

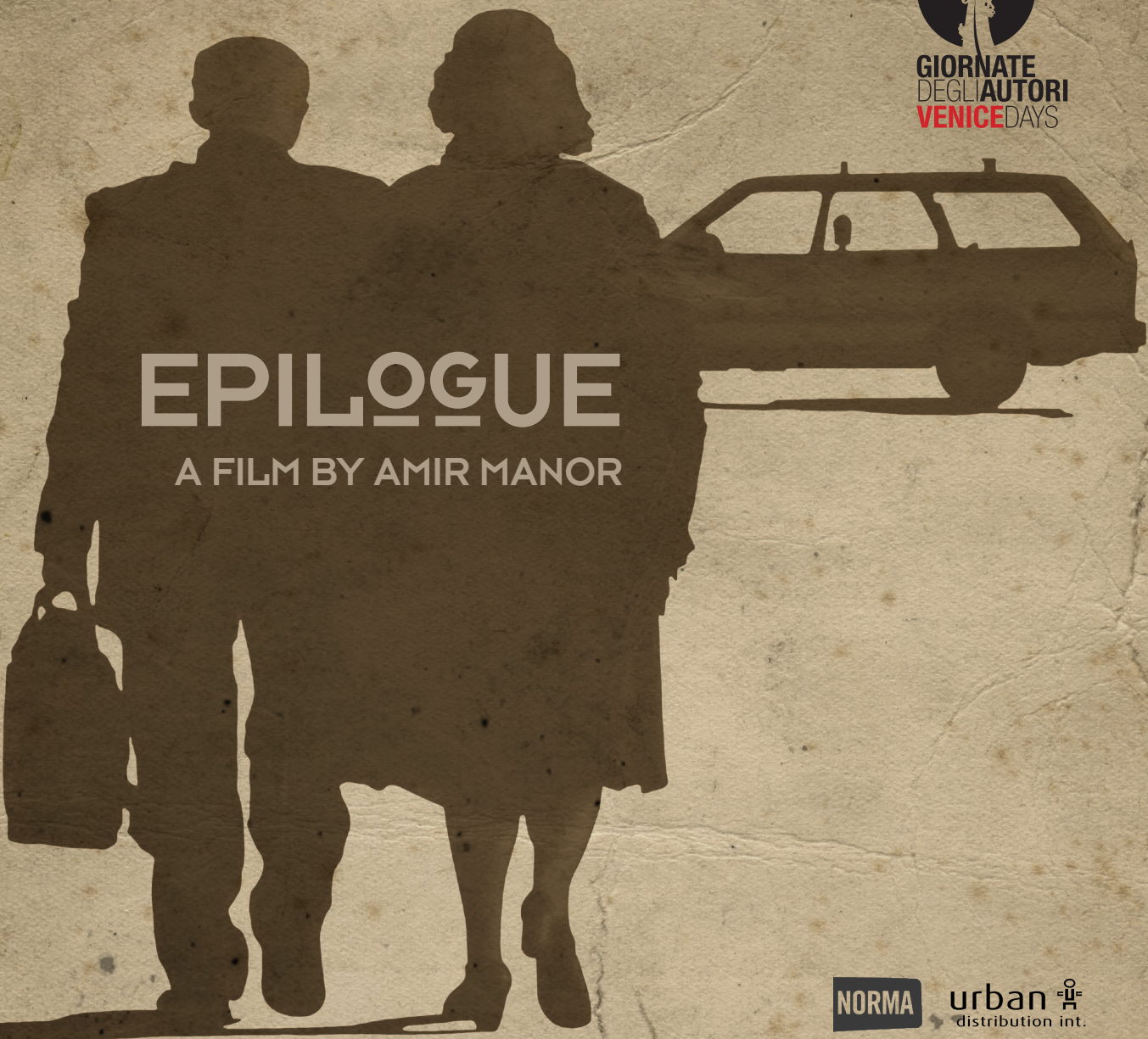
NORMA PRODUCTIONS - ASSAF AMIR PRESENT

YOSEF CARMON

RIVKA GUR



GIORNATE  
DEGLI AUTORI  
VENICE DAYS



# EPILOGUE

A FILM BY AMIR MANOR

NORMA

urban  
distribution int.



# SYNOPSIS

Hayuta and Berl, an elderly couple, find it hard to adjust to today's Israel and to the social changes surrounding them. After years of struggle, the two refuse to let go of their communal dreams, and of their revolutionary plans to build a welfare state in Israel. During a night of painful disillusionment, the two decide to leave their apartment for a last journey.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Three years ago I lost both my grandparents to cancer. Both were, for me, living models of the greatness of human spirit, and left a huge void. To the pain of their departure, more pain was added, when I saw how, in their hour of distress and anguish they were forced to realize the illusion of their most cherished beliefs. The solidarity nurtured by their lifelong work was swept away by personal interests. Joint responsibility, caring for others, reciprocity – all these were swept away by blind and alienated consumption relations, and despicable bureaucracy.

