



FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE  
COMPÉTITION



*quando sei nato  
non puoi più nasconderti*

(Once you're born...)



Rai Cinema and Cattleya  
present  
a film by  
Marco Tullio Giordana

*quando sei nato  
non puoi più nasconderti*

Once you're born...

a  
Cattleya (Italy), Rai Cinema (Italy),  
Once You Are Born Films (UK) Ltd, Babe (France)  
coproduction  
screenplay by  
Sandro Petraglia Stefano Rulli Marco Tullio Giordana  
based on the book by  
Maria Pace Ottieri

press office:  
Studio PUNTO e VIRGOLA

distribution



## cast

Bruno **Alessio Boni**  
Lucia **Michela Cescon**  
Popi **Rodolfo Corsato**  
Sandro **Matteo Gadola**  
Alina **Ester Hazan**  
Radu **Vlad Alexandru Toma**  
Tore **Marcello Prayer**  
Barracano **Giovanni Martorana**  
Clochard **Sini Ngindu Bindanda**  
Samuel **Kubiwimania George Valdesturlo**  
Quaresmini **Gianluigi Spini**  
Nigella **Lola Pepløe**  
Maura **Simonetta Solder**  
Diana **Fuschia Katherine Sumner**  
Ndjaie **Diop El Hadji Iba Hamet Fall**  
Mohammed **Mohamed Nejib Zoghlami**  
Guardiacoste **Walter Da Pozzo**  
Carabiniere **Paolo Bonanni**  
Soki **Emmanuel Dabone**  
Leana **Ana Caterina Morariu**

and with **Andrea Tidona**  
as **Father Celso**

Special appearance by  
**Adriana Asti**

Non contractual credits

## crew

Directed by **Marco Tullio Giordana**  
Story by **Marco Tullio Giordana**  
Based on the book by **Maria Pace Ottieri**  
Published by **Nottetempo srl**  
Screenplay by **Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli, Marco Tullio Giordana**  
Director of Photography **Roberto Forza**  
Production Designer **Giancarlo Basili**  
Costume Designer **Maria Rita Barbera**  
Sound Engineer **Fulgenzio Ceccon**  
Boom Operator **Decio Trani**  
Film Editor **Roberto Missiroli**  
Casting **Barbara Melega, Otello Enea Ottavi**  
Line Producer **Gianfranco Barbagallo**  
Coproducers **Fabio Conversi, Terence S. Potter, Jaqueline Quella**  
Production Companies **Cattleya (Italy)**  
**Rai Cinema (Italy)**  
**Once You Are Born Films (UK) Ltd**  
**Babe (France)**  
Producers **Riccardo Tozzi**  
**Giovanni Stabilini**  
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International sales **TF1 International**  
Runtime **115'**



## synopsis

The story revolves around Sandro, a boy of twelve, raised in a well-off family from Brescia. His father, Bruno, owns a small factory, and his mother, Lucia, takes care of the business side. During a yacht cruise in the Mediterranean, Sandro falls overboard at night. When the others discover he's missing and turn back, they can't find him; horrified, they realize he must have drowned.

But the boy has managed to survive.

At the end of his strength, Sandro is spotted by a boatload of illegal immigrants. Defying the angry traffickers who would like to sail straight on, someone dives into the water and hauls the boy aboard. That someone is Radu, a Romanian youth of seventeen, who is travelling with his younger sister, Alina.

For Sandro, it is the beginning of a hazardous return trip to Italy. His encounter with the other passengers – a mixed bunch of non-Europeans, the traffickers themselves, and the two young Romanians with whom he makes friends – gives him the chance to discover a completely different world and to test his ability to adapt. He learns to share water, to get warm by huddling against someone, to take the bullying of the strongest, and to attack like an animal that has to defend itself.

Finally the boat reaches Italy, and Sandro is reunited with his parents. But he has changed inside; the journey has put him to the test. His battle with solitude, fear, expectations and disappointments, has taken him past the "shadow line" that separates adolescence from the adult world. Once he's crossed the threshold, nothing will be the same as before.





## marco tullio giordana director

My most recent films were all set in the Seventies: *Pasolini*, *an Italian Crime*, *The Hundred Steps* and most of *The Best of Youth* took place during those years, which I believe paved the way for and produced the Italy that we find ourselves with today. I wanted to make a film about the present, and draw my inspiration from one of the phenomena that concerns us most: the eruption of migrants in our life. One of the things that has changed the physiognomy of our cities and the fabric of our relationships the most. I wanted to talk about our ability, or inability, to deal with their presence. I asked Sandro Petraglia and Stefano Rulli to help me develop this idea. We felt that an “innocent” viewpoint was required, that of someone who did not see migrants according to the classic racist or solidarity mindset; a non-ideological viewpoint. That’s why the protagonist is an adolescent, indeed a boy, who has not yet developed any prejudices and is open to suggestion. During this extremely delicate stage in his development, Sandro questions sexuality, the future, and what his parents are about. He starts to be critical and no longer accepts the things people tell (or do not tell) him.

More than the provinces, we have focused on the North of Italy, since people are really only familiar with the vaguely picturesque “self-portrait” painted by the Northern League. I’m from the North, from Crema, a town a few kilometres from Brescia. I know that landscape, those people, those idiosyncrasies well and I’m fond of them; I’m not scandalized by them. I’m familiar with all the frustrations of people from the North, their ingenuity, their vulgarity, but also their tremendous energy, their desire to do things, their generosity. Brescia was the first city that had to reckon with migrants, which puts it ahead of the rest of Italy. It needed foreigners to replace its blue-collars. Italians don’t want to work in factories anymore, and without foreigners many small and medium-sized businesses would have had to shut down. Brescia had to face the problem of how to receive them and integrate them. Without any trouble? Of course, not. With enormous problems of coexistence and rejection. But the city’s fabric resisted; it knew how to deal with this emergency. The unemployment rate in Brescia is 2%, the lowest in Europe. We found it interesting that Sandro would have some experience of foreigners, that he would already be familiar with them, that he would not be alarmed by them like someone finding them on their doorstep for the first time.

Sandro sees the immigrants at school, he sees them in the factory, but for him they are like an appendage of the machines, an extension of the lathe or his school desk. He even feels – in his relationship with his classmate Samuel – a kind of rivalry. There is, in fact, a coexistence with foreigners, but certainly no cultural integration. The idea that he could learn something from them, that he could discover things about them, doesn’t even enter his head. What happens when the son of a small-time businessman suddenly finds himself in the sea without any hope of surviving, and is picked up by a boatload of illegal immigrants? How does one recount their journey, the risks they



run, the dynamics springing from their forced coexistence, instead of the usual things we see on television – the landings, the forces of law and order, the humanitarian organizations? Of course, I cannot kid myself that I am one of them, that I can tell it like they can. My viewpoint is bound to be that of an outsider, it can only be like Sandro's, who shares a part of their life but is not – and never will be – one of them.

