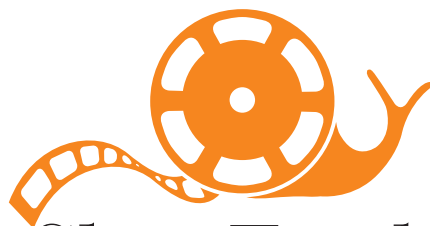


Bologna, 6th - 10th May 2009

INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL
OF **FOOD**
AND **FILM**

Festival Report by the Students of the
University of Gastronomic Sciences



Slow Food
ON FILM

RED GOLD

Red Gold is a tale of conflict surrounding a piece of land. A rich natural resource, the Bristol Bay area in Alaska is the location of two rivers that are home to the largest natural Sockeye salmon population left in the world. Unfortunately, it is also the planned location for the largest open-pit gold and copper pebble-mine, threatening to impact the existing wild Salmon stocks, habitat and the fishing industry in Alaska.

Aptly named, the documentary provides both sides of the conflict the opportunity to voice their position, with Red Gold referring both to the Sockeye Salmon as well as the copper and gold treasure buried deep in the ground.

Through Beautiful photography of the Alaskan landscape and interviews with local residents, fishermen, politicians, geologists, experts and company spokesmen, the two defined sides express polarized perspectives on life, land, and nature.

The local inhabitants connection and dependence on the fish is evident, as centuries of coexistence have resulted in their culture and identity inseparable from them. Valuing their worth by the land's natural resources, the fisheries and their days worth, quotes such as "Value yourself from where you come from" and "I live the fish" are met with "No net loss" and "diversify the economy" by the pebble mine advocates who strive for progress and profit, speaking the voice of the economical opportunities and financial prospects.

A powerful quote made by a local fisherman brought it down to an essence: "This is not a job. It is our lives."

The documentary was made as part of the campaign against the pebble mine, and so we, the viewers, are presented with contrasting oppositions; Romantic vs. pragmatic, heart vs. mind, spirit vs. material, environment vs. profit, simplifying the subject matter to a choice between 'good' and 'evil'. And while it serves its purpose, I felt the documentary did not explore the more complex and intriguing 'gray area', where the boundaries between the two opposing sides may be less obvious.

FOOD INC

The movie "Food, Inc." by American documentarist Robert Kenner puts a critical magnifying glass to the American food industry and asks the questions: where does our food come from and who are the people that makes it? And if we really knew, would we want to eat it? It was shot over several years, starting in 2002, and often by the help of hidden cameras. Amongst others it features the journalists and food activists Robert Schlosser, author of "Fast Food Nation" and Michael Pollan author of "An Omnivores Dilemma".

The reality that the industry wants us to believe in and the actual reality of how our food is made are two completely different worlds. I don't think I will ever again be able to eat a piece of meat without recalling the opening shots of cowpaddocks stretching as far as the eye can see. Not grassy, green paddocks, white-picket fences and rosy-cheeked milkmaids, as the advertisements wants us to believe, but countless divided enclosures, where the cows stand knee-deep in their own muck, in a landscape that seems like something from another planet. As one farmer puts it: 'this is not a farm, it's a factory'.

We are taken on a journey through the chicken farms, the slaughter houses and the corn fields as the movie systematically documents the processing methods used in the foodindustry. The industry basically consists of 3-4 big, multinational companies like Monsanto and Smithfield, who will go to any lenght to maintain a production that mistreats animals, deny workers basic rights and forces farmers to abide by their standards or they lose their contracts.

An example is when a chicken farmer is told by the processing company to close off the chickenhouse, so that the chickens will never see daylight and subsequently loses her contract because she refuses. The film-crew is denied permission to film inside the chicken house, but by way of a hidden camera they are able to show what goes on during the collection of the chickens before their last trip to the slaughterhouse. The animals are kicked, thrown around and stuffed into small cages. Afterwards the farmer can pick up all the dead chickens, that didn't make it. In a clear and sober style it is documented how the modern mass-production have serious consequences for humans and the environment. There is the story of Kevin who died after having eaten an E-coli infected hamburger. Cows are fed on corn which is not natural to their system, the corn develop E-coli bacteria in the cows stomach and the bacteria are spread to the meat via the cows manure.

ONE OF THE LAST

The film is a short documentary (12 min) about Mauro, a 78 year old farmer in Tuscany, Italy. In the film Mauro shares with the audience his wisdom and love to his land surrounded by the beautiful landscapes of rural Tuscany.

I got the impression that the idea behind the film is to document the “old school” farmers before they disappear and leave us only with nostalgia to the “good old days”.

In my point of view the film misses the biggest question when coming to document people like Mauro: if this way of life is so good and rewarding, why there is no continuity?

MILKBAR

Milkbars were a tradition during the communist era. Subsidized by the state, they provided access to decent food at a reasonable price. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, more than 99% of these Milkbars fell with it. Today, only one hundred and forty of them remain, all of which are privately owned. Among them is Bywalec, run by two women and friends, Danuta and Dzitka. Without any real plot, the film shows us the everyday life of the bar.

The slow, seemingly aimless, rhythm provides a sense of the melancholy and nostalgia of another time. Directors Mörnvik and Einhorn take us into another dimension - a lost world that has been changing over the past twenty years, a world where middle-class families and the elderly share tables with homeless people.

While the film deals poignantly with a sad subject, it is also punctuated by scenes of lightness that allow us, if not to laugh, at least to take a breath.

Milkbar asks the question: why are these women doing this with such little profit and so much work? Out of stubbornness as many other reviews suggest? Out of genuine benevolence? Out of attachment to a past that they refuse to let go? We try to find an answer in the close-ups on Danuta and Dzitka's faces and hands, intimate scenes that contrast with the reserve and distance used to photograph the customers.

It is in the directors' refusal to provide answers that they succeed. Time goes on and we're left to decide on our own why Danuta and Dzitka work as hard as they do, and really why anyone should maintain the traditions of another time.

BOTTLE SHOCK

So here is your formula: take a rag-tag team of lovable losers; the leader, his son, his son's best friend and a hot blond all introduced to a rollicking Doobie Brother's song to fully demonstrate said rag-tagged-rebelliousness, put them up against seemingly impossible odds, including father-son and mentor-mentee conflicts with a love triangle to boot, trade character development for clichés and clichéd anti-cliches (he's a aimless loser but gosh! he can quote literature!) and you've got the basis for a summer blockbuster. Just throw in some explosions a few aliens or terrorists and you have a standard Jerry Bruckheimer movie to enjoy when you've got a couple of hours to kill and don't really want to think too hard... except Bottle Shock is about a 1976 wine tasting known as the Judgment of Paris in which California wines bested French and earned them international respectability.

