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FUOCOAMMARE

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When I saw *Fuocoammare* last year I was shocked.

I live in Italy and of course I know “something” about migrants and their tragedy.

But the movie was a surprise to me… day after day I couldn’t stop thinking about it…

I wonder why this movie is not being screened in every schools, in every place of work, in the community centres. In malls, airports, stations, in every "non-places" of our countries. There is a moment when the question "why it happened?" or the sentence "we have to stop them!" must go into the background, to allow everyone to watch what it’s happening.

It's a beautiful, painful, poetic and awesome film which succeeds in showing us the harrowing confrontation between life (hope for the future) and death (resignation, suffering and helplessness). Every thinking person, every psychoanalyst, should watch it.

Remember these numbers… over the last 20 years more than 400,000 people have landed on the coast of the island of Lampedusa… deep south in the Mediterranean. Of these at least 15,000 died at sea.

Gianfranco Rosi has spent a long time on the island for the first time, while processing required a whole year. The film shows the everyday life in a territory of only 20 square km. Apparently it is built like a documentary, but I think it actually contains a sophisticated screenplay, in which the days of a child, the activities of the island’s inhabitants, the work of the military and the dramatic events of the migrants are shown in parallel.

Being a movie, a docu-film, gaze is central. But gazing in this case is a way to take us by the hand and lead us into history, within human affairs.

There is no comment, no ideology, no theory. Only so many stories…the history. *Fuocoammare* was a war. They/we are still at war.

Beautiful pictures, eg the stunning glittering coats, like Star Wars warriors. It’s a film that speaks almost exclusively through images (its wonderful photography reminds us of the landscapes of Salgado and the portraits of Mc Curry). Still a gaze. The one of the child, aiming at a target, with a gun or a sling. He is at war too, the war of a child playing war and hunting birds.

Then the turning point arrives. One of Samuel’s eye doesn’t work well. His left eye is lazy and his brain is not stimulated, it’s not able to watch. If the left eye doesn’t work well, the right hemisphere doesn’t record. The right hemisphere is the one where reasoning occurs. But in this case the division between reason and emotion doesn’t matter ... what matters is what the brain tells us. In any case, Samuel must train the eye that works less... so it trains the brain, connects the two hemispheres. He has to see with the other eye. It's a wonderful metaphor!

Without any rhetoric, the director speaks to us through the power of his gaze, that of a man who didn’t just go to Lampedusa for shooting a few meters of film or digital bytes, but who has lived upon himself and intensely the experience of those who live day by dat the stories he tells us.

It is a psychoanalytic film because through the function of the gaze we reproduce within us the fundamental dimension of listening, without judgments, without preconceptions, “only” receiving datas first, and later thinking about them.

There are two strong stories in the movie as symbolic metaphors of the transformation process that everyone goes through, if able to look at things with the mind of a child, a "beginner". Samuel is shown at the beginning of the film as he builds slings to hunt birds, or while miming the act of shooting; in the end it seems like a latter-day Saint Francis talking with animals. Because of this change, it has happened that, for medical reasons, the child is temporarily prevented from looking with his right eye (the good one he used for taking his aim) and has to use and train his left eye (the almost-visually impaired one). The ability to "look with other eyes", to see it in full, without blindness or selective myopia, symbolically allows the young protagonist to operate an internal transformation within himself. To become really able to see ...

For me, the internal/external dilemma is a false dilemma. The internal/external reality is an artificial separation. We can stay well, our mind can work in a good way, only if the two worlds are integrated and not separated.

This the work of a psychoanalyst. This has been the work done by Gianfranco Rosi, the film director.

In May 2016, after a short and intense discussion after the movie screenshot, the Italian Psychoanalytic Society, in a perspective of "attention" to the migrants’ situation, set up the European Psychoanalytic Workers' Group for Refugees (PER… that means “for”), with the aim of activating coordinated projects of clinical aid, psychoanalytic training and elaboration, enhancing the realities already in place throughout the country.

Recalling what Lampedusan physician says, "It is the duty of every person, who is a person, to help these people.**"**