Sources include: the book by Maria Pace Ottieri from which the film takes its title, *Migranti* by Claudio Camarca, a short essay entitled *Intercultura* by Giuseppe Mantovani... and naturally cinema. Though not explicit, there is a reference to *Germany, Year Zero* by Roberto Rossellini and to *The Children Are Watching Us* by Vittorio De Sica. The final walk taken by the boy through the Milanese “Korea” (an abandoned area taken over by immigrants) to some degree reflects, horizontally, the walk taken by young Edmund in *Germany, Year Zero*, vertically, before he jumps. As in *The Best of Youth*, there is also Truffaut – cited here with a musical theme composed by Georges Delerue for *Silken Skin* – because few like him have been able to recount the fragility of adolescence and the traumas of becoming an adult.

There were various candidates for the role of Sandro, the protagonist. Kids – if you encourage them – are always very good. Maybe Matteo Gadola had something extra. I don't even know if I should try to describe that something; I don't want to fill him with expectations when perhaps it would be better to just let him live his teenage life, with his music, his playstation and his friends. Matteo Gadola has the moral fibre of an adult, not just any adult (I know many who have none at all) but one who takes full responsibility for the undertaking he has decided to embark on. He is a sincere, proud person. There was never a moment when he behaved like a “child”, when he threw a tantrum or hid behind his youth. He is a serious, painstaking collaborator, who asks a lot of himself. This may make him seem like a child prodigy, a little monster, but the opposite is true: Matteo is cheerful, sociable, witty, and likes to chitchat; he is great to work with.

I really wanted Adriana Asti in the film; it was very kind of her to agree to appear just for a few minutes. The same goes for Andrea Tidona; I like working with actors I know well. I didn't think of signing Boni right away. I had asked him to do me the favour of coming to Brescia with me and of acting as the “straight man” at the auditions for the role of young Sandro. Alessio is from that area, he speaks the dialect, he is even more familiar with that reality than I am. I saw immediately how convincing he was as the father; the part seemed to have been written for him. I had seen Michela Cescon in *First Love* by Matteo Garrone and had liked her a lot, a real discovery. But where do these actors who are so sensitive, so capable of giving substance and depth to a character, hide? In the theatre, that's where. I like working with actors who have trodden

the boards; it may sound trite, but I think they have that little bit extra. I chose Michela without even asking her to audition. She brought to her character a surreal touch of madness, which was her idea, something she pulled out of her magician's hat. I always try not to restrict my actors, to leave them free to add something of their own. A film should create the feeling of real life, not of a perfect plot or of its creator's artifice – like Minerva springing from Jupiter's head. The best direction is the kind you can't see.

In the screenplay the two young immigrants were originally Moldavian. I couldn't find any who were convincing enough, and in the end I extended the field to include other nationalities. I started to audition Albanians, Montenegrins and Kosovars, and was ready to adapt the screenplay. I wound up choosing a Romanian, Vlad Alexandru Toma. I felt that, as well as looking the part, he possessed an extraordinary sensibility, even though he had never acted before. Ester Hazan is Italian, but has an Egyptian father. At the beginning I was afraid she might not be believable as a young Romanian girl. But I have to say that from the very first rushes her charm, so angelic yet perturbing, immediately convinced everyone.

From the very beginning, I didn't want to use much music. Although I consider it remarkable “connective tissue”, I thought the emphasis should be placed on ambient sounds: the traffic, the machines, the creaking wood, the wind, the sounds of the air, the sound of the sea. I resisted the temptation to use “ethnic” music; it seemed to obvious. Instead, I used music from other films: *Silken Skin* by François Truffaut (music by Georges Delerue) and *The Piano Lesson* by Jane Campion (music by Michael Nyman). There is also a song by Eros Ramazzotti, which has a crucial function: Alina sings it to herself on the boat, and later it guides Sandro through the abandoned complex in the Milanese “Korea” – a bit like Doris Day's voice in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Ramazzotti is very popular abroad; it is quite plausible that a Romanian girl would know a song of his by heart. The idea came to me during filming. I asked little Ester to sing it to herself, as if its notes conjured up all the illusions that had made her leave her country, and brought her to Italy.

Marco Tullio Giordana made his first film *To Love the Damned* in 1980. In 1981 he directed *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, and in 1982 the video *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, inspired by Benjamin Britten's score. In 1983 he directed for television *Notti e nebbie*, based on the novel with the same title by Carlo Castellaneta, and in 1988 *Appuntamento a Liverpool*. In 1991 he made *Snow on Fire*, an episode of the film *Especially on Sunday*. In 1994, he took part in the group film project *L'Unico Paese al Mondo* and in 1995 made *Pasolini, an Italian Crime*. In 1996 he produced and directed for RAI and UNICEF the film *Scarpette bianche*, and in 1997 he made the editorial film *La rovina della patria*. In 2000 he directed *The Hundred Steps* and in 2003 the two-part saga *The Best of Youth*.

In 1990 he directed *L'elisir d'amore* by Donizetti at the Teatro Verdi in Trieste, and in 1997 the play *Morte di Galeazzo Ciano*, by Enzo Siciliano, at the Teatro Carignano in Turin. His novel *Vita segreta del signore delle macchine* (1990) and an essay entitled *Pasolini, an Italian Crime* (1994) were both published.

## sandro petraglia and stefano rulli screenwriters

**SP** The screenplay was not constructed along traditional lines. The first part moves at an even, uninterrupted pace, without any twists, until the boy falls into the water. At that point, everything changes: a film that seems almost to be the account of a summer, turns into an adventure movie, then soon becomes something else again, and so on. In fact, the screenplay was based on the idea of one situation *sliding* into the next. Moreover, at a certain point, we realized – without saying anything to each other – that we were constructing the entire film *around the last scene*. As if the movie had to be created for that last – or rather penultimate – scene.

**SR** Initially, the focus was more on the journey. Marco Tullio did not want to make a film about the “problem” of immigration, but about the encounter between the different cultures of innocent adolescents. Innocence enables the characters to relate with each other, which would have been much more difficult had they been older. Thus we centered the film on the triangle of the kids, and reduced the part that takes place at sea.

**SR** In this film, the father and son love each other, they understand each other. At first we thought of using alternating editing to recount Sandro’s experience on the immigrants’ boat and that of his parents, alone, in Brescia. Then this idea was gradually discarded, and it was decided that the story should revolve completely around the boy.

**SP** In subsequent drafts, we cut and added various scenes featuring the parents after they lose Sandro. The decision to stay on him after he falls into the sea, and not to show the situation at home, the empty house, the adults’ desperation, was taken just before shooting began – or maybe even during filming.

**SR** The opening scene in which the black man takes off his clothes outside the phone booth conjures up a kind of mystery of communication that runs through the whole film. Things are not communicated with words, but with glances, gestures. The direction was crucial in this regard.