What writer/director Randal Miller doesn't recognize is that while a summer action movie can survive two-dimensional characters, schmaltzy writing/acting and ridiculous character relationships (a love triangle where everybody wins?); vintners, endless shots of people staring off into space in confounded ecstasy at the first sip of a wine and a cinematic climax involving a tasting panel of French wine experts does not a summer blockbuster make.

Instead this film is hailed by some as the heir to the infinitely more endearing 2004 indie-sleeper Sideways but besides the prominence of California wines in both films the two films share little else. The only saving grace is Alan Rickman's portrayal of the Paris based British wine-seller Steve Spurrier that organized the Judgment. Rickman's haughty snobbery and dry humor are funny and more importantly believable but unfortunately he is only present for about half the film.

It's slightly ironic for a film about subtlety and craft to have none of its own. A screenplay that hewed more closely to the actual events leading up to the Judgment and avoided the many, many tiresome tangents and plotlines that weigh this film down would have allowed Bottle Shock the chance to breathe and characters to materialize into actual people would have probably been far more interesting. Luckily, for those interested a film in production based on reporter George Tabor's book, Judgment of Paris by the same name is due out in 2010 looks to be a better bet.

DIETA MEDITERRANEA

Threesome is new “two to tango”.

Savory, acidic, sweet and bitter: “La dieta Mediterranean” depicts Chef Sophia’s life into these four flavors. She serves the miracle through her passion and dedication for cooking. It is a lot of laughters, cries and sex.

Threesome has been a popular subject for Spanish movies for countable years, which may take notes about Spanish revolution and Spanish people’s desire to be independent. In this movie, the story about Sophia and her two men does not end only in the sexual context, but their friendship proves that the tension among them can bring out the best encouragement and admiration. The movie encourages the audience that it is okay to make mistakes as long as you keep searching for your dream and the better self. It used to be two to tango, but it definitely takes a whole entourage to shine the star. Sophia’s creations are the extra spice that sizzles the story. “La dieta Mediterranean” is an entertaining, sexy and happy-go-lucky movie that reminds its audience to keep shining.

DABBAWALA

Dabbawala means box service. Experienced German TV documentary director, Antje Christ, sophisticatedly depicts the intricate lunchbox service in Mumbai, India. In a city of 60 million people, there are 5,000 Dabbawalas, only men, who deliver 200,000 meals daily; it is impressive to hear that a lunchbox is rarely lost. Spiritual sustenance is essential for Dabbawalas to survive the city. They are very proud of their work and believe that serving food to others creates good karma. To become a Dabbawala, one must be sponsored, wear the simple white shirt and hat, and follow strict rules. Through a combination of narrative and dialogue, the film tracks a complex system dependent on speed, organization and trains. The workers of Mumbai call it the "life-line." The Dabbawalas call it the "food-line." The film gives the viewer a sense of the lunch service's organized madness with quick shots throughout the world's largest city. The last quarter of the film follows the Dabbawalas on a colorful pilgrimage to the countryside, where some hope to return. The Dabbawalas of Mumbai are sympathetic people and it is not surprising they have gained much fame recently through visits from Prince Charles, Sir Richard Branson, and with an appearance on the TV show "Search for India's Superstar." Antje's strong cinematography and narrative gives the viewer a glimpse into a world that is chaotic yet organized, where the Dabbawalas are hard at work feeding their grateful customers.

FOOD DESIGN

Have you ever wondered why there are so many red candies in a package of gummy bears? Or perhaps you find it curious that a fish stick bears little resemblance in appearance or taste to an actual fish. Who controls the decisions and what is the point? These topics are explored in the 2008 Austrian documentary *Food Design*, a captivating film written and directed by architects Martin Hablesreiter and Sonja Stummerer and a feature at this year's Slow Food on Film Festival in Bologna, Italy. *Food Design* uses playful imagery and a scientific approach to uncover the significance behind the foods we eat. It reveals that all foods- their shape, size, color, and texture- are deliberately designed and deeply rooted in culture. "Foods are more than they seem to be. They tell a story. We eat our values, symbols, and traditions." In other words, there is and never has been anything coincidental about food.

This film is as entertaining as it is informative, an accomplishment given its genre. Not often does a scientific documentary provoke laughter and leave the audience wanting more. By using high definition cinematography, brilliant color, and surround sound, *Food Design* captures the viewer's interest while simultaneously emphasizing the cultural importance of food. Never before has it been so interesting to watch a close-up of a cracker. But the way it is shot and the crisp sound it makes when it falls and breaks is exhilarating. Who knew that it could be so riveting to watch strawberries, milk, and cereal be pureed in a blender?

As the world is increasingly separated from the source of as well as the cultural value of its food, it is critical to make people think about what they eat and why. By making a serious topic sensorially engaging, *Food Design* does a fine job of communicating this very message.

PODUL DE FLORI

It is winter in Moldova; a bleak landscape provides the perfect contrast to a loving father and warm home. Podul de Flori is a documentary directed by Thomas Ciulei about family endurance. Jobs need to be done and the children help. Bread must be baked, tables set, carpets dusted, seeds planted, dinner made and school work completed. The scenes are familiar and domestic, yet there is something missing: there is no mother.

Podul de Flori is at once tragic and beautiful, sad and humorous. Its strength lies in the unspoken. The viewer receives the first brief mention of the mother 15 minutes into the film. The lack of verbal references provoked in me questions and built a sense of tragedy. Few details about the mother are communicated, allowing the viewer to journey with the father and children's confusion. We only find out that the mother has gone to a foreign country to work and cannot return until documents are processed. The only sign of where she may be comes in a package she sends to the family containing Parmigianino. This is a long and slow film and combined with being told over four seasons evokes a sense of time passing and the pain that the family must endure.

The days go on and so do the rituals of tending to the farm and house. Sharing responsibilities, meals, love, humour and affection keep this family together. This is perfectly summarised at the end of the film. It's now summer a small round table the family has eaten from throughout the film is brought outside. The three children and father sit with bowls of food. The father pours a glass of wine to each child and makes a toast, which they all repeat one by one: "Let daddy shoot lots of rabbits and mummy get her documents". This is the simple reality, which makes for an inspiring story that is powerfully communicated.

LE DONNE DI ZERI

The film *Le Donne di Zeri*, isn't too sure of itself. Indecisively shot, the director can't seem to decide on a romantic or objective style of storytelling. As the movie opens, flowery music reminiscent of a Jane Austen film swells to a crescendo and sweeping vistas of the Italian countryside soon follow. Center stage, our three protagonists-Zerasco Shepherdesses-relay their stories of gratification and sacrifice as they tend the flocks. After an emotional entrance like that you had better deliver a corresponding conclusion. But director Walter Bencini leaves the audience wondering why he baited us so dramatically with romanticism to end the story so inconclusively. It seems we're meant to empathize but in the end we don't know why.

