

## Between genres and styles in the films of Robert Bresson

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### Abstract

The films of French director Robert Bresson are considered sober and transcendental. However, in *A gentle woman* (1969) and in *Four nights of a dreamer* (1972), he included extracts of quite different genres, like a libertine comedy (the extract of film *Benjamin* by Michel Deville, 1968), a Shakespearean tragedy (a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) and a gangster film (*When love possesses us*, produced by Bresson himself). In a way, those excerpts represent exactly the opposite of Bresson's cinema. On the other hand, they still have some familiarity with it. We analyze the approach of those genres in the sequences in Bresson's films, as well of the styles present in them by the use of music and images of paintings.

**Keywords:** Robert Bresson; French cinema; genres; classical music; Rococo painting



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## Between genres and styles in the films of Robert Bresson\*

Luíza Beatriz Alvim

The films of French director Robert Bresson are considered sober, with a “transcendental style”<sup>1</sup>, due to the economical use of music (only diegetic in his late films) and the employment of non-professional actors (the so called “models”), who recite the lines of the dialogues as if they were just reading them.

However, in *A gentle woman* (*Une femme douce*, 1969) and *Four nights of a dreamer* (*Quatre nuits d'un rêveur*, 1972), Bresson included excerpts of very diverse spectacles, some preexistent and some not: we see an extract of the film *Benjamim*, by Michel Deville (1969) and a representation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*; and also *When love possesses us*, a sequence produced by Bresson specially for *Four nights of a dreamer*. These extracts point to other genres and styles, which we will consider in this paper.

In a way, those excerpts do represent exactly the opposite of Bresson’s cinema<sup>2</sup>: the uninterrupted music, the type of classical<sup>3</sup> music utilized (Haydn and Mozart, in opposition to the predominant Baroque music in Bresson’s films), the presence of famous actors in *Benjamim*, the interpretation without contention in *Hamlet*, excess violence and the sentimental music in *When love possesses us*.

Do those strange materials function as a pure criticism or as a hint of humor? Actually, closer observation reveals that the excerpts still have some familiarity with Bresson’s works and we will consider these crossovers and the complexity of their relations.

## 1. Libertine comedy and the Shakespearean tragedy in *A gentle woman*

*A gentle woman* is an adaptation of a novel by Fiodor Dostoevsky, *A gentle maiden*, which was published in 1876 and has the subheading “fantastic”, as the whole narrative happens in the conscience of the main male character, who walks around the dead corpse of his wife.

In the film, we leave late nineteenth century Russia for Paris a century after. Nevertheless, the basic core of the story remains the same: the owner of a pawnshop marries a poor younger woman and uses the marriage as a way to humiliate her, but he is surprised by the revolt of his victim.

On the other hand, Bresson changed the structure of the narrative: it has the maid as a witness and alternates continuously between images of the present and of the past. The fantastical atmosphere of the Dostoyevsky novel is, in a certain way, attenuated, as the images of consciousness are naturalized in flashbacks, which are a common cinematic narrative procedure.

Although the film takes place mostly in the couple’s flat and in the pawnshop, we feel a great presence of the city of Paris through its parks (the Bois de Boulogne, the Jardin des Plantes), museums (of Modern Art, of Natural History) and other cultural spaces.

### 1.1. A libertine comedy

In the beginning of the movie, at 17 minutes of film, the couple goes to the Paramount Elysées movie theater to see *Benjamim*, by Michel Deville, which tells the story of a young

male protagonist during the eighteenth century and his discovery of love at a party in his aunt's castle. Deville was known by his light comedies in the sixties<sup>4</sup> and *Benjamim* was conceived having the libertine comedy of the eighteenth century as an inspiration.



Figure 1: Scene of *Benjamim* (the arrival of the guests) shown in *A gentle woman*.

On the other hand, Deville has positioned himself about the use of music in cinema in a way quite like Bresson. In *Benjamim*, all the music, apart from its opening titles, is diegetic: at the party in the garden there is an orchestra playing all the pieces heard. As the story takes place in the eighteenth century, the selected repertoire is justified.

Moreover, Bresson observed that the *Benjamim*'s atmosphere of libertinage is not in disaccord with the sequence in his film where it is placed<sup>5</sup>: in the cinema room, a man flirts with the main female character.

