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Il colibrì / The Hummingbird. Directed by Francesca Archibugi. Fandango and Rai Cinema, 2022. 126 minutes

Internationally renowned Italian filmmaker and [screenwriter], Francesca Archibugi (Rome 1960), returns to the fore with her seventh cinematographic adaptation, *Il Colibrì/The Hummingbird* (2022), inspired by Sandro Veronesi's 2019 bestselling novel of the same title, which won the 2020 *Strega* Prize and has been translated into 25 languages.¹ *The Hummingbird*, whose screenplay was co-authored by Archibugi, Laura Paolucci and Francesco Piccolo, won the Nastro d'Argento prize for best original song and was nominated for four David di Donatello awards. It had its world premiere at the 47th annual Toronto International Film Festival in September 2022 and opened the 17th Rome Film Fest on 13 October 2022. *The Hummingbird* was then released in Italian theaters the next day and started airing on TV on 24 April 2023 before its subsequent broadcasting on Sky Cinema. Archibugi accepted the proposal to direct this film after she was approached by film producer Domenico Procacci and Veronesi himself. She was honored by the opportunity to adapt Veronesi's successful novel, and it was a text that was especially important to her because it addressed themes that were close to her heart, such as family relationships, children, adolescents, parents, intergenerational clashes, private spheres and public events, life and death, love and loss. Fueled by her passion for the project, Archibugi succeeded in directing a film that is both original and faithful to its literary source.

The Hummingbird retraces the life of its protagonist, Marco Carrera (Pierfrancesco Favino), which spans 60 years, from his childhood in the 1970s through to his adolescence, his adult life, and his final years. Notably, the story does not follow the chronological sequence of these events; instead, it moves non-linearly between important moments in his life as Marco faces numerous happy and sorrowful occasions alike. The film opens on the seaside, where a teenage Marco meets the beautiful Luisa Lattes [Bérénice Béjo], with whom he falls madly in love it is love at first sight for them both. However, their love is forever destined to be platonic, and it stays this way, frozen in time from their teenage years. Marco will always be in love with Luisa, even after marrying his wife, Marina (Michaela Ramazzotti). A Florentine ophthalmologist, Marco spends his days in his medical center and at home with his wife and his beloved daughter, Adele. One day, Daniele Carradori, Marina's psychoanalyst, pays him a visit in his office. With Carradori's help, Marco attempts to learn how to deal with life's unexpected changes.

The film, like its literary source, follows the labyrinthic, disjointed flow of Marco's life, evoked on alternating temporal levels, where chaotic memories from his past resurface almost at random, linked by intimate threads and triggered by parallel incidents in a vortex of timeless refractions and inexplicable coincidences. Lingering memories interrupt the storyline, and events in the present spark a thought from the past. *The Hummingbird* navigates through time shifts and the tied-up relationships of its troubled protagonist's life, effectively sustaining its allure as a non-linear, melodramatic epic. Indeed, the systematic and calculated shuffling of time in this film is as fascinating as it is puzzling. While it is difficult to detect the leaps from one episodic memory to the next, it is relatively easy to determine when in time a particular scene is taking place; younger actors take the stage when the characters are meant to be teenagers, and extensive makeup is used to indicate their later stages of life.

¹ Archibugi directed *Con gli occhi chiusi/With Closed Eyes* (1994), adapted from the eponymous novel by Federigo Tozzi (1993); the TV mini-series *Renzo e Lucia* (2004), a free adaptation of Alessandro Manzoni's *Fermo e Lucia* (1821-1823); *Questione di cuore/Matter of Heart* (2009), from the eponymous novel by Umberto Contarello (2005); *Il nome del figlio/An Italian Name* (2015), an adaptation of the play *Le Prénom* by Alexandre de La Patellière and Matthieu Delaporte (2010); *Gli sdraiati/Couch Potatoes* (2017), a free adaptation of Michele Serra's eponymous book (2013); and *Vivere/To Live* (2019), the adaptation of the short story *Viaggio in Italia/Journey to Italy* (2010) authored by Archibugi herself

The film is a choral story with a remarkable cast led by Pierfrancesco Favino, called upon to play the apparently uninteresting Marco, who somehow manages to fly through his life while remaining still, just as the titular hummingbird does.² Favino adds his unique tiles to the mosaic which is Marco Carrera's personality, and his characterization helps viewers see the quiet, heroic spirit of a man who faces his various traumas head-on, without feeling hopeless or lost. Many of Marco's family members die, and the effect of these tragedies on his life manifest in his stoic behavior; but their deaths are liminal within the non-linear frame of the movie, as they return again and again through its episodic editing. What seems to be Marco's quiet acceptance instead turns into courage, and his aversion from conflict conceals the nature of his destiny, which is to give and receive tenderness.