But between all that confusion, we witness the journey of three Zerasco shepherdesses isolated in the Apennine Mountains of Italy. A boon to biodiversity, the Slow Food Presidia sheep breed finds its name and its historical origins from the municipality of Zeri. Traditionally men's work, primarily women now raise and care for the Zerasco Sheep. In 2001 the Consortium for the Protection and Promotion of the Zerasco Sheep was formed to revitalize the breed in the region. Since its inception flocks in the region have grown and so has their prestige. Zeri lamb is renowned for its tenderness, sweet aromas, and pale color.

If you are looking for a compelling glimpse in the lives of three shepherdesses, this is not the documentary for you. With romantic vistas, dramatic music and contrived lighting, this film unfolds more like a 60-minutes segment than a thought-provoking portrayal. It's trite. It's clichéd. And it's unfortunate, because the film's style completely undermines the powerful message that could be told about these passionate

Shepherdesses. Despite its flaws, this film manages to succeed in achieving one important aim; documenting a community of women committed to the economic revival and cultural preservation of their home.

SNIJEG

“Snow does not fall to cover the hill, but for every beast to leave its trail.”

Aida Begic succeeded in making an optimistic film about Bosnian Herzegovinas recent history! Her picture is no comedy, and yes, Snijeg (Snow) talks about the war and the wounds resulting, but the story gives an idea of how a future could look like. Aida Begic, born and raised in Bosnia, wrote the screenplay for this quiet, thoughtful yet lively and immediate film. Her use of magical realism, the long shots and well done photography give Snijeg a clear visual identity. Oblivion or ignorance are not on the agenda of the young director. Nothing should be forgotten. But revenge and hate don't help either. Just a slow, patient process of restructuring and coming to terms with the past can recollect the shattered and fragmented identities resulting from the war trauma.

Twelve survivors are living in Slavno, a small village in the Bosnian countryside. The rest of the inhabitants was wiped out or disappeared. Life is kept in abeyance. With the past their identities got destroyed precluding any thoughts about the future. Under the everyday surface sadness and uncertainty are omnipresent. The arrival of two men breaks the fragile equilibrium between the villagers, as their offer to buy all the land divides the community.

The resulting crisis helps overcome the blockade the villagers experienced since the war. While they are finally able to discover the mass grave of their beloved ones and can start to deal with the past, food evolves as the means to keep the community together and link it to its territory. As they get the opportunity to sell their preserves to a local trader, this reveals a possible future for the village.

Traces can be seen and read in the snow, but finally spring will come.

NOTRE PAIN CAPITAL

In the streets of Saint Louis, the capital of Senegal, Sani Elhadj Magori films the food chain that revolves around bread, from its fabrication, to the black market that supplies the begging system. The film starts with an impressive fighting scene of two boys. At this stage, audiences have no clues as to the reason why they grapple fiercely. Soon after that, the scene changes to the production of bread that is commonly seen all over the world, followed by the scenes of a dining room where people eat bread and streets where people move around with bread in their hands, while giving the notion on audiences how essential bread is to the people living in the city.

A woman can be seen waiting for people who come out of a dining hall. Sitting in the entrance, she begs them for bread. In response to her request, someone leaves loaves of bread to her and others simply pass her by, ignoring her. Many of young boys haunt pedestrians on streets so as to beg them for bread. In each case, nobody leaves any money to the beggars though some people provide them with bread. It seems that the price of bread is decently low and people can afford to give a part of their own bread to others, even though they cannot afford to give money to others. Another finding is that beggars collect bread apparently more than they consumed. The film ends, all of a sudden, with the scene that a young beggar exchanges his gained bread for money. Audiences finally realize that bread is utilized as a tool of black market and hit on the possibility that the fighting of young boys in the first scene has something to do with bread.

BOM-E-PI-EO-NA-DA - BLOOMING IN SPRING

The Slow Food Film Festival is an auspicious screening venue for a budding director. For South Korean Jung Ji-yeon, a 2008 graduate of the Korean National University of the Arts, this was the Italian premiere of her 20 minute short film Bom-E-Pi-Eo-Na-Da (Blooming In Spring). The film examines teenage eating disorders and is an example of the Slow Food Film Festival's goal to expose us to the myriad of ways that food can affect life.

The protagonist of the film is Yeon-ah, a South Korean schoolgirl whose preoccupation with a hideous smell she perceives on her body alienates her from her classmates and teacher. Director Jung Ji-yeon shows us that Yeon-ah's odour preoccupation is only a part of a greater issue – she refuses to eat, leading to physical bullying and attempted force-feeding by three fellow classmates. We learn about Yeon-ah through the observation of Sung-eun, a fellow student who takes an interest in the sick girl. This crystallises in an unflinchingly intimate scene in the school bathroom that shows Sung-eun recovering from a prolific blood nose, and Yeon-ah vomiting in the next toilet. The concurrent expelling of bodily liquids draws a link between the two for the viewer. The film does not shy away from showing the blind compulsion of eating disorders and includes a depiction of the cycle of bingeing and vomiting.

Ji-yeon's depiction of South Korean school life suggests a rigid educational and social environment. Eating disorders are often a tool of control – if nothing else an individual has the capacity to control their own food consumption. In the strictly controlled South Korean society, Yeon-ah's illness appears to be a desperate bid to exercise control in one aspect of her life. Following the screening, the director noted that she used Hunger as an expression of identity, and confirmed that her protagonist wants to resist the social pressures of South Korea, but does not know how.

The film is a confronting portrait of the private pathology of eating disorders and offers an illuminating insight into one girl's response to the constraints of South Korean teenage life.

THE LOST WORLD - 100 YEARS AGO

The lost world of silent movies, a world unheard of in a modern society where the idea of short, black and white, silent movies is rarely appreciated. Fortunately these movies were brought back, for this year's edition of Slow Food on Film. Accompanied by piano music played live in the theatre, the viewers were able to watch these relics from the turn of the 20th century. No story line, no script, no actors, just grainy, silent images of rural people working and doing their daily routines.

Perhaps the most unexpected documentary was Il Polentone a Pont Canavese, a joyful and festive movie featuring the popular cooking of a polenta dish. Cooking for a whole village is a challenging enough exercise, multiply the amount of people cooking and add the tremendous size of the pots and pans and it all sums up to an entertaining masterpiece. Four men climb up the ladder and tip their body pouring the water, they are carrying on their back, into the gigantic pot. More men than imagined are needed to stir the polenta emphatically as it is poured into the water. Close by more men cooking up what I presume fat and onions in a flat pan of an awfully large diameter. All is mixed together and once cooked, viola, the polenta is ready to make its grand entrance, laid out on an extremely long board carried by ten men. Hungry and greedy the neighbours welcome the dishes offered to them.