**SP** Marco Tullio had two brilliant hunches. The first, at the writing stage, concerned the concept of the protagonist, whom he thought should be on the threshold of puberty, without any “awareness” of his sexuality. That age in which one experiences various disturbances but still can’t put a name to them. His second hunch was to give the part to Matteo Gadola. When we watched the screen tests of the possible protagonists we had diverse opinions. I thought, for example, that Matteo was too independent, self-sufficient, “sorted out”. I was a bit worried. But I was mistaken.

**SR** We wanted to recount the story of a normal boy who is unaware of the change taking place inside him, and only discovers what it is after he has risked dying. I don’t know if we have managed to give precise indications of this *normality*. For example, in the scene where Sandro and his mother are in the car and they see the young prostitute. The boy doesn’t under-

stand why his mother makes him close the window, yet he feels uneasy. Or the scene in which Sandro’s mother asks him: “What do you want to be?”, and he replies: “Nothing”, but not in a dramatic way. He is a serious, well-grounded boy who is overwhelmed by a radical change. We did a similar job on the character of the mother in *The Best of Youth*. In the early drafts of the screenplay she was aggressive towards her son Matteo, while later she became *normal*, because the problem was not the mother in particular, but the family itself. In *Once You’re Born* we wanted to recount the experience, both natural and dramatic, of emerging from childhood. A typical and, at the same time, universal change. That’s why Sandro only really understands himself at the end.

**SP** At first we thought that roughly a third of the film should be set in Brescia, a third at sea, and a third in Brescia again. After the location scouts, the theme of the immigrant centre emerged, which would act as a “decompression chamber” between the sea and the return to everyday life. At this stage it was very useful for us to meet Maria Pace Ottieri, the author of the investigative book *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti*. At any event, when entering such a world, the most difficult thing is to resist the temptation to recount – which would be both presumptuous and wrong – the story from the point of view of the under-privileged, to pretend to be in the migrants’ shoes. The film is about us more than them, it is about our guilt feelings, our fears.

**SR** We accept these migrants, but never completely. For example, look how the characters of the father and the mother react to Radu’s stealing from them. They express something that is not racism, but rather uneasiness, incomprehension. I think the film intends to raise questions rather than provide answers.

**SP** The movie is exactly the opposite of bad television, since the “good guys” are not really good and the “bad guys” are not really bad. I can’t imagine how the public will react. What I do know is that you can’t help loving the characters. The boy won my heart in the dark screening room, more than when I was actually writing the part. And the young girl touched me deeply. The way she looks at Sandro, just before the end, is – for me – the way they all *look at us*. I hope that when the audience leaves the cinema, they’ll take home something they didn’t have, didn’t know before, starting with Alina’s eyes.

**SR** In our minds there is often a blurred dividing line between the so-called “good immigrants” and the “bad immigrants”. Life is much more complicated, as the black factory worker tells Sandro. Through the boy’s eyes, we contemplate these immigrants as if they were a mystery. We understand some things, others not. For example, Sandro doesn’t understand – and he doesn’t want to understand until the very end – the relationship between Radu and Alina. But the problem for Sandro is not so much to know if they’re brother and sister or lovers, as to understand his feelings for both of them. Especially in the finale, when he discovers that Alina is very different from how he has always imagined her.





**Sandro Petraglia** was born in Rome on 19 April 1947. After gaining a degree in Philosophy, he became a film critic, a documentary filmmaker, and later a screenwriter. Together with Silvano Agosti, Marco Bellocchio and Stefano Rulli he made in 1975 the film document **Nessuno o Tutti** (released in a version entitled **Fit to Be Untied**), and in 1978 the film inquiry **The Cinema Machine**. Later he directed **Il Mondo Dentro** (1979) and **Gran Serata Futurista** (1981) and, in tandem with Stefano Rulli, **Il pane e le mele** (1980), **Settecamini da Roma** (1981) and **Lunario d'inverno** (1982).

For television he has written: **I Veleni dei Gonzaga** by Vittorio De Sisti, **Attentato al Papa** by Giuseppe Fina, **Mino** by Gianfranco Albano, **The Octopus 3** by Luigi Perelli, **Una vittoria** by Luigi Perelli, **The Octopus 4** by Luigi Perelli, **The Octopus 5** by Luigi Perelli, **The Mysteries of the Dark Jungle** by K. Connor, **Bride and Groom** by Gianfranco Albano, **The Octopus 6** by Luigi Perelli, **Bride and Groom 2** by Felice Farina, **Michele va alla Guerra** by Franco Rossi, **Don Milani** by Antonio and Andrea Frazzi, **Più Leggero non basta** by Elisabetta Lodoli, **La vita che verrà** by Pasquale Pozzessere, **Come l'America** by Antonio and Andrea Frazzi, **Compagni di Scuola** by T. Aristarco and C. Norza, **Perlasca, an Italian Hero** by Alberto Negrin, **La omicidi** by Riccardo Milani.

For cinema, often with Stefano Rulli, he has scripted: **The Seagull** by Marco Bellocchio, **Sweet Body of Bianca** by Nanni Moretti, **Dolce Assenza** by Claudio Sestieri, **Julia and Julia** by Peter Del Monte, **Ballet** by Peter Del Monte, **Mary Forever** by Marco Risi, **It's Happening Tomorrow** by Daniele Luchetti, **Pummarò** by Michele Placido, **The Invisible Wall** by Marco Risi, **The Yes Man** by Daniele Luchetti, **The Stolen Children** by Gianni Amelio, **Ambrogio** by Wilma Labate, **Arriva la Bufera** by Daniele Luchetti, **Wild Flower** by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, **The Bull** by Carlo Mazzacurati, **Poliziotti** by Giulio Base, **School** by Daniele Luchetti, **Pasolini, an Italian Crime** by Marco Tullio Giordana, **Vesna Goes Fast** by Carlo Mazzacurati, **La Mia Generazione** by Wilma Labate, **Marianna Ucria** by Roberto Faenza, **The Truce** by Francesco Rosi, **Auguri Professore** by Riccardo Milani, **Messaggi Quasi Segreti** by Valerio Jalongo, **Little Teachers** by Daniele Luchetti, **La Guerra degli Antò** by Riccardo Milani, **The Lost Lover** by Roberto Faenza, **Domenica** by Wilma Labate, **The Best of Youth** by Marco Tullio Giordana, **The Keys to the House** by Gianni Amelio.

**Stefano Rulli** was born in Rome, in 1949. After graduating in Humanities with a thesis on Neorealism and Film Criticism, he organized a conference on Neorealism at the Mostra del Nuovo Cinema in Pesaro, in 1974. During this period he wrote the book **Polansky** (Nuova Italia, Castoro, 1975) and contributed to film magazines such as *Ombre Rosse*, *Scena*, *Quaderni piacentini*, *Essai*, *Cinema sessanta*. In 1975, together with Marco Bellocchio, Silvano Agosti and Sandro Petraglia, he made the film document **Nessuno o Tutti**, released in the version entitled **Fit to Be Untied**. With this same group he made **The Cinema Machine** in 1977, a film inquiry in five episodes on cinema as myth. It was during this period that he wrote his first screenplays, collaborating as screenwriter and assistant director on **Nel più alto dei Cieli** by Silvano Agosti and **The Seagull** by Marco Bellocchio.