The film reproduces the book's recurrent, frequent leaps in time, occurring anywhere from 2 to 15 minutes apart. However, these moments omit references to the precise date in time in which they happened, creating an intricate stream of memories concerning people, incidents, encounters, tragedies, and losses. The intertwining of these different temporal planes accelerates the course of Marco's life, giving a breathless intensity to his story. In addition, this film required incredibly complex editing to depict the leaps from 1970 all the way to 2030. Such a fragmented narrative structure, built on a complex succession of flashbacks and flashforwards, creates an unsettling tension and disorienting air to the film. The chronological re-engineering of Marco's past, present, and future lives, all intermeshed with one another, leave the viewer lost and unable to processing the twists and turns in his life, which is further afflicted by his teenage sister's suicide, his parents' difficult marriage, their later precarious health conditions leading to their deaths, his wife's lies, her marital infidelity and neurosis, Luisa's sentimental ambiguity, his daughter Adele's premature death in an accident. These events are compounded by Marco's then single parenting of his infant granddaughter Miraijin, his unsettling addiction to gambling, and, lastly, his own battle with pancreatic cancer and lucid decision to be euthanized.

Archibugi cinematographically reproduces Marco's strenuous resilience against the hardships he faces, as he uses all his energy to cope with tragedy while staying grounded. Marco is like the film's eponymous hummingbird; able to move fluidly in all directions, the hummingbird simultaneously hovers in mid-air, flies forward backwards, sideways, and even up and down. A symbol of intelligence, beauty, devotion, and love, hummingbirds are respected as fierce fighters and devout defenders of their territory, quite like Marco, who stands his ground to the very end.³

The Hummingbird is an elegant, elaborate, and visually sound film that unfolds in magnificent apartments, spacious summer homes, refined sea resorts and luxurious hotels; it takes its viewers through the splashing waters of the Tuscan seaside, the squares in Rome and Florence and the glimmering lights of nocturnal Paris.⁴ The soundtrack contains original pieces composed by Battista

² The adult Marco Carrera is played by Pierfrancesco Favino, while Francesco Centorame plays him as a teenager; Kasia Smutniak takes the role of Marina, Marco's wife; Bérénice Bejo portrays Luisa Lattes as an adult, while Alisa Fossati depicts her as a teenager; Laura Morante and Sergio Albelli play Marco's parents; Alessandro Teschi is Giacomo, Marco's brother; Benedetta Porcaroli is Adele, Marco's daughter; Massimo Ceccherini is Duccio, Marco's long-time friend; Fotini Peluso is Irene, Marco's older sister; Rausi, Ginagaré is Miraijin, Marco's grand-daughter Miraijin; and Nanni Moretti plays the psychiatrist Daniele Carradori.

³ When a hummingbird flaps its wing forward, it creates forces called 'lift' and 'thrust', which move the bird up and forward respectively. Hummingbirds can also rotate their wings backward, which creates downward 'lift' and backward 'thrust'. By alternating flapping their wings forward and backward, the up and down forces and forward and back forces cancel each other out, and the hummingbird hovers in one place. <https://journeynorth.org/hummingbirds/resources/article/facts-hummingbird-characteristics> Accessed 3 August 2023.

⁴ <https://www.mepiute.com/i-luoghi-dei-film/film-il-colibri-colibri/> Accessed 4 August 2023.

Lena,⁵ although classics like *I'll Be Seeing You* (1938) covered by Billie Holiday and The Clash's *London Calling* (1979) play frequently as well.⁶

Archibugi lives up to the challenge of adapting Veronesi's complex and idiosyncratic *Il Colibrì*. While this film continues her cinematographic tradition of portraying Italian middle-class life, families across generations, collective traumas and personal emotional resilience, its original structure, simultaneously fluid and rigid, as dictated by the novel, reveal Archibugi's mastery in directing the arduous flow of memories and reflections which hover, like the hummingbird, through the turbulent and complex tale of Marco's life.

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⁵ <https://www.mbmusic.it/2022/10/il-colibri-la-colonna-sonora-del-film-di-francesca-archibugi/>
Accessed 4 August 2023.

⁶ *I'll Be Seeing You* is a popular song about missing a loved one, with music by Sammy Fain and lyrics by Irving Kahal. Published in 1938, it was inserted into the Broadway musical *Right This Way*, which closed after fifteen performances. The title of William Dieterle's 1944 film *I'll Be Seeing You* was taken from this song at the suggestion of the film's producer, Dore Schary. The song is included in the film's soundtrack.