This isn't only a personal story. The film presents a painful portrayal of old age in Israel. The feelings of transparency, loneliness, being a burden, trampled upon honor, and lack of a sense of belonging, have become a great distress which stems from society's attitude to its past and founders. The physical and mental state of the elderly is but a symptom of the spiritual state of a society that sheds all its moral treasures, a society addicted to profits, personal benefits and interests, that completely neglects its weaker segments, and in this case, its very own founders and creators.



# IN CONVERSATION WITH AMIR MANOR



**EPILOGUE** is simultaneously a film about society and the intimate portrait of a couple - How did you work to establish the balance and coexistence between these two levels of the story?

The intimate relationship between Hayuta and Berl, their common desperation, the private anguish, the alienation they feel, together and individually, are born from their sober look at the harsh reality they encounter at the end of their lives, after they created themselves in and from this reality. That reality depicts their life's work and the mark they have made on history in terms of failure, disappointment and cessation. That sober look brings their lives and their togetherness into question, and does away with the meaning and significance of lives lived and almost gone. One cannot understand the personal story of Hayuta and Berl, socialist pioneers, among the founders of the state of Israel, without being aware of the national narrative of Israel, which was written by Hayuta and Berl's bare hands. They both believed that their personal fulfillment is interwoven with Israel's social health, with the state's communal spirit. They believed that existential meaning depends on social activity, that the individual is no more than an isolated, meaningless, privatized atom. The separation between the private and social sphere is akin to erecting an artificial barrier in an organic living creature, which tries to recreate itself from the Diaspora, from the foreignness that surrounded them before immigrating to the land of Israel. This complete identification of the social and the personal has the effect of transforming Hayuta and Berl's moral and social convictions into intimate, personal beliefs. This is therefore an expression of the intimate relationship between life and its meaning, life and its creation. The state of Israel was established as part of an effort to create a new society, one that would not be taken for granted. It was an authentic rebellion against the familiar, alienated, exiled way of life. This intimate connection between their personal story and Israel's story, between their personal fulfillment and emotional connection to the state's newfound character, converts the disappointment in their failure to disappointment in the communality, and to a deeper disappointment in themselves. Their personal story becomes one with the story of a society that has renounced its original values and the idealism that established its institutions, paved its roads and constructed its buildings; the very same ideals that claimed the lives of dozens of pioneers who died of hunger and sickness, sacrificing their lives for the establishment of the state of Israel.

# IN CONVERSATION WITH AMIR MANOR (CONT.)

The relationship between Hayuta and Berl is depicted with remarkable depth and intimacy - from their health issues to family tensions and mutual resentment. What was the process for developing these characters and making them so convincing?

The writing of the screenplay was a complex process that included social criticism of Israeli society and its extreme changes, from a social-democratic welfare state to a capitalist society privatizing itself to death. But it also drew from the sad, painful observation of my grandparents' dying days. Both had cancer and felt that as they grew older, they became transparent, superfluous, a burden on the shoulders of the very society they created and praised. One day, as I was writing, my late grandmother sat next to me, and in a moment of heartbreaking honesty, admitted that her greatest pain was that she felt useless, transparent and marginal. She explained that since economic value is the only criteria determining the individual's presence, power and value, she has become a marginal component of the social fabric. When she enters a store, a pharmacy or a supermarket, the attitude she encounters, being a value-less economic factor, is degrading, as if she were but an annoying fly, no more. The personal value accumulated by years of life experience, by years of giving and doing for society, contributing and creating, is meaningless in the new world of economic objectification. This painful process observing my grandparents, and the immense inner pain they felt as they grew older all the way until their sad death, made me understand that the film isn't only about poverty or sickness, but a film about loneliness, identity crisis, abandonment and feelings of transparency. The amazing love that my grandparents shared, the love that gave them the strength to overcome pain and struggle with death, with the past, and with their sense of failure, offered me an opportunity to take a deep look at unique people that even as death approached, when reality turned its back on them and everything they represented, continued to cling to their beliefs, their philosophy, their sensitivity - their love for humanity and for each other.

Hayuta and Berl needed to carry the film from start to finish, so this was really an essential casting decision. How did you decide on Rivka Gur and Yosef Carmon for the roles? Did the actors you chose play a role in defining Hayuta and Berl and their relationship?

