



A movie by Pierre-Alain Meier

LOVE OF FATE

Réalisation **PIERRE-ALAIN MEIER** — Image **PETER INDERGAND SCS** — Son **JÜRIG LEMPEN** — Assistante de réalisation **MARION GLASER** — Montage **BEATRICE BABIN • MEYS AL-JEZAIRI** — Musique **ARVO PÄRT** — Montage-son **BENJAMIN BENOIT** — Mixage **DENIS SÉCHAUD** — Etalonnage **JAKOB WEHRMANN • CHRISTOPH WALTHER** — Graphisme et sous-titres **ILARIA ALBISETTI • MEYS AL-JEZAIRI • NINA KÄLIN** — Une Production **THELMA FILM AG PRINCE FILM SA** — en association avec **ORMENIS FILM AG** et **ZERO FILM** — avec la participation de **CINEFORUM** et le soutien de **LA LOTERIE ROMANDE** des **FONDS SUCCÈS CINÉMA** et **SUCCÈS PASSAGE ANTENNE** — Distribution **OUTSIDE THE BOX, THIERRY SPICHER**

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SYNOPSIS

1.5 million Syrians have been forced to flee to Lebanon and now find themselves at a stalemate. Their only glimmer of hope are the resettlement programs and the chance to be relocated to one of 20 Western countries. Only a small number of them - the most vulnerable ones, according to the UNHCR - can benefit from this opportunity. In 2019, 8400 Syrians were able to leave Lebanon in this way.

Having left Syria in 2011, two Syrian families have been put through a veritable obstacle course. Five years later, they are now on the brink of finally being able to depart for Germany.

But as they take the final step, fate intervenes. One of the two families won't be leaving in the end.

When fate strikes, there is no escape. There are cures for ailments, there is none for fate.

The Jarad family: Mohsen, his wife Huriya and their 9 children



PIERRE-ALAIN MEIER

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

*“Make what only you can make”
(Thus spoke Zarathustra, F.Nietzsche).*

Between 2015 and 2017, I produced the film *Eldorado* by Markus Imhoof (Berlinale, 2018). The film accompanies migrants as they set off through their own means, across the Mediterranean, their subsequent disembarkation in Italy, followed by their arrival in Switzerland. Another part of the film, shot in Lebanon, then Germany, shows the Syrian refugees' process of resettlement in Germany under the auspices of the UNHCR.

Finally, all the footage that was shot in the camps in Beqaa in Lebanon, in the UNHCR offices and the German embassy in Beirut, as well as the flight and arrival in Germany of around a hundred refugees, didn't make it into the film.

The reason: On the penultimate day of filming in Lebanon, sudden tragedy struck and shattered the dream of Mohsen Jarad, the main protagonist of the film, a few hours before his departure for Hanover, in the company of his wife Huriya and their nine children. This blow of fate completely called into question this part of Markus Imhoof's project.

While part of the crew had already flown ahead to Germany to welcome the refugees upon their long-awaited arrival, this dramatic event, which lasted about three hours, was captured in a fearless and courageous manner by Peter Indergand (camera) and Jürg Lempen (sound). Two exceptional film technicians, who took it upon themselves to film this moment. On a day of filming, where only two short sequences had been planned; the arrival of the refugees at the hotel and their departure the next morning from Beirut airport.

When editing *Eldorado*, we chose to forgo all footage shot in Lebanon, as those precious moments filmed in the run up of the Jarad family's departure, became somehow redundant, since – in a tragic twist of fate – that family was no longer leaving. Beatrice Babin, the editor of *Eldorado*, who two years later went on to edit *Love of Fate* too, tried a few solutions that were conceivable at first glance, but which never really worked out. Markus Imhoof had to come to terms with the situation: his film was heading in a different direction. Nevertheless, Beatrice and I have always remained convinced that this dramatic moment, that took place only a few hours before the Jarad family's departure could carry a film in its own right. And more importantly, we felt it was necessary, vital even, for this dramatic event to be told, especially as the images and sounds recorded were so unique.

