

Persmap



PORTO

Een film van Gabe Klinger

PORTO toont ons de onvoorspelbare aard van romantische connecties.

Jake en Mati zijn twee buitenstaanders in de Portugese stad Porto die een kortstondige affaire beleven. Regisseur Gabe Klinger wisselt tijd en perspectief en laat ons zo op fragmentarische wijze kennis maken met de levens van Jake en Mati, zowel hun momenten samen als hun bestaan daarvoor en erna.

Het intense verlangen van Jake (Anton Yelchin - STAR TREK, ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE - in een van zijn laatste filmrollen) voor de uitzonderlijke Mari (Lucie Lucas) is puur en intrigerend. Een korte ontmoeting die het dagelijkse leven even stil zet. Helaas kan dat niet stil blijven staan.

PORTO kwam tot stand met de hulp van Jim Jarmusch (ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE, PATERSON). De film is het speelfilmdebuut van regisseur Gabe Klinger en ging in première op het filmfestival van San Sebastian.



Speelduur: 76 min. - Land: Verenigde Staten - Jaar: 2016 - Genre: Drama, Romantiek
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Distributie: Cinéart Nederland

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Director Gabe Klinger

Gabe Klinger is an award-winning filmmaker, film studies professor, and author. His acclaimed documentary *Double Play: James Benning and Richard Linklater* (2013) won a Lion for Best Documentary in Venice and screened at over 100 leading events and venues worldwide including SXSW, Rotterdam, CPH:DOX, TIFF Bell Lightbox, and the IFC Center. Klinger's articles have appeared in *Sight & Sound*, *Film Comment*, and *Cinema Scope*. He has taught film studies at University of Illinois and Columbia College.

Interview with Gabe Klinger by Daniel Kasman

You were born in Brazil but live in the U.S. What are you doing shooting a film in Europe? And what drew you to the intimate Portuguese city of Porto?

Well, you know, in Europe you have producers who genuinely love art cinema and arthouse culture and a public subsidies system that supports this type of production. I had a really good experience making *DOUBLE PLAY* (2013), my previous film, with support from French and Portuguese people. I ended up going back to those same people to make *PORTO*.

My first choice for the film was actually Athens. But then Greece had a liquidity crisis in 2014 and while we were waiting for things to stabilize my friend and producing partner Rodrigo Areias, who lives in northern Portugal in a small town called Guimarães, suggested Porto. After scouting locations there with Wyatt Garfield, the film's cinematographer, I became convinced that it was exactly what we were looking for. And then the city of Porto and the Porto Film Commission were incredibly supportive in a way that made it clear it would be the right choice logistically.

As you say, it's an intimate place. It has a big city feel without being overwhelming. And aside from Manoel de Oliveira, there weren't many filmmakers who shot in Porto. That novelty was appealing to us.

I feel like I have to talk about Oliveira briefly here. He was a key influence, and not just because of the scarcity of films set in Porto. My first connection with the city was through his films. *DOURO, FAINA FLUVIAL* (1931), *O PINTOR E A CIDADE* (1956), and *PORTO OF MY CHILDHOOD* (2001) are like great virtual maps Porto and so incredibly beautiful... of course they ended up influencing the visual design of our film.

Speaking of the film's look, you have conceptualized a rather radical and adventurous way of visualizing time through cinematic material itself, using 35 mm, 16 mm and Super 8 film to evoke different aspects of Jake and Mati's lives together and apart. How did this elaborate and beautiful solution come to you? Why was it important to use celluloid to express something important about people?

I wanted a visual canvas that would expand as the temporal space of the film narrowed. Super 8 would cover the most time – not screen time, but story time – and 35 mm would cover the least amount of story time but the most screen time and therefore serve as a microscope.

It's difficult to sustain an immersive sense of time in Super 8 because it only gives you impressions. The frame is small, there's not much depth, and you can only shoot for three minutes. With 35 mm you have a huge frame, a lot of detail, and can shoot for typically around ten minutes. Because there aren't as many limitations, 35 mm allows you to conceptualize time in a more objective way.

