

LUX

3 FILMS
24 LANGUAGES
28 COUNTRIES

FILM

DAYS

MEDITERRANEA

Jonas Carpignano
Italy, France, United States, Germany, Qatar



MEDITERRANEA

JONAS CARPIGNANO

The film begins in Algeria with the arrival of Ayiva, a young man from Burkina Faso. He is accompanied by Abas and both hope to reach Europe and find a better life there. However, before arriving in Italy they have to cross the desert, fight off looters preying on migrants, reach Libya and negotiate a merciless sea on a makeshift boat.

This journey is only the first act of a drama that focuses on the lives of these migrants who, having finally arrived in Europe, are soon forced to the margins of Calabrian society, exploited as illegal labour in citrus plantations, housed in slums and confronted above all by the mistrust and hostility of local society.

SOME LINES OF ANALYSIS

This film by Jonas Carpignano has taken a matter of topical interest which has been the subject of many television reports on the tragedies of illegal migration in the Mediterranean. We know that the European Union has responded with measures that have proved insufficient to cope with the arrival of migrants. Finally, we must emphasise the growing hostility of a large sector of European public opinion to treating migrants better.

In this context, Jonas Carpignano's film has a consistently political dimension (in the strongest and noblest sense of the word) through his determination to focus on the point of view of these people who are elsewhere shown as objects of compassion at best and as undesirables at worst. In so doing, Carpignano's film deliberately sets out to show a different reality from the one normally portrayed by the media, in particular television.





A SNAPSHOT, BUT IN DEPTH

The director thus rejects any sort of explicatory approach — the narrative that migrants are supposed to be fleeing their native country to escape poverty — from the outset and seeks instead to provide a snapshot in which each situation explains and resolves itself.

The few words exchanged in a mixture of languages that is not often found in cinema (French, English, Italian, Calabrian dialect, African languages, etc.) further strengthen our involvement in the scene that unfolds before our eyes and which does not require lengthy explanation or justification. The riot scene — the climax of the film — erupts within a few seconds and the brutality of the demonstrators, who swiftly attack parked vehicles, smash shop windows and round on motorists who are suddenly brought to a stop, may take us by surprise, but, like Ayiva, we are carried along and transfixed by this explosion while counter-demonstrators respond with excessive violence.

The sequence thus assumes a universal dimension and, far from being limited to the Italian context, it shows the revolt of those whom in another era we would have called the 'Wretched of the Earth'. It should be noted here that the film is based on real events that took place in Calabria in the town of Rosarno in 2010. However, it is significant that the film-maker makes no reference to the local context: like the main character, we are immersed in events which we only partially grasp, but it is precisely this that encourages a broader, more general reading of a situation that is not unique to Calabria but applies to Europe as a whole.

THE ENIGMA OF REALITY

The laconic nature of most of the dialogues, in particular due to the different languages used by the many characters in this film, also highlights the isolation of the migrants in a society that remains largely alien to them and marginalises them. It may be obvious, but the film is thereby underscoring the lack of choice and the limited room for manoeuvre available to migrants. Once they have arrived in Libya, the members of the group which includes Ayiva and Abas are, for instance, themselves ordered to take command of the boat intended for the Mediterranean crossing: since a dialogue with the people-smuggler is impossible, the migrants have no choice but to agree, with one of them eventually deciding to captain the boat and the others being forced to accept this solution in the absence of any other option. Having arrived in Italy, Ayiva finds himself in a comparable predicament when he learns he has 3 months to find a job and possibly regularise his situation: such a measure seems absurd or at least is not open for discussion and leaves the character with no choice.



Mediterranea is, as we shall see, less concerned with describing the living conditions of migrants than with making us share their narrowly circumscribed point of view, especially the constraints to which they are subjected. These constraints are imposed as a necessity and can either be accepted or rejected, i.e. rebellion is the only alternative. This emphasis on the point of view of the characters may explain some highly visible features of the production, such as the use of a hand-held camera, which is often moving or very close to the characters and giving a confused picture of the events, or the use of non-professional actors who play roles that are certainly very close to what they themselves have experienced, or even the proliferation of night scenes as if the migrants existed only by night ...

AN AESTHETICS OF MEMORY?

The aesthetics of the film, far from strictly realistic or documentary, may also be interpreted more subtly as reflecting the memories of the main protagonists (played by actors who may well have told the director of their own past experience). If the film is clearly taking place 'in the present' with nothing resembling a flashback, we can nevertheless identify a series of cinematographic characteristics that recall the workings of memory.

Thus many sequences, rather than being filmed 'objectively', focus on one key element, a sufficiently significant detail to stick in the memory of the characters (Ayiva or Abas, it doesn't much matter who).

