

LUX FILM DAYS

3 FILMS
24 LANGUAGES
28 COUNTRIES

MUSTANG

Deniz Gamze Ergüven
France, Germany, Turkey, Qatar



MUSTANG

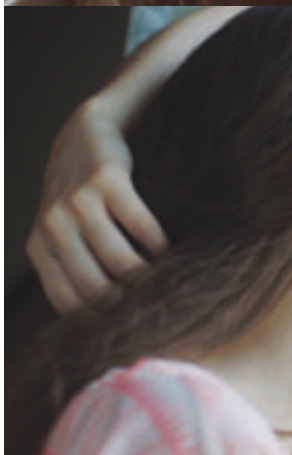
DENİZ GAMZE ERGÜVEN

It's the beginning of summer. Lale, Nur, Ece, Selma and Sonay are five sisters as bound together as the fingers on one hand. In a village in northern Turkey, they come home from school and play innocently with a group of boys. The alleged debauchery of their games arouses a scandal with unexpected consequences. The family home is gradually transformed into a prison, household chores replace school and marriages start being arranged. The five sisters, filled with the same desire for freedom, set about circumventing the limits imposed on them.

IN PERSPECTIVE: SECULARISM, PATRIARCHY, GENDER EQUALITY AND AWKWARD CO-EXISTENCE OF CONFLICTING VALUES

Film-maker Deniz Gamze Ergüven's screenplay focuses on the process which leads to the rapid imprisonment of these five young girls bursting with life. It should undoubtedly be understood as an extreme and exceptional situation rather than as the reflection of a general reality in Turkey. This is indeed a country of many contrasts. While Turkish women obtained the right to vote in national elections as far back as 1934, well before their sisters in many European countries, they remain very politically underrepresented. Torn between the emancipatory values of a secular state founded at the beginning of the 20th century and a patriarchal tradition deeply rooted in society, Turkey adopted a new Civil Code in 2001 which grants women gender equality in all areas; at the same time it has witnessed the rise of new political parties that are religious in inspiration — in particular the AKP (Justice and Development Party) — and advocate a much more traditional approach to women's place in society.

This contrasting, almost schizophrenic situation (pitting town against country, metropolis against provinces) in Turkish society is particularly well captured in this film by Deniz Gamze Ergüven, who manages to translate with great force and credibility the strained coexistence of two worlds based on opposing values. Without necessarily being representative, the extended family consisting of the five girls and their grandmother, uncle and aunts, nevertheless allows the film to ask some very tough questions in the form of a fable about the position of women in traditional societies. It thus makes the spectator engage with a crucial issue which is one of the criteria for accession to the European Union. This analysis will therefore take the important issue of gender equality as its general framework.





REALITY, BUT AT A DISTANCE

If *Mustang* is based on an existing reality, the way it describes this reality is by no means narrowly realistic. The very title of the film announces from the outset a narrative with a fable-like quality, the wild horse becoming the symbol of the five teenage girls, and especially Lale. This dimension is also found in the screenplay, which is characterised, inter alia, by a set of oppositions between two types of character (the sisters and their Uncle Erol) and a conflict that gradually escalates but ends with a twofold symbolic reversal. Finally, the dark atmosphere of the film is regularly offset by flashes of humour, which also create a distance vis-à-vis the dramatic events unfolding on screen.



FIVE ORGANICALLY LINKED SISTERS

One could say that the five teenagers are organically linked and operate almost like a single entity: whatever happens to one of them has an emotional impact on the others and influences their behaviour.

Virtually indistinguishable at the beginning, the girls gradually acquire sharper individual contours. While it is Lale, the youngest, who has the greatest thirst for freedom and is the instigator of the revolt, her sisters react in different and sometimes contrasting ways to the fate imposed upon them. Sonay defies her grandmother by refusing an arranged marriage and she becomes the only one able to marry the man she loves — she is genuinely in love with a man who returns her affections at the right time in the story, and this relationship is accepted by the family on the sole condition that she gets married without further ado; Selma, for her part, embodies an attitude of resignation that is characteristic of a great number of women who, in patriarchal societies, submit to an unwanted marriage as their inevitable fate.



REPETITION

The main plot of the film is based on the play of contrasts between Uncle Erol and his nieces, forming a sequence of events that are repeated with slight variations and cumulatively.

REVERSAL

The progressive radicalisation of the conflict between Uncle Erol (representing order) and Lale (representing rebellion against that order) introduces a rise in dramatic tension which culminates at the end of the film with an unexpected reversal. While Erol, unable to enter the house he himself has turned into a fortress, is caught in his own trap; paradoxically, for the girls this prison becomes both their refuge and the instrument of their liberation.