Together with Sandro Petraglia he made a trilogy on Rome's suburbs: **Il pane e le mele** (1980), **Settecamini da Roma** (1981) and **Lunario d'inverno** (1982).

With Petraglia he has written for television: **Attentato al Papa** by Giuseppe Fina, **Mino** by Gianfranco Albano, **Octopus 3** by Luigi Perelli, **Una vittoria** by Luigi Perelli, **Octopus 4** by Luigi Perelli, **Octopus 5** by Luigi Perelli, **Octopus 6** by Luigi Perelli, **Don Milani** by Antonio and Andrea Frazzi, **La vita che verrà** by Pasquale Pozzessere, **Come l'America** by Antonio and Andrea Frazzi, **Perlasca, an Italian Hero** by Alberto Negrin.

For the cinema has scripted, often in tandem with Petraglia: **La Donna del Traghetto** by Amedeo Fago, **Forever Mary** by Marco Risi, **Pummarò** by Michele Placido, **The Yes Man** by Daniele Luchetti, **The Invisible Wall** by Marco Risi, **The Stolen Children** by Gianni Amelio, **Arriva la Bufera** by Daniele Luchetti, **The Bull** by Carlo Mazzacurati, **School** by Daniele Luchetti, **Pasolini, an Italian Crime** by Marco Tullio Giordana, **Vesna Goes Fast** by Carlo Mazzacurati, **The Truce** by Francesco Rosi, **Auguri Professore** by Riccardo Milani, **Little Teachers** by Daniele Luchetti, **The Keys to the House** by Gianni Amelio.

The documentary film entitled **A Particular Silence**, which he wrote, directed and also played in, was released in 2005.





## riccardo tozzi producer (cattleya)

We had wanted to make a film with Marco Tullio Giordana for some time. But he was always engaged on projects with other producers. Just before he started filming *The Best of Youth*, we finally agreed to make his next movie together: but we didn't know what kind.

When he had finished shooting we started to discuss a possible subject, getting all enthusiastic, then changing our mind several times.

Then, at the beginning of last year, Marco Tullio told me about the idea for *Once You're Born*, with its very special title taken from the book by Maria Pace Ottieri: we immediately knew we had found what we were looking for.

A story about young people, an adventure during which the protagonists grow and change, rocking the adults' world. A personal story that makes it possible to touch, through the characters' authenticity, a fragment of the big world in which they exist.

To maintain our enthusiasm, and make up for lost time, Marco Tullio and I decided on the release date of the film and, working backwards, drew up a schedule for the screenplay and shooting.

Throughout this process Rai Cinema, which had been crucial to the success of *The Best of Youth*, supported us with entrepreneurial know-how and an understanding of the project's particular features.

Rulli and Petraglia, the obvious choice for the screenplay, worked quickly, with the same understanding they had experienced with Marco Tullio on the previous film: at the end of spring we had a great screenplay, which was just a bit too long.

The film was going to be difficult: a third of the action took place at sea, a location the film business fears like no other.

At first we thought we would shoot in the surface water tank on Malta, which, technically speaking, had everything going for it. But then we realized that the complex structure would have conditioned Marco Tullio by restricting the shots and deprived him of the freedom he needed to work with the boy. So we decided to film on the open sea, in Greece and along the Apulia coasts. We used the yacht, a stunning Swan, the old tramp steamer, a big boat for the extras, the boats to ferry them back and forth, the boat for the cameras, the safety boats and those plying to and from the mainland: a corner of the port at Gallipoli was the base for the *Once You're Born* fleet.

The weather smiled on us and we didn't "run aground", nevertheless shooting lasted 14 weeks.



The film was expensive, and we could not have made it if, apart from the all-important participation of Rai Cinema as coproducer and distributor (with 01 Distribution), we had not finalized coproduction agreements in France and in England, and also agreements for foreign sales.

Now the film is ready, it will be released in May, at the same time as the Cannes Films Festival, where we are in competition.

People are expecting an important European film, the fruit of the new Italian cinema that is getting such a lot of attention and inspiring confidence abroad, as if heralding a new golden age of Italian movies.



## alessio boni bruno

On this second film with Marco Tullio Giordana, after *The Best of Youth*, I was a bit thrown by the fact that we all had to follow the boy, rather than the precise rules of acting. A lot of scenes were changed, improvised on the spot, because Marco Tullio did not want me to have everything “off pat”, he wanted an crudeness, almost, in the way I expressed myself, because Bruno comes from nothing; he’s a decent guy but still a bit of a rough diamond inside. Marco Tullio always wants us to be as natural as possible. He often changes our lines at the last moment to stop us from becoming mechanical. He uses the camera almost as if it were a candid camera, studying us, catching us unawares, as if he were shooting a documentary ...

We had gone to Brescia together to audition the boys. Marco Tullio had asked me to go with him because I’m from that area, I have the same accent, and so I could put the kids at ease. After watching the screen tests, and seeing me as the “straight man”, he was convinced I should play the father. And so I had to go back and reacquire everything I had sought to eliminate at drama school: my father’s accent, my brother’s, my mother’s! In actual fact, I can only communicate with my grandmother in Bergamo dialect! I had to forget all my dic-



tion lessons. Matteo Gadola and I went to stay with his uncle and aunt on Lake Garda for three weeks. I also studied Matteo. It would have been difficult for him to copy me because he wasn’t a professional actor ... so I had to copy him! I asked Matteo’s father to tell me about his son, to describe him to me, to “explain” him. But I got the most valuable information directly from Matteo, from my relationship with him. I like Matteo, his intelligence, his tenacity, his cheerfulness. I’m very fond of him. It would be great to have a son like him.

My character is your typical small businessman, a self-made man. He works like crazy, no one has ever given him a thing. He is smart, generous ... but also a bit ignorant, conventional, conformist. It is through his son that he starts understanding a lot of things, that he starts to reason ... Bruno is not a racist. He needs those black factory workers. He knows them all individually. He may be a bit paternalistic, but he’s not racist. Racism is all around, manifested in the uneasiness of those who have no relationship with the migrants and dismiss everything with “Blacks and eartheaters, go home!”. Bruno is not like that but he obviously feels superior to them, with his money, his villa, his factory ... When his son disappears, all this suddenly has no value. As he says to his wife: “If he dies, we die ...”. When Bruno is reunited with Sandro, the fear of losing him continues to eat away at him and Lucia. He realizes he is indebted to those down-and-outs who have saved him ... One of my favourite scenes is when Bruno meets Radu and, almost unable to speak, kisses his hand...

