



MARA BEGINS

STORY

During swimming trials, Mara is left behind on a rock in the ocean, the others swimming confidently through the choppy, freezing water to shore, Mara must decide whether to let fear hold her back or if she too can take this leap of faith.

And leap she does. Upon making it to the shore, and back to her mother Mara asks whether this place, her home, is the last piece of land on their flooded earth – and if they may soon have to leave it behind.

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The idea evolved as a prelude episode to Julie Bertagna's dystopian novel, *Exodus*, which follows the journey of a 15 year old girl as she, and her family, are forced to leave their home in tiny boats looking for a rumoured city that rises into the sky, as the sea continually rises around the world.

The narrative evokes topical conversations surrounding refugee crisis and the fate of our planet.



THEMES

FEAR

The film aims to explore, and visually create, the visceral fear of being overpowered by the sea – a common childhood experience, often synonymous with a growing realisation of mortality and selfdom.

In this moment Mara chooses a first act of independence – harnessing her power over fear – but also hints at the impending loss of the freedoms of childhood, her mother's fear.

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CHANGE

The role of the sea in culture represents, in complete contradiction, both danger and freedom – an implication being that one comes from, and with, the other.

Mara undergoes a baptism by nature; the sea transforms her understanding of her place in the world and of herself. She begins her growth from child to woman.

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WOMEN'S VOICES

A REACTION AGAINST DROWNING WOMEN

Frequent representations of women drowning in art, relegating women to the realm of the dead/ inanimate women – usually only young and beautiful – can be seen to illustrate patriarchal anxieties. This symbolic killing of women facilitates complete control over women's bodies and denounces female agency.

Giving Mara distinct decisions and actions, and a choice over her life (or death) specifically by choosing to swim, is a conscious decision to rewrite this passivity that art has previously given women. This agency over her own story marks her as the hero, not a victim, and reclaims female character development.

WOMEN'S VOICES

A MOTHER – DAUGHTER TALE

At its heart this is a generational story. The mother-daughter relationship plays a key role in building the tension and pathos of the narrative.

The mother experiences an 'Orpheus and Eurydice' decision, where, upon realising that two of children are swimming ahead, but her daughter is not, she almost looks behind to see where she is, but stops herself. If she looked and her daughter wasn't there, then all is lost. So she waits on the shore, with faith that her daughter can follow.

Written as a deaf character, after watching Jemma Joyce's beautiful half silent, half spoken performance in *To Know Him* (Short, 2018), the role of the mother evokes thematic questions around 'what do we pass on?', and linked to global warming - what kind of world are we leaving to the next generation?



VOICEOVER

I COME FROM THE SUNNY VALLEYS
AND SOUGHT FOR OPEN SEA,
FOR I THOUGHT IN IT'S GRAY EXPANSES
MY PEACE WOULD COME TO ME.

I CAME AT LAST TO THE OCEAN
AND FOUND IT WILD AND BLACK
AND I CALLED TO THE WINDLESS VALLEYS,
"BE KIND AND TAKE ME BACK!"

BUT THE THIRSTY TIDE RUSHED INLAND,
AND THE SALT WAVES DRANK OF ME,
AND I WHO WAS FRESH AS THE RAINFALL
AM BITTER AS THE SEA.

--- POEM BY SARA TEASDALE

The voiceover poem acts as the voice of the sea, and/or the voice of women from generations past.

Her tale echos the journey of our protagonist, Mara, and passes on ancient wisdom –
*'she also was changed by the world. In its hardness she gained strength, but laments the loss of
her idealism - it was that which let her to jump in the first place.'*

The double edge sword of change. Something is gained and something is lost.



DIRECTOR'S VISION

COLOUR PALETTE

The film begins with a stormy, grey-blue sea, dark and swirling. It crashes around Mara, a small figure – pale and shivering in the wide expanse. After her swim, the triumph, back on land, the sea waves gently and the evening landscape has turned a soft purple-blue.

Reference: *Another Earth* (2011), dir. Mark Cahill

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POETIC REALISM

Visuals and sound design are used to reflect the subconscious/ POV of the protagonist or character in focus, whilst the narrative remains, or feels, to reflect a realism of this world even where the genre or world is fictional.

Dystopic/ Sci Fi films that are grounded by realist aesthetic: *Children of Men*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Interstellar*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

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CHARACTERS

The heart of this story is it's characters and their journeys surrounding this small big moment. All filmic elements are the aid an internal understanding of the characters struggle.



MARA BEGINS
INSPIRED BY JULIE BERTAGNA'S NOVEL, *EXODUS*. WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY HANNAH ADEY

FEEL THE FEAR.
DO IT ANYWAY.