



# Snowpiercer: Art Film in Disguises

María Teresa Villaseñor-Hernández\*

Ilustrado por Mónica Laredo Martínez\*\*

\* Egresada de la Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Información Documental, Facultad de Humanidades,  
Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, terezavh@gmail.com; mteresavh@gmail.com

\*\*Licenciada en Diseño Gráfico, email: monilaredo93@icloud.com



**S***nowpiercer* (2013) is one of the few movies that covers it all: has excellent cinematography, a strong acting lead and a wonderful and thoughtful story. Besides, it became my favorite movie instantly, like love at first sight.

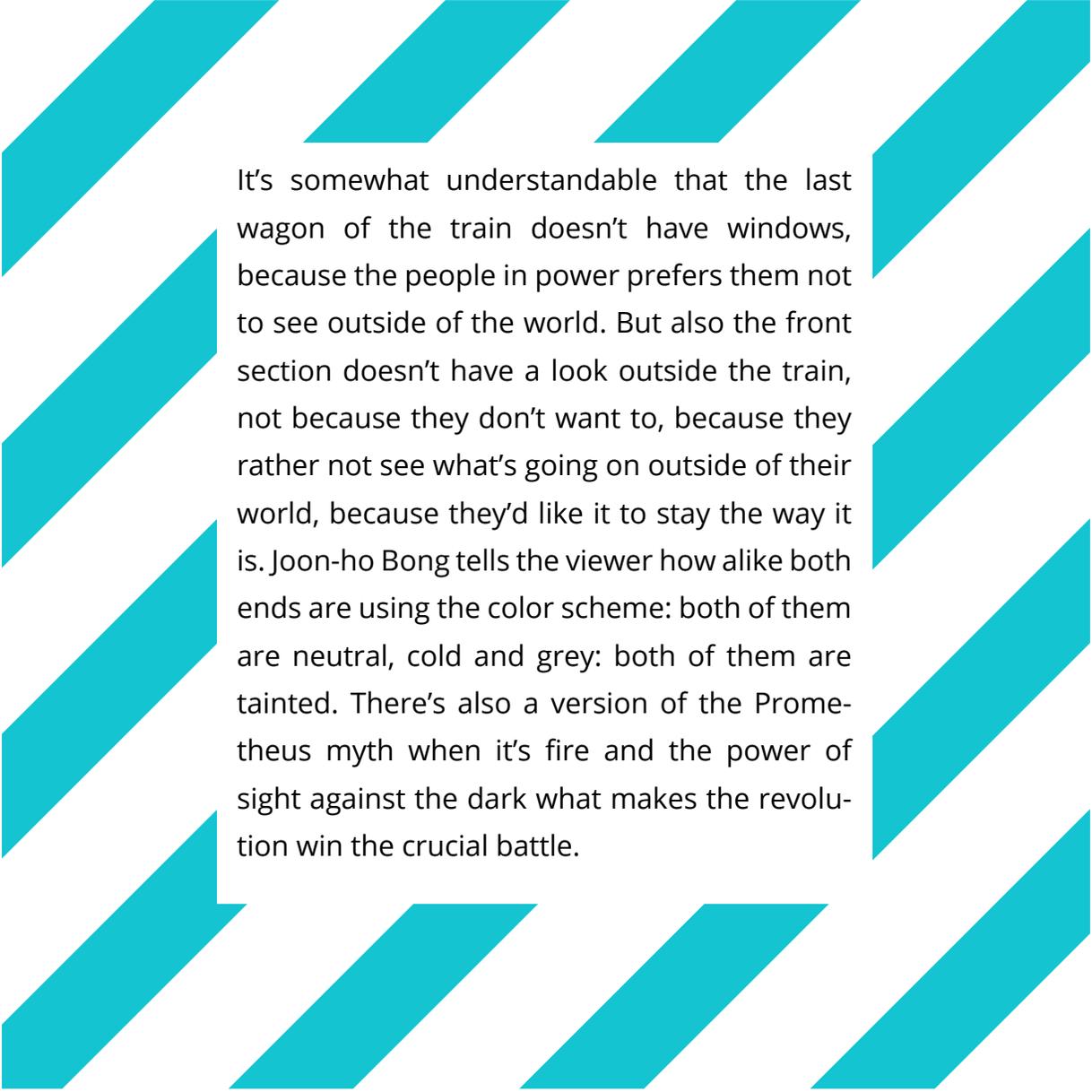
*Snowpiercer* is a sci-fi action movie with a heavy political message. Based on *Le transperceneige* (French graphic novel), it's about a dystopian future, where, due to global warming, the whole world has entered in an eternal and inhabitable winter. The only human survivors are stuck in a train, a Noah's ark-like train where what's left of humanity keep on traveling in order to keep on living. There's no reason to think outside of the train because the train means the entire world, because all that's left of human civilization is there, with all the implications.

