

The Hindwing – Review

The short film of the author Christine Kettaneh successfully achieves the fusion of different perspectives and levels of storytelling, shifting between spaces and points of view, different arts of animation and the real footage.

Focusing on the one traumatic event of felling down an old family tree due to its demise by the parasites, the film re-interprets narrators experience from several different perspectives. The overall structure successfully incorporates numerous elements in creating a solid narrative tissue that draw its energy from constant shifting between different levels. The real footage features process of cutting down the tree, bit by bit, until the whole trunk is down. The precise framing offers us mostly only an outcrop of a whole picture, the perpetrator remains faceless, and his seemingly routine work is strongly contrasted by the absence of a sound, except for the background music. This impressionist approach is pointing towards an invisible observer, a witness to this silent tragedy, and author soon reveals his hideout: hidden in the depth of an empty attic, the invisible observer catches the glimpse of the falling pieces of bark and pines, peeps through the slits in the blinds. His presence enhances the emotional charge of these scenes: the author is not only present as a narrator in off, but also as a witness, helplessly watching from afar.

At this point another layer has been introduced, in form of an animation, presenting the invasion of the bark beetles that enter the stylized tree. During this process this stylized area grows bigger until it turns into its own interior, where the invading insects multiply and hatch. The numerous cocoons, stylized in shape, are shifting their position into the shape resembling the slits in the blinds through which the felling of the tree is being observed. The interior of the tree becomes the interior of the attic, the perspectives intertwine. The narrator, both present in the written text and in the voice over, announces that it belongs to the tree itself. The organic connection has been established between the observer, the tree and the hatching bark beetles, that resemble fetuses in the darkness of the womb. The interior of the tree that is vulnerable, transforms into a place for hiding, as well as for observation of the traumatic process from afar. The constant play of these perspectives connects all the “participants” in this process: the victim, the culprit, the passive witness... The death of the tree witnessed both from within and from the distance, is not the ending. It is followed by the interlude without the music backdrop, that offers a new point of view: as if the soul of the tree left its chopped trunk and for a moment is floating above its remains. The second part that follows after this interlude is concentrating on the cocoons that are multiplying. Death is followed by life in a closed circle. Except for the point of view, that was constantly shifting, the whole perspective now changes. The subtle dramatic arch of the film is being revealed within this new light. Throughout the film contrary elements are brought together: life/death, interior/exterior, decaying/hatching...

One of the elements that is masterfully incorporated into the complex structure of this film, next to the narrators voice and several visual plains is certainly the accompanying soundtrack, precise and atmospheric. The rhythmic, piano music in the style of a children’s music box, that is melancholic, from time to time also ambivalent in its tone; the live and crisp sound of the beetles, echoing life and the death for the tree – all of it underlines this shifting in spaces, elements, positions and perspectives.

Through its imagery, associative chain of scenes, transitions between the elements and ambiguity of its metaphors, “The Hindwing” is creating a language of its own, which every deciphering opens new doors and points of view. A riddle without an end, it is a film of polarities, of opposing principles, of metamorphosis, death and rebirth...