It is movie like this one, that sparks our old memories with nostalgia. Can we bring back old traditions in the Slow Food style and organize a big polentona to feed the crowds once again? I vote yes and I dare suggest it for the next edition of Slow Food on Film.

THE LAST BUTCHER IN LITTLE ITALY

Shorts, in all their shortness, are no less capable of conveying a sentiment or cogent storyline. In fact, time strictures can force a filmmaker to dispense with the sort of magniloquent drivel that pervades many feature length productions. 'The Last Butcher in Little Italy' is a perfectly equitable marriage of style and content; there's nothing superfluous in Terruso's documentary. 'The Last Butcher' tells the story of Moe Albanese, the grandson of a Sicilian immigrant to New York and the last link to an expatriate culture that once thrived on Elizabeth Street. It's a sentimental story told without sentimentality – a commendable achievement for a young filmmaker. With his jam-jar glasses, white coat and diminutive stature, Moe Albanese lacks the sort of on-screen presence exemplified by Coppola's Brando. And yet, there's something distinctly godfather-esque about this 82-year-old butcher from Manhattan. As the protagonist stands in his doorway surveying Elizabeth Street, or chops meat while dispensing advice on how best to cook the cut, Albanese assumes the role of 'neighbourhood patriarch'. He is sort of like the local psychiatrist because he has patients come to visit him and unload all their problems and he listens, says a disembodied narrator. Albanese narrates an abridged version of his life over tremulous 16mm footage of his shop and neighbourhood in Little Italy. A vox pop montage adds depth of meaning to the protagonist's story and while the voices are never in synch with the image, the effect is palpable – Moe is a relic from another era, an antique stalwart on a street that bears little resemblance to the one he now recalls. The use of 16mm stock is notably appropriate; the jumpy, almost grainy film is analogous to the man and his old-fashioned shop – both exist and are in many ways indispensable but neither is really of this time. In 'The Last Butcher' Terruso succeeds in documenting the perpetual changeability of cityscapes. Her film raises questions about the legitimacy of cultures, ethnicity and belonging. Are these new shops and boutiques on Elizabeth Street symptomatic of an ugly capitalist trajectory or are they simply a natural progression in keeping with the city's regeneration projects? Perhaps there is room for older traditions to co-exist along side new ones, but why then is Albanese the last man standing? As Albanese concludes his reminiscing he delivers a narrative soliloquy; And that's the story of my life. Now get it down on paper and I hope you have a best seller. As facetious as it sounds, there's a self-awareness in the butcher's inflection and his wry laugh is a nod towards the inevitable – Albanese, the omniscient narrator, knows his legacy won't be a butcher's shop on Elizabeth Street but rather, the story of his life on a grainy 16mm film.

TRATTORIA ANNAMARIA

A short movie directed by a group of students from Bologna on a restaurant, Da Annamaria, of popular cuisine. Da Annamaria: Tagliatelle e... Buonanotte al secchio represents perfectly Bologna's culinary tradition but moreover it shows the simple and welcoming folkloristic tradition of the Emilia Romagna province.

Annamaria is an experienced chef and the messenger of these traditions. Her restaurant became a legend. Thanks to her popularity and modesty, she gathered thousands of tagliatelle fans. The chef handed down the art of making them to her disciples exactly like in an old handcraft shop: here the workers don't acquire knowledge by reading books but directly by looking at the master.

Annamaria thinks the most important ingredient of every plate is the hunger and when it comes to explain why her staff is made partly of foreigners she makes the point of how the Italian youngsters don't want to work in the kitchen anymore. To that she comments "E buonanotte al secchio", an untranslatable sentence that express the despair and the resignation looking at the world changing.

The authors try to transmit us the simplicity of the restaurant, from the atmosphere to the cuisine itself. The chef declares to be completely out of creativity: she only makes a few dishes since the beginning of her career. Annamaria is only looking for modern cuisine but for the simplicity of a comforting meal, like the one our mothers would cook for us.

Playing on the woman sense of humor, the directors build a funny and very charming character. Annamaria and her team of cooks and waiters are represented like a happy family that will always welcome you for a meal. Not only they will feed you with good food but they will also make you feel at home.

LOST WORLD SILENTS: 100 YEARS AGO “PAIN A LA CAMPAGNE”

The simple act of eating a good piece of bread is regarded by many as an almost transcendental experience. Enriching, not just for the palate, but also in the act of acknowledging the complex process that transforms each loaf of bread into what it is.

We didn't ate any bread at the Lumiere Cinema during the Slow Food on Film Fest at Bologna last Friday 8 of May 2009, but we suredely had a good “taste” of it by following the epic tale of a loaf of bread, from the wheat fields to its way out of the oven, as reccounted in the silent film “Pain a la Campagne”.

This black&white short documentary, filmed on an anonymous ‘campagne’ at France in the year 1907, opens to the spectator a vivid window into the bread culture of rural France at the time and the making of the traditional bread or ‘pain campagne’. This type of bread still, nowadays, more than a 100 years later, continues to be made, if even in a more “modern” way than shown on the screen, with both industrial and artisanal approaches to its elaboration. Between bread connoisseurs and artisanal bread bakers ‘pain de campagne’ highlights amidst the bread repertoire with an almost mytical and revered character. Its sole mention, an evocation of past times when the making of bread was a communal affair consummated in an oven that belonged to all. A time when each loaf of bread could still tell the story of the many hands that shaped it, from the field to the act of blessing and b piano performance, “Pain a la Campagne”, documents the complex, laborious and multistep process of producing the “stuff of life” in a humble French village (campagne), where bread, as was common in most of Europe at that time, represented one of the main sources of nourishment for laborers and peasants. In such doing, the film offers us also an invaluable insight into the local traditions of rural France, its customs, farm and food technologies, methods of food production, and even social and gender relations prevailing at the time.

The film runs smoothly, documenting a swift detailed account of each one of the steps involved in the making of bread. We get to see the land where the wheat grows, it's planting and harvesting.

