January 2024

In the Summers

Christopher R. Deacy

*University of Kent at Canterbury - U.K., c.deacy@kent.ac.uk*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf](https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf)

Part of the [Film and Media Studies Commons](https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf#collections/film-media-studies) and the [Women's Studies Commons](https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf#collections/womens-studies)

Please take our feedback survey at: [https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyfBLE](https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyfBLE)

**Recommended Citation**

Deacy, Christopher R. (2024) "In the Summers," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 28: Iss. 1, Article 44.

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.28.01.44](https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.28.01.44)

Available at: [https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol28/iss1/44](https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol28/iss1/44)

This Sundance Film Festival Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Religion & Film by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.
In the Summers

Abstract
This is a film review of *In the Summers* (2023), directed by Alessandra Lacorazza.

Creative Commons License
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

Author Notes
Chris Deacy is Reader in Theology and Religious Studies and former Head of Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK. His PhD (University of Wales, 1999) was in the area of redemption and film, and Chris has published monographs which include Christmas as Religion: Rethinking Santa, the Secular, and the Sacred (Oxford University Press, 2016); Screening the Afterlife: Theology, Eschatology and Film (Routledge, 2012); and Screen Christologies: Redemption and the Medium of Film (University of Wales Press, 2001). Chris also writes regular film reviews, is writing a book about nostalgia and religion and has been hosting a podcast since 2018 called Nostalgia Interviews with Chris Deacy - https://audioboom.com/channels/4956567

This sundance film festival review is available in Journal of Religion & Film: https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol28/iss1/44
In the Summers (2023), dir. Alessandra Lacorazza

*In the Summers* is a highly poignant tale of a father’s relationship with his daughters, told over a period of nearly twenty years, and the way his lack of responsibility and inability to really understand what their lives mean results in a sad dislocation. We never doubt that Vicente (Réne Pérez Joglar) cares for Violeta (Dreya Renae Castillo) and Eva (Luciana Quinonez) but we do feel that this is a man way out of his depth. Divorced, and living in New Mexico where the daughters come to visit in the summertime but who are otherwise based in California with their mother, *In the Summers* charts the way the daughters realize that their father will prioritize a beer, get drunk and then get angry, and then cause a further rupture, culminating in the second chapter with a car accident in which the three of them are lucky to escape with their lives.

The film is told in the form of four separate chapters as the girls grow up and are increasingly disillusioned but realistic as to what their father can offer. As they mature into young women, the irony is not lost on us that even as teenagers the girls have more emotional maturity
than he does, although their father does not entirely lose our sympathy. Nonetheless, an irreparable fissure has been opened up which is never fully re-sealed. The ultimate question for the filmmakers, and in turn the audience, is whether there can ever be forgiveness when there is so much emotional scarring. The girls make a pilgrimage which turns into a chore, and they learn how to keep their distance, but even as young women (graduates, not that Vicente has kept up) there are signs of affection and tenderness—albeit fleetingly—and we sense that there is hope, albeit one engendered by having lowered expectations.

The pace of this film is slow and languorous, but this gives us time to savor the subtle changes and reactions in the girls and the ways that they have had to come up with strategies to keep Vicente at arm’s length, just as much as he has done with them, to stop them from getting hurt further. We also see the vast difference of personality between the girls, tomboy Violeta and the more bashful Eva who craves her father’s attention but feels that her father doesn’t love her as much as he does her sister. We also see how they each seek a different sort of outcome to their summer visits.

Vicente has alcohol addiction problems and cannot find work, and his character is pretty static over the four chapters. He even has another daughter from a new relationship, which also doesn’t last, and it is the inevitability of life carrying on with no lessons learned (though by the fourth chapter he has given up alcohol and wants to use the money saved to pay for their plane ticket for the next summer, if indeed there will be another summer) that gives In the Summers such a melancholic underpinning. By the fourth chapter, the girls rent a house nearby so that they can visit their father on their own terms: their growth is palpably greater than his own, and it is this careful attention to detail that makes In the Summers such a highly impressive directorial debut from Alessandra Lacorazza Samudio.