Jake and Mati are characters stuck in time. They are stuck in one night, even though they are no longer living that one night. They are perhaps thinking about it or dreaming it. There's something James Benning says that really resonates with me: "All of time is just memory." That's really what the film is about, and contrasting these different formats, exploring what they could reveal to the audience

about how we live time through memory (and dream), I could begin to say something really poignant about these two characters.

Tell me more about Jake and Mati. They are an American and a French woman who cross paths in Portugal. neither was looking for the other, yet they found each other and a romance in a place that isn't their true homes, Jake exiled from his parents and Mati abroad with her Portuguese lover. What is the nature of their attraction?

Attraction is a mystery to me. I always balk when people look at couples and say things like, "oh, they're perfect for each other," or (pejoratively or complimentarily) "they deserve each other." How do you know? You may be perfect for someone, but your life isn't perfect. Or you may be perfect for your partner but for whatever reason you don't want to be with your perfect person.

One thing I will say is that loneliness is a great unifier, as paradoxical as that is. When you're an outsider in any environment, your feelings of loneliness are exacerbated and you seek connection, and sometimes those connections are strange, mysterious...

I didn't want to give Jake and Mati too much psychology. It's funny, I believe in psychology in my own life but I don't really believe in it in cinema. Larry Gross, my co-writer, was pro backstory and I was sort of con and we found a middle ground. A lot of backstory didn't end up in the film.

In the absence of backstory, we learn much about these characters from their behavior, how they act – towards each other, certainly, but also in Anton Yelchin and Lucie Lucas's different acting styles. Anton is curled inward: intense, earnest, almost contorted by holding in his passion. He is utterly honest. Lucie is more fresh and open, and yet that seems perhaps a mask, for she hints at her character's psychological trouble and habitual lying. How did you work with each actor to develop their characters that live so much in the moment for us?

Casting is 90%, maybe more. In both Anton and Lucie's cases, I listened to how they interpreted their characters, and sometimes those interpretations matched up with my own and sometimes they didn't, and in the latter cases, I was intrigued enough to want to explore further with them. The bottom line is that you don't want something that only comes from you, the director, because that doesn't have much dimension. Anton and Lucie showed me that they were going to be active in fleshing out their characters from day one. They brought in a lot of stuff from their own lives, stuff I can't really speak to, but that I could definitely relate to in one way or another.

The other 10% that's not casting is the actual work you do as a director. Sometimes actors can go a bit too far or not far enough and you want to help them achieve the right volume in their performance. Then there's the practical stuff: if an actor asks you for a few more takes to try something different, you have to get the crew excited to keep going and make sure the first A.D. isn't breathing down anyone's neck.

Tangentially but related: Anton and Lucie really appreciated that I stuck mostly to master shots. I found out that actors are really annoyed by coverage. They prefer a long take to figure shit out. It makes sense.

Your first feature film was DOUBLE PLAY, a documentary about the two great American filmmakers Richard Linklater and James Benning. What was it like making the leap into fiction? What challenges and freedoms did you find in this shift in storytelling?

Creating a world from scratch – man, I had no idea what I was getting into. I had never worked with an art department before, with a wardrobe department, with hair and makeup... It's a lot of coordination and in depth thought to visualize your world, you're in production meetings for weeks before you start... In that sense it's nothing like certain types of documentary.

But then there are similarities, things you find out about your directorial style in relation to performance, for example. There's such a thing as documentary performance, which I don't think I realized when I made DOUBLE PLAY. Two years later, directing Anton and Lucie in PORTO, it dawned on me that I actually have a preference, a style, which is to give my performers as much freedom as possible. Define a few frameworks and limitations and then let them do their thing.

I think at the end of the day I prefer shooting fiction. Documentary subjects can disappear or bow out, you don't have a contract with them, you're not paying them, they can change their minds, etc. It's too stressful for me. On a fiction set, you have more control, more hours, more people to delegate to... Editing is essentially the same process, however: you just have a responsibility to form a relationship with the images that you were able to get during the shoot. With *DOUBLE PLAY*, which I edited on my own, that relationship came very naturally, I understood the potential of my images... On the contrary, at a certain point in the post-production with *PORTO* I ended up needing to fire myself as editor and hired someone else in order to have a bit of distance. Realizing that and taking a step back was the most challenging aspect of making the film.

