



70th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Panorama

YILE YARA VIANELLO

JBA PRODUCTION OKTA FILM & RAI CINEMA PRESENT

a film by **DANILO CAPUTO**

SOW THE WIND

SEMINA IL VENTO



SYNOPSIS

NICA, 21, DROPS OUT OF HER UNIVERSITY COURSE IN AGRONOMICS AND RETURNS HOME TO APULIA IN SOUTHERN ITALY AFTER THREE YEARS AWAY. SHE FINDS HER FATHER DEEP IN DEBT, A POLLUTED, DEVASTATED REGION, AND OLIVE TREES DESTROYED BY A PARASITE. EVERYONE SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN UP IN THE FACE OF THE VAST ECOLOGICAL DISASTER, WHILE HER FATHER IS OBSESSED WITH UPROOTING THE OLIVE GROVE TO MAKE MONEY FROM THE LAND. NICA FIGHTS WITH ALL HER MIGHT TO SAVE THE ANCIENT TREES. BUT THE POLLUTION HAS ALSO CONTAMINATED PEOPLE'S MINDS, AND SHE WILL HAVE TO FACE UNEXPECTED OBSTACLES...

INTERVIEW WITH DANILLO CAPUTO

We are usually presented with a certain image of Puglia in the movies, but you portray the region very differently in your film *Semina il vento*.

I grew up in a small town near Taranto, and that's where I always go back to. It's my land, my home. It's a place of very harsh contrasts. Taranto has the Mediterranean scrubland, and the factory lights too; the sea, and smoke puffing into the sky; the traditional spring bonfires, and the flames of the oil refinery. There are little white houses here as well, but often they're right next to decaying concrete tower blocks. There's everything - beauty and horror, ancient traditions and industrialization - all in one place. These contrasting images are a part of me, they're under my skin now. The strong bond I feel with this region is the same bond felt by Nica, the main character in *Semina il vento*. But it's a painful relationship. In this place, nature is under attack...

Under attack?

Ten kilometres from my house is Europe's largest steel plant. "People would rather die of cancer than of hunger", says Nica at the beginning of the film. That phrase reflects a terrible situation, since after sixty years of pumping out pollution, the factory is now at risk of being shut down, leaving thousands of families out of work. At the same time tens of millions of olive trees are dying because they are infected with *Xylella*. Nobody can do anything about it and the bacteria is still spreading northwards, going as far as places such as Corsica and Spain. As if that weren't bad enough, the local mafia organizations are profiting from the farmers' desperate situation, by pouring toxic waste into their fields in exchange for cash. That's why I use the term "attack". It is nothing short of a war on nature.

But at the same time it seems to me that you wanted to go beyond current affairs.

My first reaction is anger. But I didn't want to make a film just to point the finger. I didn't want to make a film about pollution, or about *Xylella*, or about so-called eco-mafias. I wanted to make a film to try and understand how these situations are even possible. So, I tried to interpret the facts as the symptoms of something deeper.

And did you find an answer?

Yes. The pollution, the eco-mafias, the waste and rubbish that is invading the countryside: they are all linked together, all symptoms of the same paradigm. It's what I call "mental pollution". Paola says this too, in the film: "People here are polluted in the head". That's the only way that their behaviour can be explained.

What you mean by mental pollution?

It's this bizarre modern pathology. The formula goes like this: you take a man, his mind, and you convince him that he can use nature however he likes. Then let him believe that the peasant society was a huge mistake and that only industrial progress can make him happy. Make sure that this man forgets everything he previously knew how to do: farmers, blacksmiths, carpenters, all of them have to discard their past to go and work in the factory. Once your man has become completely dependent on a factory, now that he can no longer imagine a life without the factory, you tell him that the promises of happiness cannot be kept, that he'll have to make a few sacrifices. Resigned, cornered, that man will be willing to accept anything to save his job. He will be willing to poison his own land; he will

be willing to poison himself. That's what I call mental pollution.

What is Nica's outlook on life?

Nica grew up with her grandmother, a woman who was rumoured to be a witch. She learned everything she knows from her. And from her grandmother she inherited a peasant culture; but it no longer exists because it ended up buried beneath the dreams of industrialization. From the 1950s onwards, the values of industrialized Italy replaced old rural values; the Italian language as spoken on TV wiped out local dialects. Practices such as rural magic and 'tarantism' (a 'dancing hysteria' supposedly caused by tarantula bites) were dismissed as ridiculous superstitions that people should be ashamed of. It was a true "anthropological mutation", as Pasolini wrote as early as 1974. And it's starting from that extinct culture that Nica wants to build a different future. But her world view is destined to clash with that of her father, Demetrio. While Nica sees nature as the source of all life, for Demetrio it's nothing more than a cash machine to pump dry.