In beginning of the whole sequence, already over the shot of the neon signs of the Paramount Elysées movie theater, we hear the fourth movement of Haydn's *Symphony n.88*, which belongs to the soundtrack of Deville's film. As a matter of fact, Bresson dislocated this musical extract, which, in *Benjamim*, is a quite a long time after the images shown in *A gentle*

woman. Therefore, he approached two pieces of dance: Haydn's Rondo and Mozart's *Pantomime*, part of the music of the *ballet Les petits riens*, by Noverre<sup>6</sup>, which accompanies the extract of the film utilized.

So, in the shot of the main couple sitting at the movie theater, we hear the singing of the birds from the park of *Benjamim* and, soon after, Mozart's music. Then we see the images of Deville's film: a mid-shot of actor Pierre Clémenti, who interprets the main role, a wide shot of the castle's park, with the coming guests and carriages, followed by the shot in which Benjamim receives a kiss from his aunt. From this moment on, we hear only the film's dialog and its uninterrupted music over the images of Bresson's "gentle woman" in his film.



Figure 2: Benjamim (Pierre Clémenti) and his aunt (Michelle Morgan)

Both Sémolué and Hanlon observed that, by inserting this extract of *Benjamim* in his film, it is as if Bresson showed the exact opposite of his own style of cinema<sup>7</sup>. For example, while Bresson employed his models, which were asked not to give any interpretation to the speeches (and although Dominique Sanda, the gentle woman, became a famous French actress,

this is her very first role in the movies), the dialog we hear from *Benjamim* is interpreted by professional actors. In fact, in its cast, there were many stars of French cinema, such as Michèle Morgan<sup>8</sup>, Catherine Deneuve and Michel Piccoli.

As for the music, Sémolué and Hanlon consider it the type of classic one would expect in a film set in the eighteenth century. There are, in the entire film, pieces by composers of that diegetic time: Boccherini, Haydn, Mozart and Rameau. Differently, when Bresson utilizes the preexistent classic repertoire, he chooses the music of a much earlier period in time, such as the pieces from the Baroque and Classical periods in stories which take place in our contemporary time.

Nevertheless, Deville told us, in an interview conducted during this research<sup>9</sup>, that he also usually likes to obtain that effect of contrast of times, though, in *Benjamim*, he did not use it, as he needed the diegetic music for the dances. Composer Jean Wiener observed that Deville “thought – rightly – that those pieces were so beautiful and that they ‘adhered’ so perfectly to the scenes, that he maintained them”<sup>10</sup>.

Besides, Deville has, in that sense, much in common with Bresson: he utilizes frequently preexistent classic repertoire to have control over the musical element. He explained that it is a way of already knowing which music will be used when still in the script writing stages<sup>11</sup> and also stated that he did not like “to be at the last moment facing the consummated fact, as it happens more frequently with a living composer.”<sup>12</sup>

Deville told us that he used to take written notes of the music heard in the radio that could be adequate for a film. In another interview, Deville talks about his use of preexistent classical music in a way that quite resembles Bresson:

I never put music to sustain a scene, sentimental [music] because there is feeling, comic [music] because there are gags, in short, music to underline an effect that would make a pleonasm. For me, the music should speak for itself, like a character.<sup>13</sup>

Actually, *Benjamim* was chosen for the movie sequence in *A gentle woman* because it was a recent film (it was released in 1968, little before Bresson's film) of the same producer Mag Bodard. Therefore, the facility to acquire the exhibition rights of the extract. However, though that practical aspect, Bresson still observed a certain similarity between the libertine tone in *Benjamim* and the sensuality in *A gentle woman*.

We had to arrange to project any film in a movie theater where my main female character was. Parc-film and Paramount, with whom I worked, were also the distributors of *Benjamim*: that made things easier. *Benjamim*'s libertine tone did not oppose the sensuality of *A gentle woman*.<sup>14</sup>

*Benjamim* was also compared by René Predal<sup>15</sup> to a *marivaudage*, French word employed to describe the spirit of the comedies written by Marivaux, with plenty of social aspects and which turn, most of the times, around love. In fact, the dialog from the extract presented in *A gentle woman* contains a proposal of a love encounter. At the same time, in Bresson's film, the neighboring man flirts with the gentle woman, which makes her husband change places with her. It is as if the libertine atmosphere of *Benjamim* contaminated Bresson's film.

