would just shoot loads of scenes, and decide how he wanted the film to turn out when he edited everything he had shot and put it all together. The end result was a shock. The actor who thought he was going to be the lead actor in the film - **ADRIEN BRODY** - ended up being hardly in the film; and no one had warned him before the film was first shown. Instead, Malick had fallen in love with the performance of a then unknown actor called **JIM CAVIEZEL**, and made him

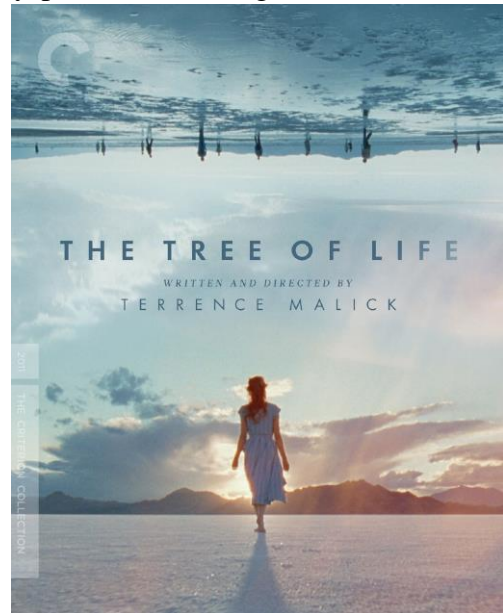


the centre of the film. And Malick was able to do this because the film itself didn't really have a story - it moved like a dream from one scene to another, some involving really intense battle scenes, some involving soldiers thinking about home or why they were in a war or trying to get away from war and connect with all the beauty around them. Here is a scene from the film:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkqiWhAxy_Y

Malick then followed 'The Thin Red Line' with a more conventional, though still dream-like, film about Europeans settling on the newly discovered continent of America: THE NEW WORLD (2005). And then he made a film which may prove to be the greatest film of the 21st century: THE TREE OF LIFE, which was released in 2011.

'The Tree of Life' may be the film that Malick needed to take 20 years off to find a way of making. It is, in part, based on his own life. It is about three brothers, and Malick was one of three brothers. One of Malick's brothers learned to play the guitar, just like one of the brothers in 'The Tree of Life'. And that brother ended up dying in Spain, where he had gone to have lessons in playing guitar from one of the world's greatest guitarists. And 'The Tree of Life' begins with the main character, Jack, mourning the loss of his brother, and thinking back to their childhood together. So 'The Tree of Life' is about Malick trying to come to terms with the loss of his brother - but it also involves Malick taking on huge questions like 'Why does anything exist?' 'Why are we here?' 'How can we go on when we lose so much?' It is one of the most moving and ambitious films ever made, and was awarded the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011, as the best film shown at the Festival that year.



But the film was, and is, very controversial. The dream-like approach to filming adopted in 'The Thin Red Line' is even more in evidence in 'The Tree of Life'. There is absolutely no attempt to explain what is going on, or present any kind of story that goes from A to B to C. You are just given snapshots in the life of a family (together with scenes showing the universe being born, and the history of the Earth!) and it's up to you to make sense of them or put them together, if that's what you want to do. And even an attempt to do that falls apart towards the end of the film when the focus shifts to Jack when he is all grown up - you don't get any story about him, or his life: you just get moments where he is placed in different situations and he is thinking about the sort of huge issues that Malick wants to talk about in the film. The film culminates in an incredibly moving sequence where all of the characters that have appeared in the film come together on a beach, and Jack is reunited with his mother and father as they were when he was a young boy, and with his little brother, who grew up wanting to be a guitarist and died trying to achieve that ambition:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsIybRQaDE4>

Malick then followed up 'The Tree of Life' with three more films 'To the Wonder', 'Knight of Cups' and 'Song to Song' which push the approach to film-making in 'The Tree of Life' to its absolute limit. In those films it is incredibly difficult to make sense of what is going on, and in fact it's stupid to even try - that's not the point of the films. What those films are doing is taking you on a ride, making you experience what the characters in the films are experiencing. And what Malick is trying to do by doing that is to teach us that reality is enchanted. That if we pay attention and really focus on the world, and nature, and other people - we will see that there is a further reality behind all of that: a reality that is really important and significant, but which we don't normally come into contact with because we are so distracted by the routines of normal life.

The film 'The Knight of Cups' begins with a voiceover telling the story about 'a young prince, a knight, who is sent by his father, the King of the East, west into Egypt to find a pearl: a pearl from the depths of the sea. But when the prince arrived, the people poured him a cup that took away his memory. He forgot he was the son of a king, forgot about the pearl - and he fell into a deep sleep.' That is what we are, according to Malick - princes and princesses who ought to be searching for some great treasure, but instead we have forgotten who we are, and have fallen asleep. What Malick is trying to do in his films is to wake us up, and help us remember what we really ought to be looking for. And his way of waking us up is to plunge us into the lives of people we know very little about, and experience their dissatisfaction with their lives, and the way they inch towards waking up themselves, like in this scene from 'Knight of Cups':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8bXAUhSSQI>

But Malick's three films after 'The Tree of Life' were so different from conventional movies that a lot of people were turned off and there was a real danger of Malick losing his audience. Perhaps realising that he had pushed his alternative approach to film-making as far as it could go, he then made a much more conventional - but still amazingly beautiful and moving (and also way long!) - film called 'A HIDDEN LIFE' about the real life story of a man who refused to serve in the German Army under the Nazis. He was imprisoned and eventually executed, with the result that his wife and children were left alone with absolutely no support. Malick asks whether this level of resistance to evil - resistance to the point where you lose your life and leave your loved ones behind - is justified and finds the answer in the quote from GEORGE ELIOT'S novel 'MIDDLEMARCH', which provides the title of the film:



'the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.'

Malick's has certainly not been a hidden life, and it is certain that if he dies and is buried, people from all over the world will be visiting his tomb - to pay tribute to a very great artist who has made some of the most beautiful films of all time, and in doing so tried to show us a greater beauty that constantly surrounds us but which we are too often completely blind. And if you want to get a sense of that beauty without watching all his films, look at his amazing tribute to Malick's films:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=dDYbC2W2U50>