During the editing of *Love of Fate*, it suddenly became clear to me: If I had been present, on this gruelling day of shooting, I would have never been able to edit this film. Before all else, I am a conveyor in this story. I essentially tried – and I think, succeeded – to reproduce the emotions Peter Indergand and Jürg Lempen experienced, by arranging their images and sound recordings in a way that tries to provide meaning or sense to this obscure, infathomable event.

Indergand's images were a significant trigger for me. Why did I feel the need to tell of these fates of others so shattered and show the deep pain of a whole family that has been hit so hard, so suddenly, leaving them without hope or future? Peter Indergand had the courage to remain present throughout and capture this tragedy. Markus Imhoof, with Thomas Bachmann and then

Beatrice Babin, tried to integrate these images into *Eldorado*, but without success, despite several attempts, because the Jarad family's misfortune overpowered the issues of the film he had in mind. And so, it became all the more important for me to try to give back their soul and their images to this family, who agreed to be filmed in such an intimate way throughout several days, but whose inexplicable circumstances made it so that nothing remained of their tremendous commitment. I completely understood why Markus Imhoof chose to give up these images, because to resume this difficult moment, even if it were to last 15 minutes, would have appeared indecent, almost abject in his film. I did not accept it calmly, however. These images had to, have to be shown. I decided to vouch for them, it is my immutable debt to the Jarad family. I share their tragedy each time I watch the film and it has become beneficial to me today that others, as much as possible, share it too.

Alongside the editors Beatrice Babin and Meys Al-Jezairi, like Peter Indergand I realized this process implies a lot of self-reflection. In order to successfully organize this tragic fate with both relevance and the respect it deserves, I fell back on a concept that marked me during my History of Philosophy classes, back when I was a student: The concept of Amor Fati, in English *Love of Fate*, and in French "*L'amour du destin*" (*The love of destiny*) or "*Aime ton destin*" (*Love your destiny*) or more commonly understood as "accepting one's destiny", a concept which Nietzsche took from the ancient Greeks. How else, without this "*Love of Fate*", can one dare to evoke with the necessary weight and distance, the fate of Mohsen and his family?

It is in this spirit that I set out to create this film without a voiceover, to construct a narrative that allows for emotions, enthusiasm, anger, agitation, to be placed at a distance. In a way, proceed through anti-editing rather than editing, so that we get attached and indulge in the characters rather than opinions, impressions and ideologies.

Above all, I sought to create a loving film, close to its protagonists, and tried beyond their words, to make their deepest feelings perceivable and in effect, who they really are. To carefully share a crucial moment in the lives of refugee women and men, tell the stories of those concerned about their future, and where the camera – which they respected and at the same time had their fun with – played a real role. Because on the one hand, given the circumstances, that camera promised them perhaps to facilitate their upcoming challenges in Europe. But on the other hand, they were also hesitant, fearful it would take away part of their soul. The camera's presence influenced all the different moments filmed by Peter Indergand and Markus Imhoof.

In this sense, *Love of Fate* has become a very singular film, which one could say, only exists thanks to a conjunction of reactions and sovereign moments, which go beyond Indergand's, mine or anyone else's control. Nevertheless, that's essentially why this film stirs up strong emotions and even offends or upsets some.

This film, these images are so troubling and to a certain point so threatening for some people, that once again, I've come to realize that perhaps it may not be that straightforward to show them. To say the least, the TV editors involved, the initial festivals applied to have so far been somewhat reluctant or cautious to offer *Love of Fate* to their audiences.

Thankfully, my trusted friend Thierry Spicher is keeping a courageous watch.



THIERRY SPICHER

DISTRIBUTOR

To distribute a film means choosing it from among numerous proposals, then to consider how to share this choice with cinema operators and then with the public, by way of journalists and other prescribing groups. To distribute a film is first and foremost a matter of choice and choices are always subjective.

When Pierre Alain Meier told us about his project *Love of Fate*, it was clear to us from the start that this project was one we would choose to distribute. Knowing him well, and him undoubtedly being one of the most atypical and demanding producers and directors in Switzerland and of his generation (therefore making him one of the most interesting), we are familiar with his thoroughness and appreciate his radicalism.