The same social hierarchy remains: the ones who boarded the train with a first class ticket became the rich and powerful inside the train and live right in the front; the ones who bought an economic ticket became the middle class and live in the middle of the train; and the ones who had to board without a ticket, the stowaways, became the scum of the train, and are relegated to the tail section. The movie starts when a man of the back of the train, Curtis (Chris Evans), with the help of Gilliam (John Hurt) decides he has enough of it and organizes a revolution to change how things work, walking through the train to the front section, to take over the god-like captain: Wilford (Ed Harris).

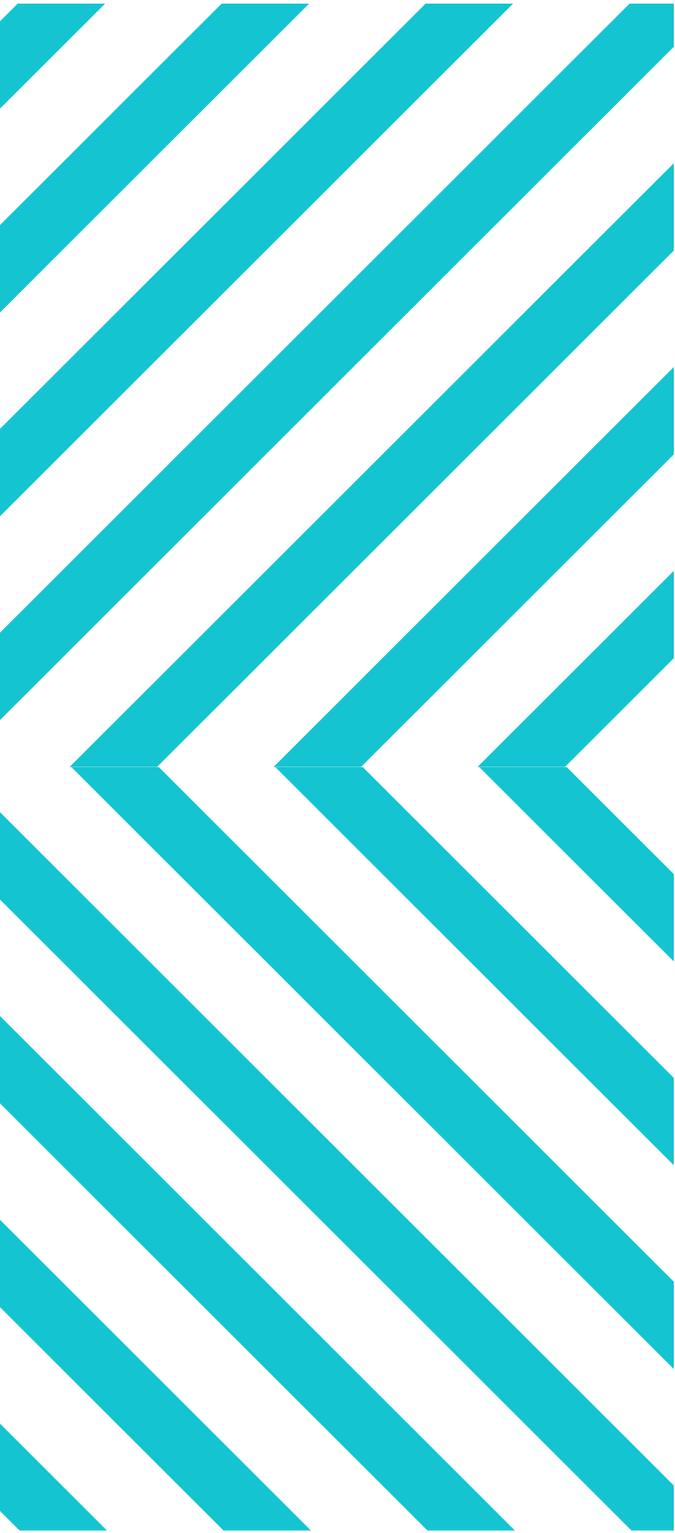
The first 20 minutes you expect the linear movie, and it is, quite literally, because we watch the characters move towards the front of the train, where the climax happens. Joon-ho Bong, the director, catches the viewer promising an action movie, but delivers a political one. We see a storyline of the economic structure, beginning with the poor cabin, passing through the water supply section, the agriculture and food section, the teaching section, the ones giving services and finishing with the rich wagons.