Alessio Boni studied at the Accademia Nazionale d’Arte Drammatica Silvio D’Amico and gained a diploma in acting under Orazio Costa Giovangigli in Taormina with a final exam based on Shakespeare’s Hamlet. He took a specialization course taught by Luca Ronconi, and one in theatre acting in Los Angeles. His first theatre performances include: Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* directed by Peter Stein, *Peer Gynt* directed by Luca Ronconi, and Molière’s *The Miser* directed by Giorgio Strehler. His most recent was *Proof* by David Auburn, directed by Enrico Maria Laman.

In 2001 he played the lead in the radio serial *Titanic* on RAI Radiodue, directed by Tommaso Sherman. On television he starred in *Incantesimo 3* directed by Tommaso Sherman and Alessandro Cane, *La donna del treno* by Carlo Lizzani and *L’altra donna* by Anna Negri; and played John the Baptist in *Maria: Daughter of Her Son* by Fabrizio Costa. He also appeared in *Un prete fra noi* by Giorgio Capitani, *Alla ricerca di Sherazade* by Franco Giraldi, *Mai con i quadri* by Mario Caiano, *Dracula* by Roger Young, *L’uomo del vento* and *Vite a perdere* by Paolo Bianchini, *Wuthering Heights* by Fabrizio Costa, *La caccia* di Massimo Spano.

He made his cinema debut in Lino Capolicchio’s film *Diario di Matilde Manzoni*. In 2003 he played Matteo Carati in *The Best of Youth* by Marco Tullio Giordana. In 2004 he did *La paura degli angeli* by Angelo Longoni. He is currently filming *The Beast of the Heart* by Cristina Comencini and *Arrivederci, ciao* by Michele Soavi.

## michela cescon lucia

I was familiar with Marco Tullio Giordana's *The Hundred Steps*, *The Best of Youth*, and *Pasolini, an Italian Crime*. We met at the David di Donatello awards, and hit it off immediately. A few months later he called me about this film which was still something of a mystery then. He told me the story. I had been on tour in Brescia for some time, so I told him one or two things about the city. He said to me: "It's a small part. If I succeed in constructing a character that makes sense I'll phone you, otherwise you'd be wasted". In mid-August he called me to start filming. I'm not the type who counts how many scenes, how many lines I have. On the contrary, we cut a lot of them on the set. I'm often virtually a silent presence. I accepted the film without reading a single page of the screenplay. There was a strange coincidence. When Marco Tullio told me the names of Boni's and my characters, I was struck by the fact that they were the same as my mother and father's: Lucia and Bruno!

Cinema is still something new for me. After the "beginner's luck" I had with *First Love*, with Marco Tullio I realized that I really could do movies. He'd say a couple of words and I knew exactly what he wanted. Everything was constructed take after take as, together, we tried to find the most natural solution. I was very happy. Alessio and I created two respectable, strong people who love each other. The tragedy that overwhelms them forces them to reflect on their life. When they are reunited with their son, however, they are unable to overcome their fear.

The sequences in the immigrant shelter in Lecce were the ones I enjoyed shooting the most. I'm a happy-go-lucky type, the clapper board doesn't scare me, I make my entrance and instantly become the mother. When I find my son in the shelter, I live that moment. Matteo Gadola is a born actor, but he doesn't possess a technique. It's very difficult working with children because you have to enter the game completely, and be very precise, otherwise you're of no help to them. Marco Tullio improvised many scenes, I adopted a very free approach on the set. In the scene where I give my old clothes to the immigrants, I really do lose it, I feel that it's an enormous and distressing problem. You want to give everything, but at the same time you realize it's not enough. I remember reading when I was fifteen a saying that I have never forgotten: "Do not give out of charity what is due by law".

To construct a scene I usually study it well beforehand, I put a lot of information into it. Then I close the script, leave it there, and when Marco Tullio says "we'll shoot it tomorrow" I go and reread it, and try to simplify everything. I find the basic feelings, the ones that are difficult to explain. By some strange magic, all the things I have assimilated emerge spontaneously. I live the scene but my head



does something else – happiness, anger; I like to mix opposites.

Lucia is fairly like me; she's rather "ordinary". I also had those maternal, protective feelings in me. She is a many-sided character, even though she only appears occasionally in the film. Every time she appears, though, you feel that something in her has changed, that she's taken a step forward. I'm a perfectionist, very finicky. Marco Tullio is a good listener, and his observations are always spot-on. He's never satisfied, he's always looking for that extra something, and when he finds it he grabs it in a flash.

Michela Cescon gained her diploma at the Teatro Stabile di Torino school for young actors directed by Luca Ronconi, and participated in study and training courses taught by teachers at the GITIS in Moscow, the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona, and by Jurij Al'sic and Bruce Myers.

Her theatre performances include: *Qualcosa di vero dev'esserci...* and *Ruy Blas*, both directed by Luca Ronconi; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Ballo in maschera*, *Ophelia: Hamlet/Frammenti*, *Storia di Doro*, *Polynices and Antigone*, *Death and Dancing*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *Hamlet X*, *Nietzsche la danza sull'abisso*, *Bedbound*, *Bacchantes*, all directed by Valter Malosti.

Film performances include: *Il Teppista* by Veronica Perugini, *First Love* by Matteo Garrone, *Sacred Heart* by Ferzan Ozpetek.



## matteo gadola sandro

I'm not used to this world, I want to go back to my own life, to what I always was. My friends, my games, my bike, all the things I had given up. It's true that when I got back to Brescia from Lecce I more or less took up where I left off, but there were still a load of scenes to shoot. It was really tiring. You mustn't think that being an actor is all fun, always easy. OK, so Marco Tullio had warned me, but it was a real hassle waiting for hours on end till they called out "Roll 'em!" and "Action!", maybe sitting or standing in the cold ...

The part we shot in Greece was a piece of cake, a real vacation. There was Alesio, Rodolfo Corsato, who plays Popi, and me in this paradise. Then things got more difficult on the immigrant's boat and the yacht. When the sea was rough we felt sick, and in the crush on the makeshift boat it was even worse. Getting dirty, getting wet, all that stuff really exhausted me, I couldn't take any more! But I only felt really bad once.

A fax arrived at my school, saying that they were looking for a boy from Brescia to play the lead in a movie. I went with three of my friends, saying: "It'll be a great experience anyway". All three of us auditioned, on different days. I passed

the first screen test and got to the second. I passed the second and – and because this thing was now bigger than me – I decided I couldn't go back: make or break! I did the third audition, and found myself on the set!

After choosing me, Marco Tullio invited me and my parents out. He explained the plot, what I had to do and what I was going to experience, and he told me not to let it go to my head. We were sitting around a table and he told me the whole story of the film. He described my part which – you're not going to believe this – seemed to have been written for me. Because this Sandro – who is a city boy, twelve years old, good at school, a big reader – seems almost identical to me. I was amazed, in fact.