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
OF **FOOD AND FILM** 2009 - Rewies

Susana M. Rivera-Colon

We are shown the peasants at work, their tools and methods. We are then taken through the threshing of the grain, the mill and the grinding into flour. Finally, we see the women who take charge of the kneading, the shaping of loaves and the loading of the wood fired ovens. By the time we see the immense, almost flat loaves of bread, coming out of the oven, you can't help but see in each one of them a symbol of our humanity, of nature, of hard labor, and the meaning of communal life. A truly fascinating historical account rich in its cultural and social character, this film reminds us not just of times pasts, but that even today, the act of eating a slice of bread, starts, not in the kitchen, or even in the bread shop, but in the wheat fields, the hand of the laborers and our need for nourishment. A sure treasure and rare find not just to bread and food lovers, but also to historians, sociologists, romantics, and poets alike.

HOME MADE SMARTIES

The first of an eight series documentary, *Homemade Smarties* is an intelligent and playful documentary that challenges three Scottish school children to try and recreate the U.K. chocolate candy Smarties. Directed by Sigrun Köhler, a former graphic designer and Wiltrud Baier a trained pastry chef, this movie was conceived during their artist-in-residence in Scotland. Opening to the tune of “food glorious food” the film focuses on three children; Kristy, Chelse and Jamie who are between the ages of eight and ten years old. They stumble through a list of ingredients on the back of Smarties. The three giddily sound out multisyllabic words like emulsifiers and diglycerides. The directors capture these moments highlighting the genuine inquisitiveness of these children.

After documenting the ingredients Kristy, Chelse and Jamie call Nestlé, the producer of Smarties and get little more than a “good luck”. Still baffled by the foreign substances the three decide to make their own version. During a shopping trip the children seem self-conscious about being filmed while looking for ingredients. This scene illustrates how self-aware the film is at times. If the directors had inserted themselves into the film it might have made the story more congruent. But this doesn't distract from the rare opportunity to view food through the eyes of a child. This is one of the most profound effects of this 25- minute short, why do the ingredients of Smarties read like a Periodic Table of elements? Does a candy need to sound like science fiction to these kids?

In the end the kids acknowledge that “they're not real Smarties”, but none-theless want to call Nestlé and tell their tale. Speaking to a friendly female representative she asks them how they made them. “Was it part of a school project? Or did your grandparents help?” she asks. After a slight pause Kristy bursts out, “No we're with two German people” the film ends with the laughter of the children and you can't help but join in.

ANTIQUÉ

The Korean film “Antique,” directed by Kyu-Dong Min and based on the Japanese manga “Antique Bakery,” is visually stunning while stimulating every possible emotion in the viewer. The colorful presentation, cinematography and art direction invoke a mixture of styles, including Japanese animation and Baz Luhrman-style theatrics. The film manages to be extremely sexy, thanks partly to the almost pornographic shots of cakes and pastries and people enjoying them, but mainly because of the four main characters played brilliantly and comfortably by well-known Korean heartthrobs.

Kim Jin-Hyuk (played by Joo Ji Hoon) is a young man with a desire to open a bakery. He is from a well-bred family, and has no affinity for cake, but explains his ambitions as a ploy to meet women, as they are the primary customers of a bakery. He soon hires Min Son Woo (played by Kim Jae Wook), an extremely talented pastry chef, who according to the subtitles is a “gay of demonic charm” who possesses the talent and curse of making all men, straight or gay, fall in love with him, making it difficult to keep employees. However, they finally find someone who is able to resist the charms of Son Woo. Former boxer, Yank Ki Beom (played by Yoo Ah In) is desperate to learn from the master and had a profound sweet tooth. To round out the staff at the bakery, Jin-Hyuk’s childhood friend shows up and acts as both an employee and a protector to Jin-Hyuk. The clumsy, comical performance of Choi Ji Ho in this role was one of the highlights of the film. These four men proceed on a journey of self-discovery through hard work, friendship and cake—complete with tears, fear, love, anger, and even a flashy musical dance number. There are some dark undertones and a mystery that must be solved, but for the most part Kyu-Dong Min delivers a delightful guilty-pleasure film that will be a favorite of both the gay community and mainstream moviegoers alike.

TOUT EST BON DANS LE CHOCON

Tout Est Bon Dans Le Cochon translates to English as, “Everything is Good in the Pig”. In this 2007 short film, directed by Emma Perret, six seasonal workers living in the remote wetlands of France have become fed up with their never ending diet of fish. One evening over dinner they begin to dream about raising a pig themselves to slaughter for the meat. The plan becomes complicated when one worker develops a tender relationship with the pig.

The film was beautifully shot on location with many landscape shots of the river on which the men live. It does not glorify the life of these men, rather giving an honest portrayal of the harsh conditions they endure, season to season. I particularly enjoyed the scene when the men compared pork recipes and traditions from their past, you felt drawn in and compelled to share your own. The characters are well developed for such a short film, you can't help feeling sorry for Ugo when he is faced with the decision to slaughter ultimately slaughter the pig. A well done short fiction film, Tout est bon dans le cochon reminds us of our innate connection with animals and will have you leaving the theater with a grin on your face.

THE WEREPIG

Yet another America bashing cliché. Move over Michael Moore, the internationals also want in on the action.

Once upon a time in the magical land of Spain (insert the twinkle twinkle here), two dirty and crude, young Americans are on the classic Eurotrip. With no knowledge of the country or the language, they board the wrong bus to Galicia with a platoon of junk food. Their fated trip begins after being excommunicated from the bus for their shenanigans leaving them stranded in the scorching Mediterranean heat. On their torturous trek for shelter and water, they stumble upon a farm and are immediately taken in by the hospitable dwellers which ultimately “save” them. But from what exactly?- From the heat or from themselves?

The clay-animated short was produced in collaboration with Jaibo Films (Alicante, Spain), pioneers in sensory detail, imaging, and creativity. The visual imagery is amazingly powerful as it purely emphasizes the characteristics of the setting, objects, and characters. Playing a supporting role to the visual imagery is the verbal usage, again emphasizing the stupidity of the ugly American while adding a dose of comic relief. It is an overall entertaining short that unfortunately falls short as it conveys a negative and uninspiring message about Spaniard’s attitudes toward Americans and does not promote the concept of good, clean, and fair food.

FOCACCIA BLUES

This movie shouts Puglia! Easygoing, playful, funny, flavoursome, simple: exactly like the Altamura focaccia. Symbol of the victory of the culinary tradition over the standardization of taste par excellence, of the sacred over the profane. The metaphor of a modern tale, in which the good and genuine Dante, who embodies focaccia in some way, and the rich, boasting American Manuel, who with his yellow Corvette evokes nobody but Mc Donalds, compete for the attention of Rosa as well as the citizens of Altamura, who finally decide to follow their own taste. The audience is almost involved in Dante's research of the chosen ingredients, letting it somehow smell the perfumes of the Puglia countryside aboard an ape car. The exceptional nature of this event makes it necessary to interview the real characters, who by the way, contribute to give more flavour to the movie. Onofrio's trip to New York who as an ambassador, not only tells his story to everyone he meets, but challenges the giant on his home ground by offering focaccia in a Mc Donalds, is very funny.