The soundtrack also accentuates this impression because of sudden changes, with an abrupt drop in ambient noise, leaving a heavy silence or background music that puts the scene represented at a distance — as often occurs with scenes we remember. It should also be noted that while the film is divided into broad geographic sections — Algeria, Libya and Italy —, its chronology is much vaguer and more approximate: does Ayiva's stay in Calabria (where he presumably picks up Italian) last a few days, a few weeks or a few months? We never find out because memory, which readily distinguishes places, has a much looser grasp of the flow of time, especially in the case of a repetitive activity such as picking citrus fruits.

The way in which Jonas Carpignano presumably gathered the testimonies of the migrants he met in Calabria certainly explains this fragmentary and syncopated nature of the film, which more or less reflects the workings of memory. While not all spectators will necessarily see the production in the same light, they will nevertheless be sensitive to the director's commitment to showing the point of view of the migrants of Rosarno or elsewhere who are condemned to live at the darkest margins of our world.





NOTES FOR DISCUSSION

How can we interpret the differences in character and behaviour between Ayiva and Abas? Is this important to understand the end of the film in particular?

How can we judge the migrants' employer? Is he an unscrupulous exploiter? A good guy? A bastard? A paternalistic boss?

Do you notice any differences in attitude among the inhabitants of Rosarno?

Have you been struck by any features of the way the film is put together? For example, the proliferation of night scenes, the camera carried on the shoulder, the confused and fragmented aspect of certain sequences, variations in the soundtrack, secondary details highlighted by the camera, etc.

Michel Condé

les grignoux



DIRECTOR: Jonas Carpignano
SCREENPLAY: Jonas Carpignano
CAST: Koudous Seihon, Alassane Sy
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Wyatt Garfield
MUSIC: Benh Zeitlin, Dan Romer
PRODUCERS: Jason Michael Berman, Chris Columbus, Jon Coplon, Christoph Daniel, Andrew Kortschak, John Lesher, Ryan Lough, Justin Nappi, Alain Peyrollaz, Gwyn Sannia, Marc Schmidheiny, Victor Shapiro, Raphael Swann, Ryan Zacarias
PRODUCTION: Good Films, DCM Productions, Good Lap Production, End Cue, Court 13 Pictures, Le Grisbi Productions, Nomadic Independence Pictures, Treehouse Pictures
YEAR: 2015
DURATION: 107 minutes
GENRE: Drama
COUNTRY: Italy, France, United States, Germany, Qatar
ORIGINAL VERSION: French, Italian, English, Arabic, Bissa





OUR STORIES ILLUMINATED THROUGH THE EMOTION OF FILM

The European Parliament is pleased to present the three films competing for the 2015 LUX FILM PRIZE:

MEDITERRANEA by Jonas Carpignano
(Italy, France, United States, Germany, Qatar);

MUSTANG by Deniz Gamze Ergüven
(France, Germany, Turkey, Qatar);

UROK (THE LESSON) by Kristina Grozeva and Petar Valchanov
(Bulgaria, Greece).

These multifaceted stories, which are the result of the great dedication and creativity of talented young European film directors, will be screened during the fourth edition of the LUX FILM DAYS.

LUX FILM PRIZE

Culture plays a fundamental role in constructing our societies. With this in mind, the European Parliament launched the LUX FILM PRIZE in 2007 with the aim of enhancing the circulation of European films across Europe and sparking Europe-wide debate and discussion of major societal issues. The LUX FILM PRIZE is a unique initiative. While most European co-productions are shown only in their country of origin and are rarely distributed elsewhere, even within the EU, the LUX FILM PRIZE gives three European films the rare opportunity to be subtitled in the EU's 24 official languages.

The winner of the LUX FILM PRIZE will be voted for by the Members of the European Parliament and announced on 25 November 2015.

LUX FILM DAYS

The LUX FILM PRIZE has also given rise to the LUX FILM DAYS. Since 2012, the LUX FILM DAYS have brought the three films competing for the LUX FILM PRIZE to a wider European audience.

Through the LUX FILM DAYS, we invite you to enjoy an indelible cultural experience that transcends borders. From October to December 2015, you can join an EU-wide audience of cinema-lovers in watching *Mediterranea*, *Mustang* and *Urok (The Lesson)* in one of the EU's 24 official languages. Don't forget to vote for your favourite film via our website <http://luxprize.eu> or our Facebook page!

AUDIENCE MENTION

The Audience Mention is the LUX FILM PRIZE people's choice award. Vote for *Mediterranea*, *Mustang* or *Urok (The Lesson)* and you will be entered into a competition for the chance to attend the Karlovy Vary international film festival in July 2016 — at the European Parliament's invitation — and announce the winner of the Audience Mention award.

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& VOTE



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