I live in an area that's famous for its large number of immigrants. I've heard that they know about it all over Africa! Every time I passed by their building, I asked myself : How did they survive the journey (I heard about it on TV)? How do they manage to keep themselves today? They live ten to a room, paying huge rents. How can they keep going, how can they survive when the whole world is against them? This film tells a similar kind of story, but in a more direct way.







Sandro also asks himself those questions but no one explains things properly until he finds himself in the middle of it all and becomes like them, experiences their situation. That's where he finds the answers to the questions he has always asked himself.

The relationship I have with my mother is completely different. With my screen mother I'm much more introvert, I don't talk to her much. She's very timid, and afraid to ask me questions. She doesn't dare ask me about the phone calls I make to Alina and Radu. My real mother is more extrovert. She asks me things, tells me things to my face, I have a much more open relationship with my real mother.

Marco Tullio explained to me very clearly how to act, always telling me to imagine that I was living the situation. I liked him because he treated me the same as he did the others. He told me that all I had to do was to think things and the camera would read my thoughts. "You're really angry because Alina has gone ... You're worried because she sent you that message ..." he would tell me. Working with him made things much easier. When you act you're not the one who is actually in the situation. But with Marco Tullio I carried those things inside me, especially when I did the scenes in Brescia. I woke up in the morning, started

filming, and when he called out "Action!" I wasn't Matteo anymore, but Sandro Lombardi! When I came home in the evening I was uptight because I was still Sandro Lombardi. I was only myself again in the morning.

Right now I can't say what I want to be. But if this film goes well and maybe other directors and producers notice me and ask me to do other films, I'll see. Maybe I'll accept, maybe when I grow up I'll even try to get into drama school, I don't know. I'm only twelve, I've got to decide what kind of secondary school I want to go to.

**Matteo Gadola** was born in Brescia on 26 June 1992 and is no longer able to hide. He is doing well at the Luigi Pirandello Intermediate School, but has not yet decided what he wants to be when he grows up. **When You're Born** is his first movie. It may not be his last.





## giancarlo basili production designer

We visited various immigrant shelters and temporary stay centres in Italy. The centre at San Foca made a deep impression on us. I remember spending an afternoon there with Marco Tullio: the two of us, alone, in the middle of the “guests”, all waiting to be expelled. A feeling of suffering and desperation that was actually physical ... I went on searching until we found the Badessa complex, a few kilometres from Lecce, an old farm with annexes built in the Sixties, used to house foreigners during the mass landings in 1992.

The first thing we looked for in Brescia was the factory that Sandro’s father owns and where he works. I saw several, and discovered that non-Europeans were the majority in most of them. The owners would say to me “Without them I probably would’ve had to close.” I told Marco Tullio these things, and they seemed to confirm what he had already intuited. In the end we chose Fabarm, a company that produces hunting rifles, though in the film we don’t see this. We liked its architectural structure, the layout of the machines, some very modern, others antiquated. They were very ready and willing to help; some of the workers even took part in the film. However, we also made some minor changes here. I really like working with real elements, modifying existing structures without distorting them. This is basically my idea of cinema, which I share with the directors, often very different, with whom I have worked: Moretti, Amelio, Mazzacurati, Salvatores, Luchetti, Piccioni ...

We were undecided whether we should make the Lombardi’s house a bit kitsch, like so many I’ve seen. Houses belonging to people who have money, a lot of money, but who, when it comes down to it, have the lower-middle-class tastes of self-made people who know nothing, don’t buy a single painting and don’t read books. But it was a bit over the top to do this in a movie. So we considered a house with a particular style, hi-tech perhaps. Not the style of the owners (they have none!) but of the architect who delivered it to them “keys in hand”. Marco Tullio really liked the idea of a big barn of a house that this social-climbing businessman has had built in the hills without putting anything of his own in it. We found the house and, thanks to its accommodating owners, were able to modify the furnishings to give it even more impact. The owners of the villa seemed identical to the characters in our film: the same energy, the same expansiveness, the same desire to enjoy their affluence without feeling guilty.

The “Korea” district in the story is actually in Milan, but we found ours in Brescia. A former Agrarian Consortium, built in the early-twentieth century and later altered several times, which was a real find where industrial archaeology is con-

cerned. We converted the different areas to recreate the world in which non-Europeans live. We redid the enclosure wall that the boy climbs over. We revamped the entire open space with the trailers. The itinerary that the boy follows inside was completely redesigned by cleaning and decorating the entire structure. We only used stuff we found in tips, the same stuff that non-Europeans scavenge for their homes. My set dresser Alessandra Mura didn’t hire anything. She only used garbage taken from containers. A tremendous job.



Giancarlo Basili debuted with Marco Ferreri on *Seeking Asylum*. This was followed by: *The Eyes, the Mouth* by Marco Bellocchio, *A School Outing* by Pupi Avati, *Henry IV* by Marco Bellocchio, *We Three* by Pupi Avati, *Graduation Party* by Pupi Avati, *Italian Night* by Carlo Mazzacurati, *It’ll Happen Tomorrow* by Daniele Luchetti, *Red Wood Pigeon* by Nanni Moretti, *The Week of the Sphinx* by Daniele Luchetti, *The Yes Man* by Daniele Luchetti, *Arriva la bufera* by Daniele Luchetti, *Sud* by Gabriele Salvatores, *Strange Stories* by Sandro Baldoni, *School* by Daniele Luchetti, *Hard-Boiled Eggs* by Paolo Virzì, *Nirvana* by Gabriele Salvatores, *The Way We Laughed* by Gianni Amelio, *Little Teachers* by Daniele Luchetti, *Apple of My Eye* by Giuseppe Piccioni, *Paz!* by Renato De Maria, *The Son’s Room* by Nanni Moretti, *I’m Not Scared* by Gabriele Salvatores, *Ginger and Cinnamon* by Daniele Luchetti, *An Italian Romance* by Carlo Mazzacurati, *The Keys to the House* by Gianni Amelio.



## maria rita barbera costume designer

Marco Tullio told me the story of the film, which is really compelling, when he was actually writing it. I started working in June, still not knowing anything about the actors – the boys, the parents, Popi and the others – who Marco Tullio still hadn't found. I went to the second-hand clothes' stalls at the Via Sannio and Porta Portese markets in Rome to find garments for the immigrants. That's where they buy their clothes, in fact. We had set up a costume department in the former De Paolis Studios, and we started dying, repairing and ageing the garments. We finally had the actors at the end of July, and I was able to study the clothes on them.



