

THE TRUMAN SHOW: A FICTIONAL STORY THAT MAKES US WONDER



People's obsession with the reality shows has probably reached its peak these days. We can have insights into other people's lives, experiencing the gamut of emotions from delight and curiosity to jealousy, judgment and event hatred. We derive pleasure from getting such an intimate window on individuals so different from and, at the same time, similar to ourselves. *The Truman Show* (1998) is a perfect example of the worldwide frenzy over the reality TV. As a matter of fact, the movie underscores the idea that we want to better understand human beings we are dealing with on a daily basis and reality shows give us a splendid chance to observe other individuals in various surroundings and get inspiration from their successes, decisions and even failures.

A global audience is witnessing Truman Burbank's life since his birth. His daily routine is similar to that of other people, but they prefer Truman's reality than their own mundane lives. They know everything about him, while he is completely unaware of the fact that the whole world is watching his every move. The viewers adore Truman, because he is one of them and he is real. He does not hide his emotions behind the wall of polished manners and memorized phrases. All people surrounding Truman, including his family and friends, are playing their roles assigned to them by media mogul Christof. The latter assumes the role of God, giving his "creation" a choice, but controlling his every step. Whenever Truman falls down or feels down in the dumps, Christof sends different people to cheer him up and whet his desire to live. Truman wants to explore the world around him and the great staging plan can go down the drain. Burbank is lulled into thinking that his world is real. However, he notices strange things or, rather, regular occurrences that invigorate him to probe further and travel beyond the limits of his native Seahaven. He begins planning his escape, overcoming his fears and welcoming uncertainty. After the illusions are shattered, he wishes to be

in control of his life, being an architect of his own fortunes.

The movie places an emphasis on the idea that “we accept the reality of the world with which we are presented”. Many people accept the reality without question, probably too afraid to explore any other or risk their comfort. However, once in a while there are people who knock down all the obstacles put in their way, and who realize that free will is a gift to be used. Nothing can stop them or prevent them from writing their own plan and living according to it.

An individual choice is what matters after all. Truman decides that he does not need God and makes it to the end of the world to demonstrate his persistence and challenge the Omni-present creator. Truman does not know what awaits him in the dark, but he chooses this dark void, because he wants to face up the real world. I admire Truman, for he has courage to break the confines of his limited world and worldview. The entire story can be seen as a parallel to the Garden of Eden story with one significant deviation from the original. Truman decides to leave his perfect world, opting for exploring the other side. In addition, he is also sensitive to the intrusion of his privacy. The whole world knows his inside out and still people can hardly predict his last choice.

Becoming a “celebrity” nowadays is easier than decades ago. Television offers people numerous opportunities to become famous and recognizable, devouring their lives and secrets in exchange. Real life gives a variety of unpredictable and exciting plots people will never get tired of. If they are bored with their own lives, they can peep into someone else’s, discovering that they are doing either better or worse than other people.

The Truman Show is not an exaggeration taking into account the increase and the popularity of such shows as Big Brother, Survivor, American Idol, Dancing with the Stars, Fear Factor, America’s Next Top Model, etc. It seems that people living in the twenty first century subsist more on emotions and stimulations than food. Probably, the explanation is not so difficult to find. As technology becomes more advanced, we want to reassure ourselves that

we are still capable of true feelings and not only of cold reasoning.

The Truman Show is a reflection of modern society's obsession with reality shows. The reality television has a hypnotic effect on the masses of people worldwide. The contemporary society derives pleasure from living on the edge, looking for thrills and addictions. It celebrates human weaknesses more than virtues, promoting shallowness, anti-social behavior, cut-throat competition and excessive self-indulgence.

Jim Carrey turns out to be a perfect choice to play Truman Burbank. Moreover, he is likable and believable. His comic persona surfaces at times, persuading the viewers that he is comfortable with his role. Jim Carrey proves that he is an extremely versatile actor capable of projecting the charisma of a funny and serious man. In *The Truman Show* he demonstrates the best of his dramatic acting skills with a couple of trademark gags. His performance is engaging in scenes, where he fully expresses the rebelliousness of his character. The real thrills of Carrey's performance are the times, when he lets the viewers into the soul of his character.

It is evident that the movie is full of symbols, metaphors, comparisons that focus on the perception of the reality, self-determination, truth seeking and overcoming fear. I think many people tried to imagine themselves in Truman's place. I genuinely sympathize with the man, who is just a victim of deception. When he faces a choice either to continue starring in the show or live in the shade, he chooses the latter and, strange as it may seem, his choice is welcomed by the public. *The Truman Show* is a must-see movie because of the creative and original script; in addition, is one of Jim Carey's best performance due to his surprisingly drama acting skills and his charisma to entertain.

WORKS CITED

The Truman Show. Dir. Peter Weir. Perf. Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney. Universal Studio, 1998. DVD.