In other words, there is hope for those who, like me, still believe that the tastes of home are the best way to resist the mediocratizing of flavours because, in this world of standardization it is tradition which represents the real news.

LA MONIQUE DE JOSEPH

Daring, courageous and very brilliant. These are the best words that I find to describe Chemin's short. It provokes the most intense reactions in its audience presenting the ominous situation in which Joseph's wife, Monique, suddenly wakes up one morning with her head transformed into a veil's one. Surprisingly she feels only a slight headache and nothing in her life seems to have changed so much, except for her appearance. Joseph, that is definitely worried but less desperate than what the audience would expect, takes her to the doctor, who says that nothing is wrong with her. Instead, he prescribes some pills to Joseph that, according to the professional, looks a bit pale. Amusing.

The author is clever on creating a strong feeling of disbelief in the spectator, that refuses to consider such a ridiculous situation. This feeling progressively starts to dominate Joseph's reaction towards his wife who although being loved by him, does not seem to fit any more in a normal human life. When she understands this, she decides to go to the forest, where she now belongs. This relieves Joseph in the beginning. Nevertheless, as time goes by when he works with his potatoes in his farm, he begins to understand that he is not able to leave without her company and that, although she has transformed into this particular creature, he still wants to take care of her and love her. As well as he becomes a defender of the oddly shaped potatoes by not separating them and selling them to the clients as they are, Joseph understands that diversity and uniqueness is something that should be valued understood and praised. Heroically, he finally decides to go to the forest and recover his wife.

"La Monique de Joseph" addresses a deeply crucial subject for nature, agriculture and therefore gastronomy. By presenting an odd situation that hilariously surprises and entertains the audience, he states the need for human beings, like Joseph, to realize the active involvement that they should have with biodiversity and endangered species. Only genuine concern for these matters can rescue and heal all the natural species lost because of industrialization and human actual lifestyle. To understand this, we have to go beyond science, beyond knowledge and make use of our love and passion.

GODOG

Directed by the young Koki Hasei, already winner of the movie festival directed by Emir Kusturika, with its 17 minutes, this short documentary presents an incredible picture of kids playing and working amongst and on top of mountains of rubbish in the slums of Manila, in the Philippines. Featured at the cinema and food festival, held in Bologna between the sixth and the tenth of May, Godog entered the category food=apocalypse.

In fact, the contrast 'childhood'/mountains of rubbish don't let the spectator see neither hope nor future for these kids, but the ability of the director is just in the capture of the innate and natural vital strength of these kids, still able to sing, play and marvel at the small things they find in this big mound of rubbish, their world. What an inhabitant of the west may find to be a Xmas tree is in fact the tomb of a newly born baby, around which songs are sung and instruments are played, out of what we discard. Photography and direction catapult the spectator, astounded by a noise of machinery and ships moving,

to that place, where frenzied kids looking for something of some value and breathless runs towards a polluted sea full of ships transporting wares, leaving him speechless.

It comes natural to ask if a such place really exists, where the only maternal presence seems to be a pregnant bitch (cagna), also scouting the place looking for something to eat.

This is a disenchanted documentary, where the only thing that sounds familiar is a Santa Claus still playing well known Christmas carols and which is attracting the attention of all the kids.

Of little paradox but of much effect the fuck t-shirt wore by the main actor who as a conclusion, only voice talking about himself, explains simply that he's looking for things in the garbage to buy what he wants, a job like any other.

PRANZO DI FERRAGOSTO

Already acclaimed at this year Venice Film Festival, “Pranzo di Ferragosto” is the only movie which was not screened as a national première at Slow Food On Film, a privilege reserved to the celebration of Gianni Di Gregorio’s first work which was awarded the “Luigi De Laurentiis” prize as the best work au début.

Relegated to a routine dependent on his mother Gianni, who furthermore plays the role of main character, runs into the farcical role of “nanny”: the four old women he has to care of will exasperate him through their vices and absurd requests.

The choice of non professional actresses in the roles of the four chirpy old women has turned out to be great in creating a sort of neo-realistic atmosphere, so successful that the director decided not to give them a fixed script in order to let them express their spontaneous humour. The story focuses on the themes of the third age and Italian family ties, continuously garnished by the image of the table as a place of gathering, by the omnipresent wine that Gianni drinks to calm himself down, the cooking in progress, Maria’s “pasta al forno” stealthily stolen at night by the chronically on diet Grazia.

A work inspired by a reality the author himself has experienced for ten years, with a hint of imagination and a dose of irony. A breathing space on old people conditions, often abandoned to themselves; a fresco about their freakiness but also their naiveness and the still present possibility for them to have fun. As Marina Cacciotti herself stated before the screening, “prima me ne stavo sempre a casa, ora non ci torno mai...ho addirittura preso l’aereo...vado a Venezia, a Roma in taxi, me diverto insomma...!”.

A glimmer of hope Di Gregorio brought to aged people.

DINNER FOR FOUR

Food is one of the easiest sources for national stereotyping. Food is identity, food is memory, food is home. This is also the premise that Jutta von Stieglitz-Yousufy's short film 'Dinner for Four' aims to explore. It tells an anecdote from the life of asylum seekers in Germany. Four of them, from different corners of the globe, have become friends and would like to treat each other to a good dinner. Alas, none of them has considered the differences in culinary and cultural sensibilities and each offers to serve what is to the others entirely unpalatable.

The plot is set up in a way to provide ample opportunities for comedic moments. The audience finds itself experiencing some of the same incredulity and repulsion as the protagonists at the thought of eating a dog, a guinea pig or a crocodile. The fact that the 'chefs' have brought their sources of meat still alive adds to the comic potential, not to mention that the animals had to be procured from places not usually considered part of the food supply chain, like pet shops and the zoo. On a more thoughtful note, the story invites to reflect on the difficulties of intercultural communication, and of being a stranger in a foreign country.

Unfortunately, the film ruins its own potential by overshooting the mark. The characters are hollow stereotypes painted with a crude brush. Despite the reconciliatory ending, one is left with an unpleasant taste in the mouth. Not content with the comedy implicit in the cultural dissonances and misunderstandings, the director restricts each character to a mere bundle of clichés, from what they wear to what they say. Amateurish acting does not help, either. To handle a sensitive topic like this requires wit and charm. Simply spreading the offence is clumsy and does not diminish its tastelessness.