This reversal will set speech free. Nur, cooperative and subdued until now, rips her dress and throws the shreds out the window, yelling that she will call the police and tell them everything. Despite her young age, her attitude shows that she is fully aware of the illegal nature of the measures that her family has taken in respect of the girls: forcing them into arranged marriages, withdrawing them from school and all the many acts of violence perpetrated against them. In the context of *Mustang*, such a symbolic reversal reinforces the political significance of a story that clearly denounces a society in which women are theoretically men's equals, but are in fact far from equal in practice.

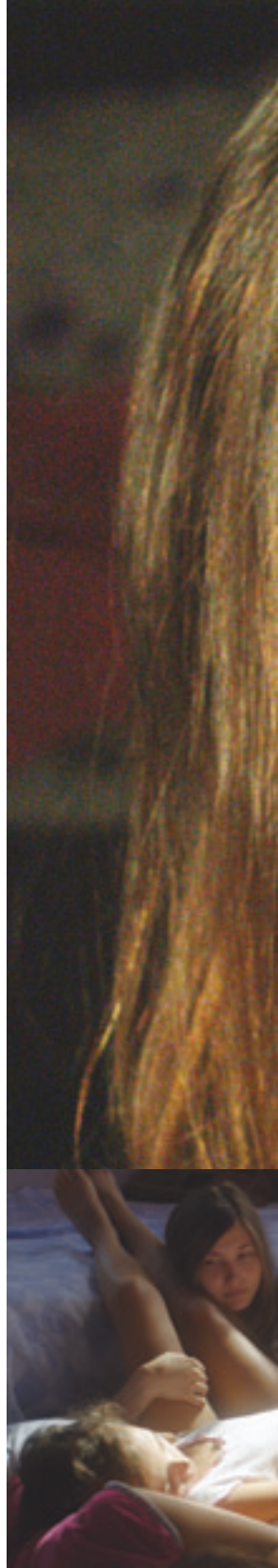
COMPENSATION

The reversal which constitutes the climax of the film is also accompanied by a very noticeable shift in atmosphere. While the screenplay was initially characterised by growing dramatic tension, relief and even laughter now predominate. However, the story contains plenty of comic elements from the outset, albeit in a less concentrated manner.

It is particularly the group of women that orbits around the grandmother that is the source of a number of comic incidents. Divided between patriarchal traditions and emotional solidarity with the girls, the older women in the family are constantly oscillating between two attitudes. While the grandmother expects exemplary and 'respectable' behaviour from her granddaughters, she nevertheless intervenes to defend them from Erol's excessively authoritarian behaviour by covering up their lapses or putting her son in his place.

However, the funniest scene in the film is the one that takes place in the village during the five sisters' illicit trip to the football match. Seeing her granddaughters on television, the grandmother faints. Fearing that the men will also see these images, Aunt Emine immediately grabs a hammer and begins demolishing the fuse box that provides the house with electricity. As the men soon realise that the rest of the village is not affected by a power cut, Emine marches firmly up to an electricity pylon and begins bombarding its top with missiles until a fatal explosion takes place, plunging the entire village into darkness. The great tension generated by the possibility that Erol will discover his nieces' jaunt loses its dramatic character here through these almost surreal scenes that, moreover, take place hidden from the gaze of men, who are now seen as puppets, symbolically stripped of their omnipotence.

It is again Uncle Erol who is the butt of ridicule at the end of the film, when Nur and Lale manage to lock him out of the 'fortress' that he himself has built to shut them in. The scene is obviously a source of great tension, since Erol tries by every possible means to get into the house, harbouring — we guess — murderous (or violent) intentions, but the fact that he is caught in his own trap is also a source of comedy and is bound to win the viewers over.





IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION THE TREATMENT OF SPACE

In *Mustang*, Deniz Gamze Ergüven evokes the disjuncture between a public space attached to modernity and a private sphere still under the influence of the traditional values of patriarchal society. Do you also find this disjuncture in our societies?

Vinciane Fonck

les grignoux



DIRECTOR: Deniz Gamze Ergüven
SCREENPLAY: Deniz Gamze Ergüven,
Alice Winocour
CAST: Güneş Nezihe Şensoy, Elit İscan,
Doğa Zeynep Doğuşlu, Tugba Sunguroglu,
Ilayda Akdoğan, Nihal G. Koldas, Ayberk Pekcan
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:
David Chizallet, Ersin Gök
MUSIC: Warren Ellis
PRODUCER: Charles Gillibert
CO-PRODUCER: Frank Henschke
PRODUCTION: CG Cinéma
CO-PRODUCTION: Vistamar Filmproduktion
YEAR: 2015
DURATION: 94 minutes
GENRE: Drama
COUNTRY: France, Germany, Turkey, Qatar
ORIGINAL VERSION: Turkish





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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