## 1.2. The basic principle of alternation



The images of *Benjamim* resemble the French Rococo genre *Fêtes galantes* developed by Antoine Watteau, also from the eighteenth century. Rococo is considered an ostentatious and exaggerated variation of Baroque. At the same time, in France, Watteau's "gallant style" approaches it to Classicism, as considered by Arnold Hauser<sup>16</sup>.

To Hauser, those frivolous and bucolic scenes by Watteau cannot be considered as a return to an idyllic Rousseauian nature, as they are much nearer to the Arcadian ideal, which conjugates nature and civilization, sensuousness and rationalism. In those paintings, the bucolic world is under the artificial disguise of civilized society. Hauser also considers that, in this genre, Watteau disrupts with the Baroque tendency towards the monumental, giving place to delicacy and intimacy and follows the criteria of pleasance and convention, characteristic of Classicism.

Although Deville mentions Watteau, he has stated that he tried in *Benjamim* to portray something resembling the "sunny" painting of French Impressionism.

In painting, especially concerning the clothes, we took reference mainly in Fragonard, who painted or draw women in such simple clothes as ours. As for the rest, I confess that the "sunny" painting of the Impressionists inspired us more than the somewhat grey atmosphere of the paintings by Watteau or by Lancret.<sup>17</sup>

Such "sunny" scenes are also present in *A gentle woman* (figure 3), in which many couples go to the Bois de Boulogne and gather bouquets of flowers.





Figure 3: Bresson's gentle woman (scene in the Bois de Boulogne)

Besides, in the first of the two sequences in which we hear diegetic music coming from the LPs placed on the phonograph by the gentle woman, she leafs through an art book with paintings by French Impressionists (we see *La Blonde aux seins nus* and the famous *Olympia*, both by Manet) to the sound of Mozart's *Fantasia K397*.



Figure 4: Two shots of Bresson's gentle woman regarding an art book with paintings by Manet (on the right, *La Blonde aus seins nus*; on the left, *Olympia*).

In its turn, that musical piece by Mozart belongs to a period of his life in which the musician had an important contact with the work of Baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach. The beginning of the *Fantasia*, though not heard in the film, quite recalls some of Bach's

*Preludes*. Baroque music will be really present in the film's other sequence of diegetic music originated from the LPs. In this second sequence, the piece is from English Baroque composer Henry Purcell.

After that sequence of the Impressionists paintings and Mozart's *Fantasia*, we have a time ellipsis and we see precisely the image of a painting by Watteau, *Jupiter dévoilant Antiope*, present in the Louvre Museum, where the couple strolls around. According to the film's découpage, the couple should be in the Italian Renaissance room and the painting shown would be by Titian. Maybe the change to Watteau was due to a desire of a greater unity and cohesion with the other citations in the film.



Figure 5: on the right painting *Jupiter dévoilant Antiope*, by Watteau; on the left, the couple regards the paintings at the Louvre (both shots from Bresson's *A gentle woman*).

Taking all these aspects into consideration, we could say that, in addition to making a crossing of genres by the inclusion of the extract of Deville's libertine comedy in Bressonian drama, there is also an alternation in *A gentle woman* between Classicism, Impressionism and Baroque.

Moreover, if we consider only the music heard in the two sequences in which the gentle woman changes the LPs on the phonograph, we observe that both of them begin with popular music composed by Jean Wiener and end with the erudite/ serious music repertoire (Mozart or Purcell).

In fact, all those alternations resemble the very act of changing LPs by the gentle woman. At the same time, the narrative structure of the film as a whole functions in that alternated manner: between the images of the past evoked by the husband and the ones that take place in the present, when he walks around the dead corpse of his wife.

### **1.3. Robert Bresson and Michel Deville: coincidences or affinities**

There are quite a lot of coincidences between Deville and Bresson, which makes us consider that maybe there is not such an opposition between them or, if any opposition, it is, at least, quite ambiguous.

Firstly, a lot of the usual collaborators of Bresson, like Foley artist Daniel Couteau and the already mentioned Jean Wiener worked in Deville's films. It is quite true that Wiener position as a composer was suggested to Deville by producer Mag Bodard<sup>18</sup>, so that he could receive the payment for his music, as he had financial difficulties at the time. It was a small collaboration with just one piece in the end of the film, which imitated the style of the classical composers of the rest of the soundtrack.