I was familiar with Yosef Carmon's work in film and theatre and I knew that he was the right person to portray Berl. His size, sensitivity, facial expressions and deep dedication to his profession, as well as his authentic excitement for the materials that make up life, allow him to portray true sensitivity without any effort or automated gestures. Yosef Carmon creates himself from within a character, as a result of his authentic enthusiasm for the character's path and inner world. I wasn't acquainted with Rivka Gur until I met her at a café. When we met, I asked her if she was ready to perform the nude scenes in the screenplay. She smiled at me, raised her dress above her head, exposing her body and said, "That's what I've got." At that moment I understood that her courage and daring is exactly Hayuta's courage and daring. Rivka Gur took on Hayuta's character in an admirable manner, driven by a deep wish to understand her pain and identify with her place in the world. Rivka gradually explored the character until she was breathing from within her, and Hayuta became an inseparable part of her. During this working process I identified Hayuta in Rivka, in her sensitivity, expressions, generosity, humility and professionalism. Working with Gur and Carmon, a process that included endless rehearsals of each and every scene, was a significant learning experience, during which we all got deeply acquainted with the characters.

The harsh social realism of your film is contrasted with moments of humour - in particular Berl's incompatibility with the modern world, which seems to echo Buster Keaton or Jacques Tati. Did you have any such references in mind when you shot the film?

There are several gestures in the film that try to create a dialogue between the past and the present, between significant historical moments of Israeli culture and international cinema and the lost figures of Hayuta and Berl, characters constructed from various historical layers, and their relationship with the modern, alienated reality in which they function. The tribute to Silent Film is a tribute to the power of the past, a tribute to the emotions of old age, a tribute to Berl. There are other gestures and tributes, such as allusions to the "Cameri Five," a biting political TV sketch program in the 1990's in Israel. In the scene where the neighbor abuses Berl, actor Shay Avivi refers to the characters and style he himself depicted in the program, creating a satire of Israel society. This gesture is, in fact, a form of yearning for the days when political criticism was essential for getting ratings, essential for the belief in hope. In some cases humor was used to generate emotional ambiguity, representing the conflicts the viewers experience in real life: between a funny old couple that talks and sounds like impulsive old people, and can appear to be a humorous anecdote, and the meaning and significance behind that humor: degrading questioning at the Social Security Institute, abuse by alienated, cold hurrying youngsters, and so forth. The psychological mechanism moves the viewer between laughter and guilt, between comedy's devotion to tragedy's anxiety.

# IN CONVERSATION WITH AMIR MANOR (CONT.)

You have also worked as a journalist covering Israeli society for major national newspapers. Did your experience as a reporter contribute to the themes in EPILOGUE? Do you think there is a sense of profound disillusionment broadly affecting Israeli society and culture?

My experience as a journalist and educator helped me undercover many themes in Hayuta and Berl. My deep acquaintance with Israeli culture and the economic and cultural changes affecting Israeli society in recent decades, made me realize that these extreme changes have caused many people to abandon national solidarity, which was the cornerstone of the young state. These changes led many to renounce common responsibility and communal action and assume narcissistic individuality, a privatization of the consciousness that puts the individual and his needs in the center, as opposed to society and common responsibility. This change in ideals is the product of political processes that transferred the political power from the socialist left to the capitalist right, from social-democratic solidarity to selfish beastly capitalism. These changes place the weaker segments of society at the bottom of the political list of preferences, place a burden of taxes on the middle class and transform community and common responsibility into a troublesome burden, rather than responsible action for the common good. This damning point of view made me realize that Hayuta and Berl's story is a national story as well as a personal narrative. Their distress isn't purely personal but reflects on society as a whole. Their sense of failure reflects on our failure as a society, and brings a sense of hopelessness about our common future.

Nearly all Israeli films seem to portray some aspects of either the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the role religion plays in society, but both are absent from EPILOGUE. Could Hayuta and Berl live in any country - or is this a genuinely Israeli story?

Hayuta and Berl's story could only happen in Israel. This is an intimate lament about a uniquely moral society's downfall, and its blending into the western capitalist world in the era of globalization. Israel is one of the youngest states in the world, established from the ruins of the western world following WWI, while anti-Semitism and totalitarian fascism were gaining power, and until the aftermath of the holocaust and WWII. This was an effort to create an authentic rebellion by a new young Jewish generation, educated according to Enlightenment values. This generation decided to merge this education with its unique identity, and create a new Jew who doesn't become assimilated but doesn't isolate himself, one who doesn't adhere to blind faith in God, and who is also wary of the European Bourgeoisie. This new generation tried to create a new Jew based on Jewish roots, and create a new society based on equality and liberty. This rebellion gave birth to one of the most interesting experiments in history, the kibbutz, the national labor union and the Israeli welfare state. This unique experiment was born from the integration of the experience of distress in the Diaspora and the need to create a new identity, as well as a new Jewish-Zionist identity, based on Jewish roots while reinterpreting these roots in an active, creative fashion. This film is the story of the failure of one of the most unique historical experiments, as reflected in Israeli society.

The film is in a certain sense a *J'accuse* like manifesto against modern society and the way it places economics and profit before humanity and basic values. Is EPILOGUE connected to the growing global dissatisfaction with ultra-capitalism and consumerist culture?