Naturally, we saw *Eldorado* and we immediately understood that the material which would form the basis of *Love of Fate* would be of great quality. This assurance, combined with the originality and the radical requirement of the project, allowed us to become invested very early on.

The subsequent stages, from the viewing of the rushes to the different rough cuts, up until the first test screenings and the first refusals received by festivals, proved us to be right. The viewer is awestruck when the twist of fate in *Love of Fate* is presented to them in all its force.

The very way in which the film was born (images captured without the presence of a director by a director of photography left to his own devices) makes the fate of Mohsen Jarad and his family a story, a tragedy better written by reality than any fiction ever could: entities of place, time and action leave no room for escape. And the film gives everyone the opportunity to experience in the true sense of the word, this tragedy and to be an actor, powerless albeit, but an actor nevertheless.

The film's force is thereby in allowing its viewer to live an experience that is very rarely, if ever offered, because the combination of circumstances that made it possible is almost an incongruity.

Love of Fate immerses the viewer in reality, leaving them stunned.

And yes, of course, this could lead the viewer to react defensively and refuse to accept the emotions provoked, by intellectualizing, contenting themselves by questioning (legitimately, but so poor in terms of what the film has to offer) the film's moral legitimacy, from the moment these images were captured to their editing.

Little does it matter. For us the film will certainly be one of the most interesting proposals to accompany during its release. We believe that not revealing the unfolding drama will allow viewers to experience it for what it is and thus have access to a unique experience. It won't be easy to convince journalists to coincide with this point of view, it won't be easy to find theatres willing to screen such a special film, it won't be easy to moderate the debates that follow the film.

All the more reason to delight in having to do it.

Because it really is worth it.

PROTAGONISTS / PLACES

More than 20 million refugees worldwide have been forced to leave their home countries. Most of them find refuge in neighbouring states. These host countries are often overwhelmed with the situation and not equipped to provide such large numbers of people with decent living conditions.

Most of these exiles struggle to survive for years in overcrowded camps, with no chance of integration there and no prospect of returning to their countries of origin.

Resettlement of refugees to a third country willing to give them permanent residence, is accessible only to a limited part of the refugee population worldwide. In 2019, of the 1.5 million vulnerable refugees, that are of concern to the UNHCR, less than 1% have been resettled.

The main characters:

AUDREY BERNARD

Head of UNHCR's resettlement program in Beirut

"It's very difficult to work for resettlement. You see misery, day after day after day. You see really the most vulnerable of the population here. So, it's very challenging. We wish we could resettle more people, but we can't. And we see some families where there isn't anything that we can do. For them to apply for resettlement, there's nothing we can do about it.

But resettlement is something very rewarding. We're very happy when we see this one family, the day that they depart, the team is very happy to know that this particular family that we've been following through for several weeks, several months, they made it through and they left. And we really hope that they will be well-received and taken care of in the resettlement country."

THE ALSOUKI FAMILY

Syrian refugees

Nour Alsouki: *"The problems had been going on for a while, but they were happening far from our village. But when the trouble started in our village...When I heard that someone I knew had died, and the way in which he died, I started to feel scared. We immediately retrieved our passports, that same day. We decided to leave our village. At first, we tried to move to a neighbouring village. But it turned out to be just as dangerous there. We felt like, soon, the whole of Syria would be a dangerous place.*

One night, a plane flew overhead and opened fire. The children were terrified, and I didn't know what to do. I hid the kids in a corner of the bed and lay on top of them. I thought, if something were to happen, it would hit me and as long as I kept my children hidden, it wouldn't hit them. It was so terrible, I thought we were going to die there and then."

THE JARAD FAMILY

Syrian refugees

As he returned from the two days of cultural orientation in Tripoli, in Northern Lebanon, Mohsen Jarad wanted to introduce the film crew to his neighbours, invite us into his makeshift home. A single heater in the centre of the tent is lit. The power's out. Mohsen tells his wife or one of his daughters to prepare some tea. His neighbours gather around. He starts telling them about the cultural orientation programme. What impressed him most, was the luxury in the hotel they provided for them.