There are more collaborators in common with Bresson in Deville's other films. It is the case of Jean-Jacques Grünenwald, composer of Bresson's three first long-feature films (*Les*

*anges du pêché, Les dames du Bois de Boulogne* and *Journal d'un cure de campagne*) and responsible for the music of Deville's first four films, between 1961 and 1964 (*Ce soir ou jamais; Adorable menteuse; À cause, à cause d'une femme; L'Appartement des filles*), under the pseudonym Jean Dalve. As Deville points out, "Dalve" was an anagram of the end of his name, "Grünenwald"<sup>19</sup>.

Grünenwald, organist in Saint-Sulpice church in Paris, was considered a "serious" composer. Deville told us that he did not get acquainted with the musician by seeing the films of Bresson: he met him as he worked as a direction trainee in the films *La vérité dur bébé Donge* (Henri Decoin, 1952) and *Les amants de Tolède* (Henri Decoin and Fernando Palacios, 1953), whose music was composed by Grünenwald. As he began making his own films, Deville had the idea of inviting him, because he liked the contrast that emerged from having a "serious" composer writing dance music.

The collaboration Deville-Grünenwald remained until they disagreed on the soundtrack of *L'appartement des filles*: Deville preferred the simpler sketch of the composer to the final elaborated partition for a big orchestra, too "heavy", in Deville's words<sup>20</sup>.

Another common collaborator between Bresson and Deville was actress Dominique Sanda, Bresson's gentle woman in her first experience in the movies. Ten years later, she acted in Deville's *Le voyage en douce* (1980).

Secondly, like *A gentle woman, Benjamim* has only diegetic music (it is only non-diegetic in the opening titles and that was made at the request of Mag Bodard, as Deville told us). Most of the film, including the extract taken by Bresson, happens in the party in the garden

of Benjamim's aunt: there is a realistic imperative for hearing music. Moreover, to justify it, Deville shows many times the musicians in the garden, as they play their instruments. This aspect resembles what happens in Bresson's films, especially the ones of the last phase of his career.

Finally, there is still another coincidence or common trace between Michel Deville and Bresson. In the very beginning of *Benjamim*, the maid plays, on the harpsichord, the first bars of the *Adagio* from Mozart's Concerto n.23 for piano, the same ones heard, also diegetically, in *The devil provably* (1977), by Bresson.

#### 1.4. A Shakespearean tragedy

Another ambiguous criticism by Bresson occurs when the main couple goes out for the next time. They go to the theater to see a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. When arriving home, the young wife takes Shakespeare's book from the library and, as if she spoke for Bresson himself<sup>21</sup>, complains that, in the performance, the very passage in which Hamlet asked his actors (from the play in the play) for contention was deleted.

Many critics complained about the poor quality of that performance, which, for Michel Mohrt, is, in fact, a feat:

Of course, Hamlet is very badly performed in France, but to perform it so bad, so falsely, it is already a *tour de force*. The beautiful death of the gentle prince is concealed, the duel is reduced to a derisory gesticulation. No doubt Bresson wanted to ridicule a certain way to perform the tragedy.<sup>22</sup>

Ambiguity occurs also in the end of the play, when we hear trumpets and drums during a monologue by Hamlet. He complains: “but why this rolling of drums?”, disgusted with that spectacular effect that reinforces emotion, a complaint that maybe Bresson himself would make. Actually, the presence of drums recalls the ones that open and close the *Trial of Joan of Arc* (1962) by Bresson. However, they do not sound magnificent and they constitute the only soundtrack of the film, apart from a sparse melody from a sole trumpet.

At the same time, we could consider that *A gentle woman* receives a hint of Shakespearean tragedy. As a matter of fact, the husband only starts doing something to regain the love of his wife when it is already too late. Her very death happens when he is buying the airplane tickets to travel and to try to begin a new life.

## **2. A gangster film in *Four nights of a dreamer*.**

The novel *White nights* has the original subheading: *A tale of love from the reminiscences of a dreamer*. As Sémolué<sup>23</sup> observes, although Bresson maintains the aspect of the “dream” in his title, he eliminates the exaggerated romanticism of Dostoevsky’s male protagonist, such as the way he pours down his feelings in long pompous speeches (the main female character Nastenka even asks him to speak “less splendidly”<sup>24</sup>).

We must remember that *White nights* (published in 1848) belongs to the first phase of Dostoevsky’s career. As observed by the Brazilian version’s translator, Nivaldo dos Santos, it is precisely in this first phase that the Russian author is closer to the Romantic Period<sup>25</sup> by the style of the main character’s speeches, as well as by the phantasmagorical atmosphere, which

recalls the works by German Romantic author E.T.A. Hoffmann (who is quoted by Dostoevsky's narrator).