When a film takes place in the present it is difficult to do sketches, unless you get precise indications from the director. *Once You're Born* is a realistic movie on which my work consisted mainly of documentation and collecting as much clothing as possible. The illegal immigrants had to stay on the boat for a month, so they couldn't use their own clothes. I had to dress them as if it were a costume picture. If I saw something that inspired me for the young trio while I was looking for clothes for the various ethnic groups, I got it and put it aside. I created sets of garments: Alina's set, Radu's set ... The more "material" you have the more confident you feel, because you have a wider selection to propose to the director. Then we had everyone try on the clothes. There are always surprises at that stage, some things work, others not.

Clothes tend to reflect the spirit of the person who wears them. A certain dress on a young girl can make her look older, another can have the opposite effect. Without the actors our work is simply theoretical. When you have a fitting together with the director, the two of you may often see things differently. That hardly ever happened on this film: Marco Tullio is very meticulous; he tells you things; he brings you into

his world. It's great for a costume designer to work on a story like this, in which the characters are transformed and you can accentuate this with the costumes. For instance, Alina's transformation in the finale. It has to shock: after seeing her dressed in rags, dirty, her hair always unwashed during the entire journey on the boat and at the centre, we meet up with her again in that awful place in the finale, with suede kneeboots, miniskirt, her navel showing, and heavily made up like a Lolita. It upset me to doll her up like that, but unfortunately that's what almost always happens to those girls.

The ageing of the garments was done very thoroughly. Marco Tullio likes things to look real – the clothes would never have been washed if he had had his way! We took out the colour, faded them and re-dyed them. The more time you have for ageing the better it turns out, the more authentic it looks. To create the salt marks, we constantly wetted the clothes with sea water. We also continued to age them during filming on the boat, because they always looked brighter in the sunlight, they never seemed washed out enough. On the set, when you see the battered, peeling boat, the extras' faces, and where they're placed, you add the finishing touches because you know how far you can go.

How do these "self-made" people from Brescia dress? The local middle-class doesn't hide its wealth like the bourgeoisie once did. On the contrary, they flaunt it and clothes are as much of a status symbol as a car or a beautiful home. They all know each other, they feel more protected than in the city, where they prefer to "blend". I went with Marco Tullio to Brescia to meet Matteo Gadola and his parents. They weren't identical to the characters in the film, but close. I walked around the city centre, looked at the shop windows, studied the passers by. The security men in the stores looked at me askance, but it was a great help in understanding the city's style.

Maria Rita Barbera was born in Messina and gained a diploma at the art school there. She graduated in production design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, later working as assistant costume designer with Marco Ferreri, (Piera's Story, The Future is Woman), Marco Bellocchio (The Eyes, the Mouth and Henry IV), Nanni Moretti (The Mass Is Ended).

As Costume designer she signed: *Italian Night* by Carlo Mazzacurati, *Disamistade* by Gianfranco Cabiddu, *Il prete bello* by Carlo Mazzacurati, *Red Wood Pigeon* by Nanni Moretti, *The Yes Man* by Daniele Luchetti, *Another Life* by Carlo Mazzacurati, *Arriva la bufera* by Daniele Luchetti, *Dear Diary* by Nanni Moretti, *School* by Daniele Luchetti, *Little Teachers* by Daniele Luchetti, *The Son's Room* by Nanni Moretti, *Apple of My Eye* by Giuseppe Piccioni, *Ginger and Cinnamon* by Daniele Luchetti, *La vita che vorrei* by Giuseppe Piccioni, *Te lo leggo negli occhi* by Valia Santella.

## roberto forza director of photography

This is the third film Marco Tullio and I have made together, so we know each other really well now, and this helps us to work out what we want to do. There are three main photographic/narrative situations: the first one in Brescia (introduction of the characters); the second in the Mediterranean (the sea journey, the landing, the immigrant centre); and the third in the North again, but in a more wintry, psychologically cold context. I felt that each of these situations needed a different atmosphere. In the first part in Brescia – the film has just begun, the director does not want to show his hand yet – diffused and reflected light predominates. No side-light, no back lighting. The cold northern light but without this coldness becoming dramatic.

After the scout on Malta, Marco Tullio was not all that keen on the idea of the surface water tank, and decided to film everything at sea, also encouraged by the fact that our general manager Gianfranco Barbagallo is a keen yachtsman, and therefore would not overlook a single detail, above all with regard to safety. We chose the Gulf of Gallipoli precisely because the position of the peninsula on which the city stands – with a small island right in front that protects it from strong currents – would allow us to shoot even with a strong wind. After doing a long series of tests, we decided to shoot the night scenes without any artificial light, using the well-known “day for night” process. It works like this: you shoot with back lighting and underexpose the negative by at least two stops, then you do a further correction in the lab. How many times have we seen John Wayne springing down from his horse, in silhouette, on a bright night illuminated by the full moon in John Ford’s glorious westerns! They were filmed with the sun high in the sky (they couldn’t have done it if it had been cloudy) by underexposing the film and correcting the excessive brightness of the sky with special filters. Nowadays, digital technologies actually make it possible to shoot with a normal exposure and to do the corrections later, during post-production, which gives you more control over everything ...

We used an almost documentary technique for the immigrants’ landing, however. There were the normal lights of the port – I merely strengthened them – and the flashing lights on the police cars. All the other light sources were part of the scene: the headlights of the cars, the ambulance lights and the carabinieri (military police) vans. We had three units, each filming independently. There were hundreds of walk-ons, real police, real carabinieri, real coastguards, real harbour office employees, real Red Cross workers and real Misericordia volunteers. The immigrants were also real, all recruited in the area. We filmed it like a reportage. I had a camera myself, and while I was shooting I felt the adrenalin pumping like it did when I was a young newscameraman. At the centre, I based



myself on the lighting typical of these structures, using big fluorescent lights attached to the ceiling, and adding very little to boost them. I prefer not to alter the natural state of things too much. I try to intervene only where necessary. I don’t think the photography should “show”.

Roberto Forza was born in Rio de Janeiro on 26 September 1957. His most important films are: *The Price of Victory* (1993) by Alberto Sironi, *Diary of a Rapist* (1994) by Giacomo Battiato, *Follow Your Heart* (1995) by Cristina Comencini, *Silenzio si nasce* (1995) by Giovanni Veronesi, *Esercizi di stile* (1996), episodes by Dino Risi, Mario Monicelli, Luigi Magni, Sergio Citti, *The Cyclone* (1996) by Leonardo Pieraccioni, *The Octopus 8* (1997) by Giacomo Battiato, *The Octopus 9* (1998) by Giacomo Battiato, *Più leggero non basta* (1998) by Elisabetta Lodoli, *Marriages* (1998) by Cristina Comencini, *Liberate i pesci* (1999) by Cristina Comencini, *The Hundred Steps* (2000) by Marco Tullio Giordana, *Nati stanchi* (2001) by Dominick Tambasco, *Break Free* (2002) by Gianluca Maria Tavarelli, *The Best of Youth* (2003) by Marco Tullio Giordana, *Stork Day* (2003) by Giulio Manfredonia, *Paolo Borsellino* (2004) by Gianluca Maria Tavarelli.