As a film critic and programmer yourself, did you look for inspiration in other films, especially to guide this new fictional endeavour? The profound importance of time, its personal perception and interpersonal impact, brought to mind films by Alain Resnais.

This is the part where you don't want to give away too much, right? It's more fun to see what connections other people draw with the film as the main clue.

Since you mention Resnais, I will say that I definitely went down a *MURIEL* (1963) rabbit hole during both the writing and editing stages. But that movie is way more sophisticated than what I'm up to. It's still so radical. If I wanted to make a film like *MURIEL*, financiers nowadays would run away screaming.

Other influences, direct and indirect: Fleischer cartoons (especially Betty Boop), Rivette (*L'amour fou*, *Out 1...*), Louis C.K. (*Louie...*), Godard (*Bande à part...*), McCarey (*An Affair to Remember*, *The Awful Truth...*), Dover Koshavili's *Late Marriage*, Sam Fuller's *The Steel Helmet*, Petzold's *Phoenix*, Alan Clarke's *Elephant*, Lisandro Alonso (*Los Muertos...*), Jim Abrahams and the Zucker bros.' *Airplane!*, George and Mike Kuchar's 8 mm films... Hopefully that's a diverse enough list that no one can point at my film and say, "He's copying this particular filmmaker or this particular style." The reality is, I'm copying everybody.



We can certainly see some of your touch points behind and in front of the camera: Jim Jarmusch is an executive producer and Françoise Lebrun, whom we love for THE MOTHER AND THE WHORE (1973), has a moving appearance as Mati's disconsolate mother. I imagine it is inspiring to collaborate with figures so important to cinema's living history.

For me – and it was the same on DOUBLE PLAY, where I got to work with people like André Labarthe – the most stimulating part of my work is engaging in the history of cinema. Françoise's performance in the Eustache is one of the all-time greats, I think. It's up there with Falconetti in THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC (1928). And I grew up watching Jarmusch's films on VHS tapes given to me by grandmother. In the early '90s when I first discovered him, Jarmusch was established but still not a household name. His influence is widespread now. I watched STRANGER THAN PARADISE again recently and it's still so radically modern. It's in the DNA for so many things that came after.

I've known Jim and his life partner Sara Driver for a while now. We keep in touch and when I'm in New York I try to see them. Jim was so warm and receptive to me when I pitched the idea for PORTO. I was so nervous. He thought about the treatment for day or so, and then he called me to say he'd come on board. I was in a supermarket when I got the call and I think I did a little victory lap in the produce section with my shopping cart.

Jim's role in the film was spirit guide. You can't really have that as a film title, unfortunately, but it's more accurate than executive producer. What he did was guide me through different parts of the process, give creative feedback, offer moral support, and introduce me to a few people on the business side.

If you have the possibility to invite artists who you love into your filmmaking world, then why not? This is what Jarmusch does frequently in his films. I'm thinking of Robert Mitchum in DEAD MAN (1995) or Screamin' Jay Hawkins in MYSTERY TRAIN (1989)... You end up learning a lot from these people. You have to assume the posture of student as a filmmaker. There's a 125-year history that comes before you and you can never forget that.

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One night in Paris:

A visit to the set of Gabe Klinger's PORTO, MON AMOUR (working title)

Shock and outrage as erstwhile film critic Gabe Klinger dinds life beyond occasional contributions to sight & sound – by Nick James.

I'm late and it irks me. I've Eurostarred to Paris on an early train but got stuck in a winding taxi queue. I get out of the cab opposite the address on the rue Lèon Frot, blinking in the sudden spring sunshine while fumbling with my phone to call Nicolas R de la Mothe, one the producers of Porto, Mon Amour [working title!] and trying not to be intimidated by the fact that there's an armed guard – a real military man with an automatic rifle – outside where I want to be. A face I assume is Nicolas emerges and a hand beckons me in. I nod to the guard as I drag my wheellie suitcase round behind him. He ignores me.

