



THE CHILDHOOD OF A LEADER

Autumn
Season
2016

Release: 2015

Cert (UK): 12A

Runtime: 116 mins

Director: Brady Corbet

Screenwriter: Brady Corbet, Mona Fastvold

Cast: Liam Cunningham, Bérénice Bejo, Tom Sweet, Stacy Martin, Robert Pattinson

With such a complex and multi-layered film such as, *Childhood of a Leader* we inevitably turn to The Guardian's Peter Bradshaw to make things clear.

"This steely, sinister and utterly gripping movie is the feature debut of 28-year-old actor-turned-director Brady Corbet. It's an inspired provocation, jabbing its audience with a fictional variant on history, and loosely based on Jean-Paul Sartre's 1939 short story of the same name.

The film imagines the wealthy, dysfunctional and unhappy childhood of someone fated to become a fascist leader: the action, disturbing enough in any case, is retroactively charged with this poisonous destiny. Newcomer Tom Sweet plays Prescott, the unhappy 10-year-old son of an American career diplomat (Liam Cunningham), who is in France in 1919 as part of US president Woodrow Wilson's retinue, there to establish postwar settlement terms to be imposed at Versailles on the defeated Germans. His beautiful and troubled wife (Bérénice Bejo) has effectively got her husband the job because she is a fluent French speaker, though he is not."



Versailles, of course, calls to mind just one "leader": the one whose career was based on persuading Germans they had been humiliated and betrayed by the surrender terms of the first world war. But Hitler's childhood – and Mussolini's, and Stalin's – were much more lower class than the one shown here. Franco was a bit higher up the scale. The fascist leader who compares in patrician entitlement and privilege is Oswald Mosley, and even he doesn't quite fit. Fascinatingly, it is a more metaphorical origin myth about American as much as European fascism.