LA VIE MODERNE

La Vie Moderne is a beautiful French film about the vanishing life of the farmers in the land of Haute-Garonne, the south-west of France. It is a documentary interviewing several families of farmers of the region. The land is poor and isolated. Apparently the life has got more difficult than before.

When the director, Raymond Depardon, interviewed the farmers, they spoke about their everyday life quietly, with few words, sitting at their own dining table where they would spend most of time at home. The sceneries of the barren land correspond to the hopeless future of the people, totally left behind of the modern life. When a young mother said “the farmers will be useless” to his son who has said that he wants to be a farmer like his father, the father, at the same table, kept quite hiding his complex emotions. This scene was quite impressive, showing the acute reality.

The farmers are no more able to live as farmers. This French rural situation can be universal problem in our Modern life; the generations who support the agriculture are rather old ; a small inefficient agriculture can not survive any longer; they have problems to have a successor of their land that will not bring enough money in spite of the hard work to live in the modern life. What is our modern life? Could the modern life be happy, leaving these people behind? For whom is the modern life? Is it too melancholic to try to keep the things as it were? This taciturn movie evokes questions and makes us rethink about our modern life.

It is the love of the director towards the rural people and the rural life, that saves this film from the complete depression of the harsh reality. The way he interviews and the way he captures them through the camera are full of tenderness. In this tenderness, we feel some light in the future of the rural life somehow.

WHAT YOU EAT

It is a short film in which the title expresses the idea that the writer director is trying to convey to us. We kill nature's animals just for pleasure and eventually we will kill each other it starts when we are children. The boy kills a harmless bird the father forces his son to eat the bird and every animal he kills including the dog. The story seems bizarre at first but then one realizes that it is us who kill purposelessly. In the past man hunted only what he ate and now we just kill without being responsible.

The movie is in color, few short scenes and mostly medium shots. In a voice over the boy as a young man narrates telling us about his childhood, growing up only his father is around no explanation to the why or where. All we get is his side of the story not the father's, there are no other characters in this film. Very minimalist style, it leaves a strong impact of the message it has, "you must eat what you kill" it is repeated several times through the film. The ending leaves you open to your own interpretations and conclusion. The gloomy story makes you think the worst possibility when the young man is hiding between the trees waiting for his prey hoping to be lucky this time. What and who is the prey? That is for you to decide.

In this short format only one point view is shown and the rest is left for you the viewer hoping to wake you up to be aware.

LEMON TREE

The Lemon Tree tells the story of Salma (Hiam Abbass), a Palestinian woman who owns and maintains a lemon grove started by her father and has been in the family for over half a century. Her husband has passed away and her children have all moved out and so she lives a lonely but dignified life maintaining her lemon trees with the help of an old friend, Abu Hussam whom has been an employee of the family for many years. Unbeknown to her, her life is about to be turned on its head as her beloved lemon trees are placed under imminent threat as her new neighbour, the Israeli defence minister Navon moves into his new luxury home next door. Divided by the green line separating the West Bank and Israel, the secret service are extremely twitchy as to the security threat posed by the lemon trees and so order the trees to be cut down. And so starts a David vs. Goliath battle which will take Salma all the way to the Israeli Supreme Court.

Salma learns via an official letter from the Israeli government that her beloved lemon trees are to be cut down and so seeks legal representation from a young lawyer Ziad Duad (Ali Suliman) who knowing that she cannot afford his services still decides to represent her. After being ruled against on two occasions Salma and Ziad who by now have developed an intimate relationship begin the appeals process which will take them all the way to the Supreme Court and the attention of the national media. Support also comes from an unexpected place though as the defence minister's wife Mira (Rona Lipaz-Michael) who, dealing with her own marriage problems, becomes sympathetic to Selma's cause.

Written and directed by Israeli filmmaker Eran Riklis, The Lemon Tree is essentially the story of two woman on either side of the argument, although their lives are worlds apart they actually have a lot in common, this point reaches a climax when Mira climbs the security fence of the lemon grove to make contact with Salma only to be caught at the last moment by the secret service, Salma hears a noise outside however upon opening the door Mira is gone.

In the end Salma has to cut down a considerable amount of her trees, however there is a small consolation in that Mira leaves her husband and a huge concrete wall is erected to separate the two. As Ziad, Salma's lawyer, puts it, "it appears that only in America can you have a happy ending."

FOOD INC

The movie "Food, Inc." by American documentarist Robert Kenner puts a critical magnifying glass to the American food industry and asks the questions: where does our food come from and who are the people that makes it? And if we really knew, would we want to eat it? It was shot over several years, starting in 2002, and often by the help of hidden cameras. Amongst others it features the journalists and food activists Robert Schlosser, author of "Fast Food Nation" and Michael Pollan author of "An Omnivores Dilemma".

The reality that the industry wants us to believe in and the actual reality of how our food is made are two completely different worlds. I don't think I will ever again be able to eat a piece of meat without recalling the opening shots of cowpaddocks stretching as far as the eye can see. Not grassy, green paddocks, white-picket fences and rosy-cheeked milkmaids, as the advertisements wants us to believe, but countless divided enclosures, where the cows stand knee-deep in their own muck, in a landscape that seems like something from another planet. As one farmer puts it: 'this is not a farm, it's a factory'.

We are taken on a journey through the chicken farms, the slaughter houses and the corn fields as the movie systematically documents the processing methods used in the foodindustry. The industry basically consists of 3-4 big, multinational companies like Monsanto and Smithfield, who will go to any lenght to maintain a production that mistreats animals, deny workers basic rights and forces farmers to abide by their standards or they lose their contracts.

An example is when a chicken farmer is told by the processing company to close off the chickenhouse, so that the chickens will never see daylight and subsequently loses her contract because she refuses. The film-crew is denied permission to film inside the chicken house, but by way of a hidden camera they are able to show what goes on during the collection of the chickens before their last trip to the slaughterhouse. The animals are kicked, thrown around and stuffed into small cages. Afterwards the farmer can pick up all the dead chickens, that didn't make it. In a clear and sober style it is documented how the modern mass-production have serious consequences for humans and the environment. There is the story of Kevin who died after having eaten an E-coli infected hamburger. Cows are fed on corn which is not natural to their system, the corn develop E-coli bacteria in the cows stomach and the bacteria are spread to the meat via the cows manure.

PIRATE FOR THE SEA

“I send my ships and my crew into harms way to protect life on the oceans. What we do is dangerous”, says Paul Watson, the controversial marine conservation activist.

Aptly named, PIRATE FOR THE SEA(101) introduces us to Paul Watson. Over thirty years ago, Paul founded The Sea Shepard Conservation Society, a vigilante organization. Watson believes in coercive conservation and uses his private navy to ram whaling and fishing vessels on the high seas. Sea Shepard is an organization of good pirates in search of bad pirates; criminals, poachers, illegal whalers and outlaw fishing operations. Their flag, a version of the Jolly Roger, features Neptune’s Trident crossed with a Shepard’s crook.