PORTO, MON AMOUR (working title) is now in post-production. What Nicolas looks like – a surprise – is a French producer, by which I mean that he looks scholarly, pale and somewhat harassed, not unlike Louis Do de Lencquesang playing the role of Grégoire Canvel in Mia Hansen-Løve's The Father of My Children, except that he's thinner in the face and, as far as I can tell, not suicidal. Immediately and gently, as we climb the old apartment block's stairs, he breaks the bad news: I've missed the shot which director Gabe Klinger wanted me to be in as a bystander. I tell Nicolas I'd guessed as much because I had the call sheet and the shot was timed for an hour ago. I am prepared, instead, to do the real on-set job of being observant but invisible; pleasant, unobtrusive and occasionally helpful, so I have to shake my irritation at being late.

Gabe Klinger is a friend. The Brazilian-born, Chicago-raised cinephile has written a few things for Sight & Sound, programmed some interestingly risky material at the Rotterdam Film Festival and, in recent years, he and I were part of a happy team coaching film-journalism students for the Edinburgh Film Festival.

When we were there in June 2013, he told me he had a rough cut of a documentary he'd made, *Double Play: James Benning and Richard Linklater*, in which the two great directors chew the fat about the verities of making films. One night, when we and the students were out drinking, I suggested we went to Gabe's apartment to watch the rough cut. He was very willing and so were the students. By the time we were settled in the room however it was around midnight and, five minutes into the film, I fell sound asleep. Nobody woke me. I came to as the film was ending and saw that the students had loved it, but I was too embarrassed to do anything more than mumble apologies and slope off to my own room.

Fast forward from June to August at the Venice Film Festival, where Gabe's documentary, now complete, was selected for the Venice Classics section. You have to understand the psychology here. In Edinburgh, my attitude had been simple – "Oh, Gabe's made a film about two filmmaking mentors. That's great." I had no expectation either way as to its quality and my missing the chance to see it only made that position safer. But Venice selecting it meant that I did have to see it and have a real opinion about it – always a risk with a film by someone you know. Fortunately the film is really absorbing and enjoyable. You don't have to take my word for it: it won the Venezia Classici award for Best Documentary on Cinema that year.

Skip ahead again to November 2014 in Lisbon where I saw Gabe at the DocLisboa festival. As we ate ice cream while looking down over the city towards the Tagus from the Edward VII park, he told me he already had his first fiction film financed – with no less a figure than Jim Jarmusch as his executive producer and Anton Yelchin (*Star Trek*, *Only Lovers Left Alive*) as his lead male – and was planning to shoot early in 2015, mostly in Porto, northern Portugal, but with a few scenes in Paris.

Given so intriguing and ambitious a set-up, when Gabe invited me to the set in Paris I couldn't resist – after all, here was a chance to observe a multilingual film crew and cast in action, and in any case I owed him one for the sleeping incident.

I find him on the apartment's upper floor, pacing out a scene like a proper director. Having shot the bulk of his film in Porto, he's on his second Paris set-up of the day, with two more here to come and a further four or five in another apartment scheduled for the evening. The place is a charming jumble of thrift-store treasures and kitsch mementos, most of which are not in the current shot being set up, in which Mati arrives at her mother's apartment.

Gabe introduces me to the permanently distracted cinematographer Wyatt Garfield, whose sole interest is, as it should be, the way the light is changing in the room on this brilliant day. I'm then taken downstairs to meet the actors. Françoise Lebrun (*La maman et la putain*, *India Song*, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*), who plays the mother, is all pre-shot bonhomie; young lead actress Lucie Lucas (best known for her central role in the French TV series *Clem*), who plays Mati, leans back in the makeup chair and beams a stunning smile. Immediately you can tell it's a relatively happy set.

The best place from which to experience the rehearsals for this first shot turns out to be the kitchen, where all the lunch food, which I'm encouraged to take my fill of – parma ham, great cheeses, grapes etc – is laid out. It's irresistible, so eventually I flee, stomach full, out of eyeshot of the actors to the other side of a screen for a first couple of takes then slip downstairs to the monitor to watch the crucial ones. Mati's mother is a stoical alcoholic, the tension between them immediate when Mati's let into the apartment. The mother offers wine; the daughter wants coffee, but agrees. I don't know how the camera will register the orange glow from the near-empty fridge when Lucy as Mati opens it, but it looks great on the monitor.

