

Daniele Luchetti on Our Life

Natasha Lardera (November 11, 2011)



N.I.C.E. opened at the Anthology Film Archives in New York, with Luchetti's drama of contemporary Roman proletarian life. This is the story of one man, played by Elio Germano, and his struggle to rise above the compromises that beset him.

As his wife is about to give birth, Claudio (Elio Germano) is standing by the vending machine located in the hospital's waiting area. Through her gasps of pain, Elena (Isabella Ragonese) asks about her two other children, Samuel and Christian, "Are they in bed yet?" "Yes." Claudio lies. They all are excited about the arrival of baby Vasco, named after the couple's favorite singer, Vasco Rossi, yet something is not right. After waiting for hours, the initial energy is gone, the kids are half asleep and Claudio is uncertain on what to do.

He is approached by two nurses, they introduce themselves but their names are not important. "Is the baby born?" Claudio asks. "Let nurse Unknown take them to get some ice cream." As they walk away Claudio is given the news.

A family of four boys, one adult, two children, and a baby is at the center of La Nostra Vita (Our Life) Daniele Luchetti's film that has opened the 21st edition of [N.I.C.E.](#) [2], one of Italy's most prominent film festivals for Italian films made by young directors at their first or second experience, at the [Anthology Film Archives](#) [3] in New York.

Our Life (2010) is a drama that portrays personal hardship and social conflicts.

Claudio is a young construction worker of the Roman suburbs and after Elena's death he is not ready to make it on his own and tries to avoid the pain and loss by trying to provide his kids and himself with the goods they never had. He gets in trouble and when he realizes he can't get out by himself he is forced to call out on the people he trusts: his shy brother (Raoul Bova), his protective sister (Stefania Montorsi) and the drug dealer in his neighborhood (Luca Zingaretti).

"I am a devoted follower of realism," director Daniele Luchetti, in New York to introduce the film, explained to us, "Zavattini used to say 'follow your characters just like a spy,' and that's what I did. I wanted my story to be as real as possible. I did my research... I figured out how much money a family like Claudio's would make and so what apartment they could afford, in what area of the city... what clothes they would wear, anything to make this film as real as possible."

The same was done with the actors and Luchetti explained how "We basically had no rehearsals, as I wanted to capture the actors' first reactions to the events. I shot this film like a documentary, where I lead the actors in the direction I wanted them to go but then I just let them go, set them free." This is done effectively through extreme close ups that center of Germano's face, for example, in the toughest scenes of the film... when the nurses deliver the news and when, at the funeral, Claudio sings his and Elena's favorite Vasco song.

"I was not happy with the scene where Claudio is informed of Elena's passing. So I approached some real nurses and asked them how they deliver the sad news in real life. I then asked them to do the same with Elio. He is a very sensitive actor and the reaction you see on film was his first and only reaction. I wanted that authenticity."

Everything in the film speaks of authenticity. The idea of this story first occurred to the filmmaker after having shot a documentary in the projects of Ostia. "I wanted to set a story in that environment, and it took me two years to find this one."

Indeed, differently from Luchetti's previous films, Our Life, does not focus on politics or ideology but on reality. "After the fall of the Berlin Wall there was a depoliticization of Italians. Conflicts and ideologies were substituted by money and the quest for wealth. Claudio tries to suffocate his pain, and even his guilt, with money."

Money is at the heart of society, a society where prostitutes and drug dealers are good people, where racism does not exist because Luchetti believes "In the goodness of people and their ability to redeem themselves." And Claudio, does redeem himself.

For other N.I.C.E. screenings:

<http://www.i-italy.org/18590/21st-return-n-i-c-e-new-italian-cinema-events-nyc> [4]

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