"Germany is a paradise. They'll treat us like Germans, not like Syrians. We hope it will all go well. The system in Germany is completely different to our system here in the Middle-East. Everyone is equal. Not one person is better than another. Perhaps the president is a little bit better than everyone else. Regardless if you're German, Spanish, French, African, Syrian, Jordanian, Saudi Arabian, nobody is worth more than anybody else. Everyone has the same value. They wouldn't differentiate between you, if one has more money than the other. You are all equals. It's written in their law. And if you respect their laws, everything will be okay."

DEPARTURE FOR BEIRUT, THEN HANOVER

Mohsen leaves everything he will no longer need, behind for his neighbours. A heart-warming enthusiasm, on the cusp of his departure.

As they wait out in the scorching sun on a square in Zahle, capital of the Beqaa. Mohsen starts to sweat and feel unwell. The children become impatient, as the other families begin to arrive. The Alsouki family is one of the last to arrive and waits in close proximity to the Jarad family. Tears and endless embraces with the family members they leave behind.

Throughout the long journey from the Beqaa Valley to Beirut, Mohsen starts to feel increasingly unwell. From time to time, the bus has to pull over, for Mohsen to step out, get some fresh air or throw up. He alternates between moments of lucidity and suffering.

The bus finally arrives in Beirut. The refugees get off the bus, unload their bags and the families regroup. Mohsen is sweating, his wife tries to cool him down. Mohamed, the guide leads the families – one by one – into the lobby of the hotel. Finally, it's the Jarad Family's turn. Mohsen, exhausted, rushes to take a seat on one of the chairs in the lobby, while his wife checks in at the reception desk.

Mohamed desperately tries, for the zillionth time, to get a hold of the Red Cross, a hospital, doctors. For the moment, the situation still seems hopeful.

PIERRE-ALAIN MEIER
Director and producer

Born in Delémont, Pierre-Alain Meier studied at Neuchâtel University, then at the INSAS (Institut Supérieur des Arts du Spectacle) in Brussels. At the head of his production companies Thelma Film and Prince Film, he produced forty fiction films and documentaries in different countries, including in Argentina, *Memoria del Saqueo* (Berlin Festival 2004, Golden Honorary Bear) and *The Dignity of the Nobodies* (Venice Mostra, 2005) by Fernando Solanas, in Cambodia, *Les gens de la rizière* by Rithy Panh (Cannes Film Festival 1994, International Competition), in Senegal, *Hyenas* by Djibril Diop Mambéty (Cannes Film Festival 1992, International Competition), in Burkina Faso, *Yaaba* by Idrissa Ouedraogo (Cannes Film Festival 1989, Opening film at the Directors' Fortnight) and *Laafi Tout va bien* by Pierre Yameogo (Cannes Film Festival 1993), in Algeria, *Bab el Oued City* by Merzak Allouache (Cannes Film Festival 1994), in Palestine, *Salt of this Sea* by Annemarie Jacir (Cannes Film Festival 2008), etc.

Also a series of films by Swiss filmmakers: *Far from the villages* filmed in Chad (IDFA Amsterdam 2008), *Like stone lions at the gateway into night* (Nyon 2012) and *The Perimeter of Kamsé* (Nyon 2020) by Olivier Zuchuat, *Eldorado* (Berlin Film Festival, Out of Competition, Nominated for the Oscars 2018) and *More than Honey* (Nominated for the Oscars 2013) by Markus Imhoof, *A Parting Shot* by Jeanne Waltz (Berlin Film Festival, Forum, in 2008), *Men of the port* by Alain Tanner (Cinéma du Réel, Paris 1995), *Win Win* by Claudio Tonetti.

He has also directed several films, most notably documentary films, among them *The dance of the monkey and the fish* filmed in Cambodia in 1993, and most recently *Farewell to Africa* (Visions du Réel in Nyon 2017), as well as the fiction film *Thelma*, made in 2001.