## roberto missiroli editor

Marco Tullio began to talk to me about this film while he was still developing it, and from the way he first told the story, I sensed it would be very different from his previous movies, with a rather elaborate narrative dimension. Marco Tullio shot a great deal of material for this film, making it possible to organize the story in very different ways. Material like the almost “documentary” footage – such as the landing sequences or those on the dilapidated boat, which did not follow a precise narrative structure. We had to find a “thread” right away, to extract from the hundreds of takes a story, an emotional quality, a meaning that although well-described in the screenplay was not immediately evident in the material.

For the first time I found myself working near the set, and far from the usual Rome studios: Marco Tullio had asked me to stay by him not only to speed up the editing, but also to give him more control over what he was filming. Since he was improvising a lot – because he was working with kids and various non-professional actors – he wanted to make sure he didn’t go off track. By screening the material right away, he was able to make all the corrections that he felt were necessary, there and then. The fact that the scenes were shot in sequence gave you the idea of progressing, you had everything clearer in your head, you felt reassured, because you saw the narrative developing naturally. Other parts were based on glances, silences, and required more effort to construct, such as the sequence in which the boy falls into the sea at night – which marks a distinct change of register. A tremendous amount of material was filmed for that sequence, enough to make a movie in itself! With the editing it was a question of finding the right emotional atmosphere to communicate the boy’s feeling of being abandoned, and the anguish that seizes him when he realizes the others don’t know he’s missing, and will not be coming back for him.

At first, I saw the film in a more “romantic” key; now I think it’s more realistic while still maintaining a novelistic quality. But that of a contemporary novel: terse, incisive, no adjectives. Not of a nineteenth-century saga, like the *The Best of Youth*. The sparing use of music also helped us to create that feeling, which reflects the epic quality of the story but never descends to melodrama.

On average, kids express their feelings very clearly. For instance, Matteo Gaddolà is a very good actor, with an amazing naturalness in front of the camera. If he’s tired, he has no professional technique to help him hide it; he’s transparent, like glass. With a professional actor, on the other hand, it is perhaps more difficult not to be deceived when he uses his experience, the “tricks of the trade” to cover a moment of distraction during the scene he is performing.



It is on such nuances that editing feeds and, as I said, they are easier to detect in a child actor.

Roberto Missiroli was born in Ravenna on 22 August 1954. His most important films are: *L'albero della vita* by Abdul Kadir Shaid Amed, *Corsa di primavera* by Giacomo Campiotti, *Towards Evening* by Francesca Archibugi, *Adelaide* by Lucio Gaudino, *La conchiglia* by Abdul Kadir Shaid Amed, *Traditori del tempo* by Gherardo Fontana, *The Cherry Orchard* by Antonello Aglioti, *The Great Pumpkin* by Francesca Archibugi, *Per non dimenticare* by Massimo Martelli, *Barnabo of the Mountains* by Mario Brenta, *Like Two Crocodiles* by Giacomo Campiotti, *Carogne – Ciro and Me* by Enrico Caria, *Making a Film for Me Is to Live* by Enrica Fico Antonioni (special on *Beyond the Clouds* by M. Antonioni), *Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo* by Enza Negroni, *Vite blindate* by Alessandro De Robilant, *Il guerriero Camillo* by Claudio Bigagli, *La ballata del lavavetri* by Peter Del Monte, *Muzungu* by Massimo Martelli, *A Time to Love* by Giacomo Campiotti, *The Hundred Steps* by Marco Tullio Giordana, *The Comeback* by Franco Angeli, *Pasolini – le ragioni di un sogno* by Laura Betti, *Angela* by Roberta Torre, *The Best of Youth* by Marco Tullio Giordana, *Il vestito della sposa* by Fiorella Infascelli, *Per sempre* by Alessandro di Robilant, *Saimir* by Francesco Munzi.

## maria pace ottieri writer

Sandro, the boy, is a strong character who holds the film together. Matteo Gadola was an excellent choice; there is not a single moment when he strikes a false note. The immigrant invasion was a risky theme. For instance, immigrants have now become an accepted part of TV fiction, as an element typical of our times. There is always one who represents the category, in a rather pathetic walk-on part. Marco Tullio's movie is completely different because the immigrants are the real protagonists, over and above the narrative pretext. They are not rhetorical; they do not fit any sentimental idea we may have of them.

The opening scene with the non-European who breaks down serves to introduce the title of the film, which also expresses its essential meaning: *Once You're Born*, taken from the title of my book *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (*Once You're Born You Can No Longer Hide*). In other words, every person must and can find their place in the world, we are all equal. Being born in Italy is not a virtue, being born in Sudan is not a crime. That character who loses control embodies all the difficulties, the wounds and the endless obstacles inherent in the encounter between an individual from another country and a society like ours, which is so complex and multifaceted. He is someone who hasn't made it, who may have just arrived or who may have

been here for some time but is throwing in the sponge.

The Milanese "Korea" in the film is an area like the barracks in Palermo or the case di ringhiera (large housing estate) I describe in my book. Completely "new" environments in the city, where immigrants have taken over abandoned areas and converted them to meet their own desperate needs. These areas are often demolished to construct new buildings. The setting for the finale is inspired, as well as being something completely new in cinema.

Brescia is one of the cities that has absorbed most immigrants. The few remaining industries in Italy are concentrated around Brescia. Whether they are giants like Iveco or small factories with a few dozen workers, the work force is now almost entirely composed of immigrants. The new inhabitants of the city are Africans, Moroccans and Senegalese. This can be seen from the number of their children in the schools, which increases exponentially every year. A considerable number have integrated, not only in the sense that they have their papers in order but also that they have become part of society while managing to keep their own traditions alive. For example, the Senegalese have their own church in Pontevico, and every year they gather there in vast numbers to celebrate a June festival. The same can be said for the Pakistanis, Indians and Sikhs. Legal immigration is as important as illegal immigration.

The character played by Alessio Boni is really believable. The blue-collar who has worked his way up and become a factory owner, and who therefore says to his employees: "You've got a long way to go. I started from the bottom like you, and I've got this far." He is a typical Northern Italian small-time businessman. His son, on the other hand, is the film's conscience, the only one who asks himself questions about the immigrants as people, even before he falls into the sea.

I have always thought that the inhabitants of our country were ahead of national policies. There is no absence of conflict where immigrants are concerned, but a natural, though slow, osmosis, appears to be underway. From the children at school to the interdependence between families and migrants. I continue to think this and to hope that it will always be the case. Although we have a narrow-minded, short-sighted government and a Bossi-Fini law on immigration that certainly doesn't help, maybe in the space of a couple of generations people's mentality will change. Notwithstanding this, there will always be an increasingly larger gap between those who arrive illegally now, when legislation has become more strict, and those who have been in Italy for some time and have started to buy their own house with a mortgage, and have children at school who speak Italian.

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