I give this film “two thumbs up”. It captures the essence of Paul Watson who relishes the romantic and colorful notion of being a pirate. Though he does not have a captain’s license we see him in uniform as “Captain Paul” (with gold braid on his shoulder). As we journey with him, we experience stirring high seas adventures and confrontations in international waters. The film reveals Paul’s personal history (an eco-warrior before puberty) including the creation of Greenpeace. Fearless and uncompromising, several times we see him literally put his life on the line including a dramatic life-transforming moment.

This is the first documentary films for Ron Colby, who has film and tv production experience but no major credits. My one criticism is the film could be cut by about 20 minutes.

To sum, Paul’s willingness to risk lives for his beliefs and his courage, have earned him both loathing and veneration. But his no nonsense, politically incorrect approach to intervention is refreshing and charismatic. With governments/organizations rendered ineffective through bureaucracy and corruption, it’s fascinating to watch a “hero” taking action immediately and effectively. As Paul said, “I guess I plead guilty to being a vigilante, but if there are no police, then vigilantes will appear because crime will never be given a free reign.”

VINOS DE CHILENOS

A clear and profound sense of place, the combination of elements such as soil, climate, grape and wine making know-how, is what the French refer to as terroir. This concept is rooted in the Old World and has sprouted an important discussion for New World wine producing countries. The struggle to create a Brazilian wine identity is the focus of Paula Prandini's first documentary film, *Vinho de Chinelos*, which takes place in the Vale dos Vinhedos, in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, where 90% of all Brazilian wine is produced. The film intimately follows the everyday life of Luis Henrique Zanini, enologist of Vallontano Vinhos Nobres, and his family and friends as they eat, drink, and discuss their idealistic philosophies on Brazilian terroir. Luis Henrique, son of Italian immigrants, the forefathers of wine-making in this region, is a self-proclaimed radical, crafting his wines with integrity and remaining true to his roots. He and his peers are bit players in the now ubiquitous global debate between traditionalism and commercialization. They feel their identity as a wine producing country is still fragile. As they enter the global market they fear that the desire to compete may lead to homogenization and sacrifice the soul of Brazilian wine for profit. His organic philosophy and wine-making style is cinematically captured by Prandini's filmmaking, using a handheld camera and silently narrating the film as we neither see nor hear her. She enables the viewer to sympathize with the protagonist without characterizing him as the typical under-dog hero fighting the corporate villain usually associated with docs of this kind (think *Mondovino*.) Unfortunately, the film falls short of its documentary ambitions as it lacks a balanced view of both sides of the conflict.

LE CAFE DE PECHEURS

In a cafe on the north coast of Morocco, the fisherman of the tiny town spend the winter contemplating the threatening weather & their fishing boats, as they listen to warnings issued by the port authorities. Time passes at glacial speed as the men spend their time between smokes and glasses of mint tea. It is difficult for them. This forced idleness adds to their economic hardship, and while some of the young men engage in petty crime unloading cigarettes, Monsour, who is older, wants to earn this money honestly to feed his wife and children. The only local authority is a gendarme who nobody trusts. He is a bully and corrupt. Exasperated, Monsour requests the gendarme for help to earn a living – to let him go out to sea and fish. When Monsour's request is refused, he decides to take matters into his own hands - with disastrous results leaving his wife to fend for herself and their children.

A glimpse into the lives of others – this film shows in a pragmatically quiet way the frustrations faced by people who rely on the natural world for their livelihood and how easily it can be robbed from them. Not only man is responsible for this theft, but often it is nature itself. And once this happens, the fragile balance of friendship & tolerance is shaken as children starve. One poor fisherman is helpless against these circumstances nor does he have the mental and emotional ability to deal with it, leading to fatal desperation – which is oh so common in today's world.

L'APPRENTI

As the bus meanders along a non-descript mountain road we are greeted with a teenage boy occupying his time among the passing trees. The adolescent mind is a restless one. Struggling, searching, reaching for an understanding of where they are going, where they came from, and if they truly have any choice in the matter. There are situations, emotions, and processes in place long before they are made aware to the child they will impact. As one grows and the world around them unfolds, they may come to find their parents are inherently good people; yet they lack the keen ability, knowledge, and perseverance of nurturing parental skills. It's quite a pity the child is not around to choose their makers, perhaps they would have chosen more wisely. This is the foundation of their inheritance. For some this acknowledgement comes early on, for those less fortunate the cycle is perpetuated into their own eventual attempts at raising kids. With this foresight, we glimpse among the bucolic French border with Switzerland. Mathieu continuously shirks his responsibility as the ever passive farmer, Paul, takes casual notice. The mundane landscape gives way for seemingly endless contemplative dialogue, where each sentence is hung up, stretched out, and measured against the wider world. We are left with no choice in how we would like the characters to develop, blossom, and strengthen themselves; only questions speculating on the future of the characters we've inherited.

HAITI CHERIE

Haiti Chérie, taken from the name of a patriotic Haitian song, addresses the deplorable situation of Haitians working in the sugar plantations in the Dominican million people of Haitian origin, and this film tells the story of three who attempt to escape the batey and return to their native land.

Directed by Claudio Del Punta and written by Punta and Mario Cabrera Lima, the film was inspired by the 2007 documentary "The Price of Sugar." The writers explained this in the introduction to their film, however it would be almost mandatory to see the earlier documentary for any understanding of Haiti Chérie. The film opens with a young couple preparing to bury their infant, then shows them quickly back to work on the batey as normal. Perhaps spurred by the death, and certainly encouraged by a 14 year old boy, Pierre, who is infatuated with her, Magdaleine desires to escape the batey and return to her native Haiti. Her husband, Jean-Baptiste, wants to stay in the Dominican Republic with hopes of finding a better job there. An incident in the cane fields forces them to flee, and all three find help from a doctor who is willing to provide transportation and cover. It is their feelings about staying or leaving, their physical journeys, and their emotional journeys that provide the theme of this film.

The film was difficult to watch, both because of the sadness of the batey situation and the way the story is told. It packs an emotional punch, and succeeds at making the audience feel sympathetic with the main characters and morally offended by the batey system on this island. However, the movie as a stand alone fictional story feels disjointed and without the background knowledge of the situation, many side stories and even the main plot would be difficult to understand. Overall, the film calls more attention from an emotional side to the problems of the batey system, and for that it should be viewed, but for the viewer wanting a well thought out story, this film does not deliver.