As in *A gentle woman*, Bresson maintains the basic core of the story, though transposing it from the nineteenth century Saint Petersburg to contemporary Paris: a romantic and solitary man meets a young woman late at night: she is waiting for her ex-tenant, who left her one year ago with the promise of coming back. The dreamer and the young woman become friends during the following nights and tell each other about their lives.

In the novel, Nastenka tells the dreamer about the evening when the tenant invited her to go see *The Barber of Seville*, by Rossini. After that, Nastenka signs a letter to the tenant as “Rosina”, like the opera's main female character. In the film, the opera is replaced for a movie theater: the tenant offers Marthe (the correspondent to Nastenka) and her mother invitations for a gala film preview, but he does not go with them.

That way, like in *A gentle woman*, in *Four nights of a dreamer*, Bresson includes a film inside a film. However, this time, the film included is not preexistent: the extract of *Amour, quand tu nous tiens* (*When love possesses us*), with cinematography by Ghislain Cloquet<sup>26</sup> (while the cinematographer of *Four nights of a dreamer* as a whole was Pierre Lhomme), was especially produced to be incorporated in the film.

Although the title may make us think about the binds which unite Marthe to the tenant, we see a sequence in which the gangsters kill each other in a gun shooting. In its end, we hear sentimental symphonic non-diegetic music. Those scenes exert an effect of irony by referring themselves to commercial films full of violence and with emotionally charged music of sustain.



However, as Claude Beylie<sup>27</sup> observes in an interview with Bresson, even in that satirical extract which has exaggeration at its basis, in some moments, we still recall the director's style as, for example, in the shot of the crisped hands of the dying character on the ground, which we could consider as a typical one from Bresson. The director agrees: "My friend Ghislain Cloquet [...] suggested me to change style. He was right. I tried it, but it did not work"<sup>28</sup>. Also, as we see in the analysis by Marcel Martin:

This cinema that he hates [...], Bresson makes a severe and savory caricature in a sequence of a commercial production [...], a bloody settlement of accounts by gunfire. But he integrates practically that absurd sequence in his film and [...] gives it such a familiar air, though the huge and indecent puddle of blood, that the parody fulfills in sublimation.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 5: Shot from *When love possesses us*, in Bresson's *Four nights of a dreamer*.

As a matter of fact, the blood and the groaning in that sequence recalls the violence from the prologue and the epilogue in *Lancelot of the lake* (Bresson, 1974), with its images of cut heads, blood flushing from corpses and groans of pain, even if, in that case, the exaggeration comes from another source: the typical descriptions of medieval literature - we can see many examples in *Le chevalier de la charrete* by Chrétien de Troyes<sup>30</sup> and in thirteenth

century anonymous *La Mort du Roi Arthur*<sup>31</sup>, which are considered inspiration sources for Bresson's film.

As for the non-diegetic music, despite functioning as a pure support to the emotional atmosphere of the scene, having been triggered by the shot of the photo of the dying man's girlfriend, at the same time, it is spared during almost all the sequence, resembling the norms advocated by Bresson for the use of music in films<sup>32</sup>.

### 3. Contemporariness and anachronisms

In Dostoevsky's novels, there are usually references of books, plays and operas of the time of the author. For example, in *A gentle maiden*<sup>33</sup>, the characters see the operetta *La péricole* (1868), by Jacques Offenbach, which is contemporaneous of the book. They also see a play by Russian author P.I. Iurkiévitch, with the suggestive title *Searching for happiness*.

In his film, Bresson eliminates the references to Saint Petersburg's cultural life from Dostoevski's time, and replaces it for a Shakespearean play and a contemporary French film. The only maintained reference from the original novel in *A gentle woman* is a quotation of Goethe's *Faust*, mentioned by the man in one of his first encounters with the young woman.

As for the *White nights*, its musical references also express Dostoevski's contemporary Saint Petersburg's cultural life: the already mentioned *The Barber of Seville*<sup>34</sup> and the allusion to the musical theme of *Robert, le diable*, by Giacomo Meyerbeer. Both are operas from the first half of nineteenth century – the second one was performed in Saint Petersburg in 1843 -, that is, they were contemporary to the novel.