I should say here that all the dialogue scenes I'm watching are in French and mine isn't exactly impeccable; nor is Gabe's, or so Sonia Buchman, the film's other French producer, tells me, but in any case I'd read the scenes on the train that morning so am able to follow most of what's going on. Gabe, of course, has the advantage of having originally co-written the script in English (with veteran screenwriter Larry Gross). Sonia's main role seems to be acting as Gabe's French ears, picking up on

intonations that a non-French speaker might not. This sort of triangular flow of creative commentary (actor, director, producer) can create diplomatic difficulties but for me it's the perfect condition under which to observe a first-time fiction director in action.

What's obvious is that Gabe is a born on-set diplomat, managing these potentially tricky situations with just the right amount of gentle cajoling and firmness. Lucas confirms this when I ask how Gabe is handling the French scenes. "He's really good. He stays calm," she says. The only time he ever seems a little fierce is when he speaks Portuguese to his compatriot, assistant editor/script supervisor Jade de Brito Lopes, but that may just be my poor ear for intonation in that language.

It gets to late afternoon, with the light changing fast, before those apartment scenes are done. Since they're the last of the film for Lebrun, whose performances all day have seemed to me spirited and metronomically precise, we give her the traditional last-shot round of applause, and head for the second location. As we leave the building, Gabe explains that the armed guard isn't there to protect the shoot. It's a coincidence – a staff member of Charlie Hebdo happens to live there.

Buchman's residence – a calmer, more spacious, book-lined apartment – is the setting for the day's final scene. Alice (Aude Pepin), one of Mati's old friends, has invited her for dinner with Blanca (Florie Auclerc Vialens), another, and they talk about Mati's bohemian love life, about her having the pick of whoever she wanted. The scene, as I quickly learn, is a fast-paced ensemble interchange of sharp wit and swiftly-shading emotions, but it's

broken up into wides, two-shots and closeups, so I see it played out upwards of 40 times. In situations like this, my admiration for actors reaches its height. There is barely a moment in all those takes that flags. Gabe is always fine-tuning and tweaking the way certain lines come through, at one point asking the raucous Pepin to be more cartoon-like in her noises, explaining that he loves cartoons.

During one change of set-up, Gabe confesses that he doesn't much like the title *Porto, Mon Amour*, so we can expect that to change. As we pass the midnight threshold he sets about livening up his actors by getting out his Super 8 camera and encouraging them to make stupid faces for the blooper reel. When the shoot finally ends, everyone is wired and buzzy – except sleepy me, exhausted just from looking – and the beers appear and I realise how quickly Gabe Klinger seems to have got the hang of this actor-directing business.

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Cast

Jake Kleeman	ANTON YELCHIN
Mati Vargnier	LUCIE LUCAS
Mother	FRANÇOISE LEBRUN
João Monteiro Oliveira	PAULO CALATRÉ

Anton Yelchin (actor) began his career at the age of nine and acted in over thirty feature films, including acclaimed turns in Jim Jarmusch's *ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE* (2013), J.J. Abrams' *STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS* (2013), Nick Cassavetes' *ALPHA DOG* (2006), McG's *TERMINATOR SALVATION* (2009), and the Sundance Grand Jury Prizewinning *LIKE CRAZY* (2011) directed by Drake Doremus. His recent credits include Joe Dante's *BURYING THE EX* (2014), Michael Almereyda's *CYMBELINE* (2014), Paul Schrader's *THE DYING OF THE LIGHT* (2014), in which he starred alongside Nicolas Cage, and Jeremy Saulnier's *GREEN ROOM* (2015).

Lucie Lucas (actress) has been acting since childhood, appearing in a number of plays, TV series, and films, including the features *15 ANS ET DEMI* (2007), alongside Daniel Auteuil, and *LE MISSIONNAIRE* (2009). Since 2010, she's been playing the title character in the hit TV series *Clem for TF1*. She had notable roles on *THE LITTLE MURDERS OF AGATHA CHRISTIE* (2009), *LE PIGEON* (2010), and the ongoing comedy series *nos chers voisins*. *PORTO* is her English-language debut and first starring role in a feature film.