EPILOGUE was written long before the beginning of the Israeli rebellion against capitalism. It was written in the period when it became clearer that the gap between the common past and the privatized future flings the new generation to the margins, sentencing young people to despair or leaving them no option but emigration. The image of the privatized reality began to emerge to a comprehensive image of reality, revealing the personal distress and causing the significant comprehension that the poverty isn't private but rather public, thus giving birth to the solidarity of spirit that sparked the protest, reawakening common responsibility against profits, against beastly capitalism, against the wages of senior officials against financial speculation, against withered budgets and the once-obvious measures that damaged the weakest. Suddenly people began to realize that the supermarkets do not, in fact, offer a true variety of choice, since the freedom to choose between thirty brands of shampoo and forty different DVD players, does not represent true freedom. The masses understood that economics isn't a sphere reserved for senior economists alone, but rather a significant tool in designing our lives and our consciousness. This realization sparked the spontaneous current that shook the streets and rattled the political establishment. One cannot say that we already feel the results of the movement in our daily lives. Affordable housing is still but a dream for most of Israeli young people, making a respectable living is still a fleeting hope for most Israelis. The Israeli government still ignores the social spirit that was born in the poverty neighborhoods and still prefers the support of the lobbyists and large corporations to the interests of the public, but we hope that the change in consciousness that began in the recent revolutionary movement, while we all sweated together in the streets of Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem and Be'er Sheva last summer, will be reflected in the upcoming elections, and in a change in the moral codes dictating economic policies and class solidarity in our society.



# AMIR MANOR

Amir Manor, director and scriptwriter, grew up in Rishon Lezion (Israel). At the age of 18 he went on a year's service on behalf of "Ha Noar Haoved Ve Halomed", a socialist youth movement, in which his beliefs and ideologies were sculpted. He took part in educational enterprises of the movement and in communal groups across Israel. At 25 he left the movement to Jerusalem, where he worked as a social-financial journalist at "Kol Ha'ir" magazine. Later on he left to Tel Aviv's "Ha'ir" magazine. After two years he joined the Israeli 60 minutes "Uvda" as a journalist and worked for "Ma'ariv" – one of the big daily newspapers in Israel. Amir is a graduate of the Film & Television Department at Tel Aviv University. His first film *Reds* (40 minutes) won the first prize for the Best Drama at the Jerusalem Film Festival 2007. *Epilogue* is his first feature film.

## FILMOGRAPHY

### **Epilogue** (2012)

Narrative Feature, 96 min. Writer and Director.

### **Lands** (2008)

Narrative Short, 28 min. Director.

### **Ruin** (2008)

Narrative Short, 47 min. Writer and Director.

### **Reds** (2007)

Narrative Short, 40 min. Writer and Director.

Winner of Best Drama at the Jerusalem Film Festival, 2007

### **Pouring Sun** (2006)

Narrative Short, 30 min. Writer and Director.

# NORMA PRODUCTIONS

Norma productions was established by producer Assaf Amir in 1995. Amir's debut production, *Chronicle of a Disapperance* by director Elia Suleiman, won the Luigi De Laurentiis Award at the Venice Film Festival 1996.

Since then, the company's productions have won five Israeli Academy Awards, four Best Film awards at Jerusalem Film Festival, and an array of awards in international festivals.

Norma Productions' titles include:

**Broken Wings** by Nir Bergman (Grand Prix at the Tokyo International Film Festival 2003, Panorama Audience Award, Berlinale Film Festival 2004)

**The Cemetery Club** by Tali Shemesh (doc. Nominated for the European Film Academy Award)

**What a Wonderful Place** by Eyal Halfon (Grand Jury Prize at Karlovy Vary Film Festival)

**Intimate Grammar** by Nir Bergman (winner of the 2010 Tokyo Grand Prix)

**Fill the Void** by Rama Burshtein (Venice Film Festival 2012, Competition)

**NORMA**

# CAST

Yosef Carmon - Berl  
Rivka Gur – Hayuta

Efrat Ben Zur  
Itay Turgeman  
Shai Avivi  
Natan Zehavi  
Yaron Brovinski  
Hagar Ben Asher  
Rotem Keinan  
Efrat Aviv

# CREW

Written And Directed by  
Producer  
Associate Producers

Production Company  
in association with  
Cinematographer  
Editor

Production Design  
Art Director

Original Music Composed by

Amir Manor  
Assaf Amir  
Adar Shafran  
Roni Abramowsky  
Norma Productions  
Firma Productions  
Guy Raz  
Iris Ozer  
Rotem Cohen, Barak Vazan  
Oren Hanan  
Ruth Dolores Weiss

Israel 2012 / 96 min / 1.85 / 5.1 SR / Hebrew



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