But when the story moves forward you can see small hints of social criticism. Beginning in the first car with the empty guns and empty threats, you can see how poor people are repressed with fear, not with guns. And also we notice that the real weapons (in this case, literally weapons) are hiding inside the school, where the crucial indoctrination happens.





It's somewhat understandable that the last wagon of the train doesn't have windows, because the people in power prefers them not to see outside of the world. But also the front section doesn't have a look outside the train, not because they don't want to, because they rather not see what's going on outside of their world, because they'd like it to stay the way it is. Joon-ho Bong tells the viewer how alike both ends are using the color scheme: both of them are neutral, cold and grey: both of them are tainted. There's also a version of the Prometheus myth when it's fire and the power of sight against the dark what makes the revolution win the crucial battle.



A character worth of mention is Mason (Tilda Swinton), who preaches the “know your place in the world” doctrine, in a way the controverted writer Ayn Rand would love to have in her novel *Atlas Shrugged*, delivering a shocking speech at the beginning of the movie. From subtle hints we can see she once was a child from the back forced to work on the front, and now she’s there to suppress the people who lives where she came from. She also sees the train as the only real thing, but she’s also resentful for the things she was forced to do.

Other interesting character is Namgoong Minsoo (Kang-ho Song), the engineer who participated in the building of the train, and thus, knows how to give the revolution access to all of it. He and his daughter, Yona (Ah-sung Ko), help Curtis to go to the front section, and in return, they ask for «crono», a highly addictive (and inflammable) drug. Yona is the hidden protagonist, the one that’s learning how the world works by his father’s constant lessons about living outside, before the train became their world.

*Snowpiercer* is a very hard critic on how revolutions blindly try to preserve the system they so hard want to put down, and how the people in power tries to keep the engine moving by using ideas to control people. This movie not only speaks to us in the way of the speeches the main characters make, but in the colors and the scenography they use. One thing worth noticing about this movie is that some companies decided not to show it in the us because they thought it wouldn't make enough money, and it barely came to Mexico. If you have the chance to see it, you'll love the wonderful and terrifying ending, while watching one of the most beautiful made action movies.

#### References

El Séptimo Arte (2013). *Snowpiercer*. Recuperado de <http://www.elseptimoarte.net/peliculas/snow-piercer-4031.html>.

Internet Movie Data Base (2013). *Snowpiercer*. Recuperado de [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1706620/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1706620/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1).

MovieClips trailers (2014). "Snowpiercer Official US Release Trailer 1". Chris Evans Movie HD. Recuperado de <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nX-5PwfEMBM0>.

Pushak, E. (2013). "Understanding Art House-Snowpiercer". Recuperado de [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bm9qKj1Q\\_OU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bm9qKj1Q_OU).

TV Tropes (2013). "Film/Snowpiercer - Television Tropes & Idioms". Recuperado de <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Film/Snowpiercer>.