Françoise Lebrun (actress) is best known for her turn as Veronika in Jean Eustache's post-Nouvelle Vague classic *LA MAMAN ET LA PUTAIN* (*THE MOTHER AND THE WHORE*, 1973). She began in the French film industry as a producer and assistant to Eustache and later worked as an actress in films by Marguerite Duras, Adolpho Arrieta, André Techiné, Jean-Claude Biette, and Paul Vecchiali. More recently she has given memorable performances in films such Julian Schnabel's *THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY* (2007), Guillaume Nicloux's *THE KIDNAPPING OF MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ* (2014), and Arnaud Desplechin's *MY GOLDEN YEARS* (2015).

Crew

Director	GABE KLINGER
Screenplay	LARRY GROSS GABE KLINGER
Cinematography	WYATT GARFIELD
Editing	GABE KLINGER GÉRALDINE MANGENOT
Production design	RICARDO PRETO

Gabe Klinger (director / producer) is an award-winning filmmaker, film studies professor, and author. His acclaimed documentary *DOUBLE PLAY: JAMES BENNING AND RICHARD LINKLATER* (2013) won a Lion for Best Documentary in Venice and screened at over 100 leading events and venues worldwide including SXSW, Rotterdam, CPH:DOX, TIFF Bell Lightbox, and the IFC Center. Klinger's articles have appeared in *Sight & Sound*, *Film Comment*, and *Cinema Scope*. He has taught film studies at University of Illinois and Columbia College.

Larry Gross (co-writer) is best known for his collaborations with Walter Hill, Clint Eastwood, Wayne Wang, and John Curran. His credits include *48 HRS.* (1982), starring Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte, *STREETS OF FIRE* (1984), *CHINESE BOX* (1997), *TRUE CRIME* (1999), and *PROZAC NATION* (2001). He

won the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at the Sundance Film Festival for WE DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE (2004). Gross teaches at Columbia University and New York University.

Wyatt Garfield (cinematographer) has shot several features, including director Tom Gilroy's THE COLD LANDS (2013) and Michael Tully's PING PONG SUMMER, which was selected for Sundance and SXSW in 2014. He also shot Lou Howe's GABRIEL, which was the opening night film at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival. Garfield recently completed photography on three projects: GRASS STAINS, starring Tye Sheridan and Kaitlyn Dever, LILA & EVE, starring Jennifer Lopez and Viola Davis, and MEDITERRANEA (Semaine de la Critique 2015) for director Jonas Carpignano in Italy.

Bando à parte (producer)

Rodrigo Areias has worked on over 70 short and feature films and videos, including works by João Canijo, F.J. Ossang, and João Pedro Rodrigues. He was in charge of the European Culture Capital film production program for the city of Guimarães in 2012, a project through which he commissioned and produced films by Jean-Luc Godard, Aki Kaurismäki, Manoel de Oliveira, and several others.

Gladys Glover (producer)

Nicolas R. de La Mothe and Sonia Buchman have been working for Gaumont for over 5 years before starting their own production company, Gladys Glover. They've produced a dozen of short and feature films, documentaries and fictions. Beside PORTO, they are currently producing a documentary by Wang Bing, a comedy by Vincent Dietschy and an historical drama by Pablo Agüero.

Madants (co-producer)

The Madants company was founded in 2015 by Klaudia Śmieja and Beata Rzeźniczek to focus on independent productions with international potential for the festivals and distribution. Our first project, of which we are a co-producer is the debut PARK directed by Sofia Exarchou, premiered at Toronto Film Festival. Other project include Claire Denis' highly anticipated HIGH LIFE, Hafsteinn Sigurdsson's multi-character drama UNDER THE TREE, FOAM AT THE MOUTH by Latvian director Janis Nords and PITY by Greece's Babis Makridis.

Jim Jarmusch (executive producer) is a leading figure of world and independent cinema. His breakthrough feature Stranger Than Paradise (1984) garnered the Camera d'Or prize at the Cannes Film Festival and became one of the key American films of its era. His other works include Down by Law (1986), Dead Man (1995), Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai (1999), and Broken Flowers (2005). Jarmusch's recent Only Lovers Left Alive (2013) and Paterson (2016), were selected for the Cannes, Toronto, and New York Film Festivals and were bought for distribution all over the world.