Nica tries to find antagonist insects to stop the infection from spreading...

That is "biological combat". All this is based on a very simple theory: in nature, every predator is also somebody else's prey. This theory has almost mythological overtones and inevitably recalls the relationship between Nica and her father, Demetrio.

...but Nica ends up being the one who has to become an antagonist...

Exactly, the film draws parallels between the world of insects and the world of humans. To me, an olive tree is more than a tree: it's a symbol in which my whole identity is bound up. When I was a boy, I liked to lie down beneath an olive tree and gaze up at the sky through its branches. So, I am profoundly moved by these millions of trees that have been shrivelled to death by *Xylella*. It is an apocalyptic image, one that never fails to move and upset me.



Nica has an astonishing relationship with nature. In some scenes she almost seems to be able to hear sounds on the very edge of perception. How did this idea come about?

As soon as we began writing, it became clear to me and my co-scriptwriter Milena Magnani that Nica would have to feel a visceral love for nature. It's just that we didn't know how to put that on screen. We didn't want our character to go around hugging trees. Then we realized that Nica's love for those trees must depend on her ability to listen to them. Listening as a sort of profound connection with the world. So, the creaking of their bark had to become a sort of natural language, a bridge between humans and nature. Nica listens to the world and we listen to it with her.

Is there an animistic element in the way in which Nica interacts with nature?

I believe that the first step towards really changing things is to stop thinking of nature as though it were something outside of us. We have to shake off this Cartesian vision. We are part of nature. Nica does not perceive those trees as objects but as subjects, like individuals capable of feeling, desiring, suffering, and communicating. So yes, she does have animistic beliefs. But at the same time, Nica is a scientist, and contemporary science maintains something that animism had already picked up on: namely, that animals, trees, even the tiniest plants have their own inner form of life

Yile Yara Vianello, the actress who plays Nica, really lights up this film. Where did you find her and how did you work with her?

It took us more than two years to find our Nica. Then, Marianne Dumoulin and Jacques Bidou remembered Yile, who at the age of just 11 had played the main character in *Corpo Celeste* by Alice Rohrwacher, which they had co-produced. As soon as I met Yile, who is 20 now, I knew she wasn't like the character I had always imagined, she was much more. My Nica was a more austere character, without any doubts or hesitancy, probably quite a boring character. Whereas Yile gave Nica a very rich inner life, she lent the character her own pace, her own hesitancy. Yile was brought up in an alternative community isolated in the mountains, and she has a truly intimate relationship with nature. There's something in the way she touches those trees that no other actress could have given us.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1984, Danilo Caputo grew up in a village near Taranto (Apulia, Italy). At 17, he left for the US where he studied classical music. Three years later, an arm injury forced him to quit music and move back to Europe. Quite lost, he began studying philosophy hoping to find some answers, but he found cinema instead. In 2008 he wrote and directed his first short film (*Polvere*). Others shorts followed (*Banduryst*, *Il Posto Fisso*). In 2011, he moved back to Apulia to shoot his first long feature *La Mezza Stagione* (*Late Season*), without any budget, with non-professional actors and a tiny but happy crew. The film premiered in 2014 in Karlovy Vary and was selected in various international festivals.

Following that adventure, Danilo moved to Paris where he found work as a postman in the 15th arrondissement. At the same time, he started working on what would become *Semina il Vento* (*Sow the Wind*). Coproduced between Italy, France and Greece, the shooting took place in the rusty countryside surrounding Taranto, in that very part of Italy that Danilo has been trying to escape for almost two decades, quite unsuccessfully. *Semina il vento* has premiered in Panorama at the 2020 Berlin Film Festival.



CAST

Nica **Yile Yara Vianello**
Paola **Feliciana Sibilano**
Rosa **Caterina Valente**
Demetrio **Espedito Chionna**



CREW

directed by **Danilo Caputo**
produced by **Jacques Bidou, Marianne Dumoulin, Paolo Benzi**
script **Danilo Caputo, Milena Magnani**
image **Christos Karamanis**
art **Federica Bologna**
sound **Maximilien Gobiet**
editing **Sylvie Gadmer**
sound design and mix **Peter Albrechtsen**
original music **Valerio Camporini F**

a coproduction **JBA Production (France), Okta Film (Italy), Graal Films (Greece)**
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developed with the support of **CNC and Mibact, Angoa, TorinoFilmLab, Atelier de Cannes.**

Italy, France, Greece | 2020 | 1h30 | DCP | Italian | 5.1 | 1.85 | Color

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