

# Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February at 7:30 pm

**El pastor** (2016) Spain

The Shepherd

15 | 1h 38min

**Director**; Jonathan Cenzual Burley

**Stars**; Maribel Iglesias, Miguel Martin, Alfonso Mendiguchia

A self-sufficient shepherd's home and way of life is threatened when property developers take an interest in his land. Anselmo, a stubborn and uncompromising man, will not be pushed or harried into anything he does not want to do, and the film plays out as a painful warning that some characters will react rather than be pushed.



**Jonathan Cenzual Burley: interview; Coney's Loft. Noel Loade**

**Q. *The Shepherd* seems to be a reflection on the nature of greed and the effect that greed has on individuals. Is that accurate?**

It's a critique on greed and abuse of power. Particularly inherited power: people who just think that they are above you because they have this God-given right to tread on you. Anselmo [*The Shepherd's* protagonist] finds that, when he refuses to sell his land to a corporation, his neighbours who he has known for years, and are selling their properties, have no problem with bullying him out of his own home in order to see the deal through. It's also a kind of threat of what happens when you push people. Basically, you'd better be careful who you bully because that person might turn around and shoot you right in the face!

**Do you see *The Shepherd* as a western?** Yes and no, it definitely has aspects of the modern western. I didn't exactly set out to make one but the similarities didn't happen by coincidence either. Westerns always seem to deal with a capital sin, like the effects of greed, envy, thievery and *The Shepherd* is very much like that, it's got a very straightforward code; if you do this, this is what happens. The entire film in many ways is a duel between good and evil.

**Q. Another trope of that genre is civilization's struggle against the frontier; against nature. In this film, it's more like nature's struggle against civilization.**

A couple of people in Q&As and articles have said about how this film goes against progress. But it's nothing like that. It's rallying against the fact that the wrong type of people can embellish or dress up greed and pure personal gain in the name of progress. The company in the film tells the people that their project is going to make the village better but their bulldozing the village completely and keeping all profits for themselves. Case in point, somebody sent me a video about Donald Trump wanting to expand his Golf course in Scotland (Aberdeenshire) and the Scottish guy was like "Trump can take his money and shove it up his arse!".

Trump did the same thing we see in *The Shepherd*: he started to try to discredit this man, saying he's dirty, he's a pig, he's all by himself, but he wasn't and ultimately this guy won. That's the biggest "fuck you" to a bully, and to the biggest bully on the planet right now.

**Q. Indeed, there is parallel to be drawn with *The Shepherd* and the rise of Donald Trump. 'Happy coincidence'?**

It was very timely. I wrote the script while traveling in India about two years ago. When you're in a place like that you may see and hear things that have a level of unjustness and a smack of dictatorship or corruption about them and it doesn't necessarily shock you. I came back to Spain and found that I was noticing corruption and greed all over, it was rampant. In the West, we seem to just allow it and not only that, many people measure their success on what is effectively misleading and stealing from people. These people aren't exactly bad, but everybody is being used and the nastier people by definition come out on top. However, I do think that most people are good. It sounds a bit optimistic, you know, but some people generally just read one angle into things, one newspaper, one news source, only seeing one side of what is often a very complicated state of affairs. They're not all bad. I mean the guys dressed in the KKK outfits definitely are but other than that it's just ignorance. People are pissed off at complex and one-sided systems of government and that allows corrupt people to come out with simple messages to mask an ulterior motive: "Make America Great Again" or that whole anti-immigration rhetoric running through the Brexit campaigns. It's very easy to control people with fear, and right now everyone's scared. That fear has become currency. Edited Alex O'Reilly