Screening of *Farewell to Africa* and *Hyenas* at Cinéma City Pully in Lausanne



PETER INDERGAND
Director of photography

Peter Indergand was born in Crest in France. He studied Art History and English Literature at Zurich University. Followed by a degree at the American Film Institute AFI in Los Angeles. His collaboration with Christian Frei marks a particular place in his work, which culminates with the film *War Photographer* being nominated for an Oscar, a film that has a great international impact and for which Indergand is nominated for an Emmy-Award. Recently he created the images for the documentaries *Electroboy* by Marcel Gisler and *Genesis 2.0* by Christian Frei, which had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2018. Peter Indergand has received several awards for his work as director of photography: including the Swiss Cinema Prize for *Eldorado* in 2019.

JÜRIG LEMPEN
Sound Engineer

Has been working since 2003 as a freelance sound engineer as well as an editor, sound editor and mixer. He recently provided the soundtracks for Jacob Berger's *Dévoilées*, Antoine Russbach's *Those who work*, Germinal Roaux's *Fortuna*, Ursula Meier's *Sister*, *Giochi d'estate* and *L'autre moitié* by Rolando Colla and Frédéric Choffat's *La vraie vie est ailleurs*.

BEATRICE BABIN
Editor

In 1990, Beatrice Babin completes her studies in Philosophy and Filmmaking with a Master's thesis dedicated to Federico Fellini and the figure of the clown as a border line between life and death. She has recently edited *Eldorado* by Markus Imhoof, *Lou-Andreas Salomé* by Cordula Kablitz-Post, *Die schönen Tage* von Aranjuez by Wim Wenders.

She edited *Love of Fate* with Meys Al-Jezairi as co-editor.

MARKUS IMHOOF
Director of *Eldorado*

Alongside Peter Indergand and Jürg Lempen, Markus Imhoof shot most of the footage for *Love of Fate*.

It took Markus Imhoof five years of work to prepare, shoot and edit *Eldorado*. He boarded a boat of Mare Nostrum, which was setting off on one of its last rescue missions at the time: "I wanted to show how obstacles are cleverly put in place to make it almost impossible for anyone to reach paradise. We talk about numbers, never about human beings. Too often those who hate refugees have never even met one. My film shows the reality of migrants. I would like its love of others to become contagious."

Where migrants and refugees face intolerance, discrimination and xenophobia, Imhoof turns the situation around by presenting human beings who are simply trying to rebuild their lives.

Eldorado follows the hellish route of migrants crossing the Mediterranean in the hope of a better life in Europe, especially in Switzerland. "As rich and happy Swiss citizens, we have a responsibility for the misfortune of others."

THIERRY SPICHER

Distributor, Outside-the Box

In 2004, Thierry Spicher alongside Elena Tatti, founded the production company Box Productions, in the framework of which he produced, among others, *Home* by Ursula Meier, *Mon frère se marie* by Jean-Stéphane Bron, *Those who work* by Antoine Russbach, *Pause* by Mathieu Urfer, *Beyond the horizon* by Delphine Lehericéy, *Loulou* by Nathan Hofstetter, etc.

Since 2010, as Outside the Box, Thierry has distributed many great films, among them: *African Mirror*, *Midnight Family*, *Abou Leila*, *Une mère incroyable*, *Jeanne*, *Have a Nice Day*, *Quand j'étais Cloclo*, *Pity*, *Une Part d'Ombre*, *A l'école des philosophes*, *Razzia*, *Becoming Animal*, *Safari*, *The Valley of Salt*, *I am not a Witch*, *Europe, she loves*, and so on.

CREW

Direction and production
Image
Editing
Music
Sound
Sound Editing
Sound Mixing
Colour Grading
Graphics & Titles
Subtitles
DCP
Trailer

Pierre-Alain Meier
Peter Indergand
Beatrice Babin, Meys Al-Jezairi
Arvo Pärt
Jürg Lempen
Benjamin Benoit
Denis Séchaud
Jakob Wehrmann
Meys Al-Jezairi, Ilaria Albisetti
Nina Kälin, Meys Al-Jezairi
Christoph Walther
Aron Nick

Technical specifications

Switzerland 2021

Duration: 1 hour 28 min

Filming Locations: Lebanon, Germany

Jürg Lempen, Peter Indergand, Markus Imhoof, in Beirut during the filming of *Eldorado*.



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