We can observe that, even when Bresson seems anachronistic, he ends up being contemporary<sup>35</sup>. Giorgio Agamben<sup>36</sup>, evoking the quote by Roland Barthes, observes that the contemporary is the un-timely. Agamben also considers that philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche claimed his contemporariness to the present through a disconnection with it, as “those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands”<sup>37</sup>. Like Bresson, the contemporary has a relation of anachronism with his present world.

It is to that kind of anachronism that Didi-Huberman<sup>38</sup> refers to when, astonished, he saw the affinities between some drops of paint in mural by Fra Angelico and the works of American painter Jackson Pollock. He comes to the conclusion that the anachronism is an inner necessity of images. For example, the approximation, through editing, of the bright images of *Benjamim* and Bresson’s own sober interiors, as well as Classicism, Baroque and Impressionism in Bresson’s *A gentle woman*.

#### 4. Conclusion

We considered here the subtle or more insistent presence of other genres in two films of French director Robert Bresson. Libertine comedy, Shakespearean tragedy and gangster films integrate themselves to the director’s style, as does the web of quotations of baroque, classical and impressionist pieces.

In the case of preexistent materials, like the *Benjamim* extract in *A gentle woman*, as a consequence of having been removed from its initial context and of getting into a new cut,

“incommensurable”<sup>39</sup> things are approached, “that didn’t seem predisposed to”<sup>40</sup>, as is the case of found footage in experimental cinema.

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*La vérité sur Bébé Donge*. Directed by Henri Decoin. France : 1952.

*Les amants de Tolède*. Directed by Henri Decoin and Fernando Palacios. France : 1953.

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*Le procès de Jeanne d'Arc*. Directed by Robert Bresson. France: 1962.

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*À cause, à cause d'une femme*. Directed by Michel Deville. France : 1963.

*L'appartement des filles*. Directed by Michel Deville. France : 1964.

*Benjamim ou les mémoires d'un puceau*. Directed by Michel Deville. France : 1968.

*Une femme douce (A gentle woman)*. Directed by Robert Bresson. France: 1969.

*Quatre nuits d'un rêveur (Four nights of a dreamer)*. Directed by Robert Bresson. France, Italy: 1972.

*Lancelot du lac*. Directed by Robert Bresson. France, Italy: 1974.

*Le diable probablement (The devil probably)*. Directed by Robert Bresson. France: 1977.

*Le voyage en douce*. Directed by Michel Deville. France : 1980.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (Da Capo Press, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> See Jean Sémolué, *Bresson ou l'acte pur des métamorphoses*. (Paris: Flammarion, 1993) and Lindley Hanlon, *Fragments: Bresson's Film Style* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> We are employing “classical” in the sense of erudite or so-called “serious music” (we are not only referring to the pieces of the Classicism period).

<sup>4</sup> Deville was of the same generation of the directors of the *Nouvelle Vague*, like Jean-Luc Godard. Although the style of his film-editing was quite different, many actors of the *Nouvelle Vague* worked with him (some were even “discovered” by him), such as Anna Karina, Marina Vlady and Macha Méril.

<sup>5</sup> Giorgio Tinazzi, *Il cinema di Robert Bresson* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> The music for this *ballet* was written by Mozart in 1778, in Paris, where the composer tried to settle down, without success.

<sup>7</sup> Sémolué, *Bresson* (1993) and Hanlon, *Fragments* (1986).

<sup>8</sup> Bresson refers to this actress in an interview from 1955, as he mentions the obviousness of the interpretation of famous actors: “The films we make now with actors will become documentaries, documentaries of actors for a hundred years. That is how Michèle Morgan was in 1955, and that is all we will see. As you have already probably noticed, films become old fashioned, they become old fashioned almost always because of the way of acting”, our translation from French to English. “Une mise-en-scène n'est pas un art”, interview with Bresson, in: “Hommage à R. Bresson”, supplement to n. 543 of *Cahiers du cinéma*.

<sup>9</sup> In March 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Wiener, *Allegro appassionato* (Pierre Belford, 1978), 194. In original French: “il trouva - à juste titre - que ces airs étaient si jolis et ‘collaient’ si parfaitement à ses scènes, qu’ils les garda”.

<sup>11</sup> Usually the music is one of the last elements added to the film and the composer starts his work when the film is already at the post-production phase.

<sup>12</sup> Alain Garel and François Porcile, “La musique à l’écran” (*CinémAction*, 62, January 1992), 105. In original French: “*je n’aime pas être mis au dernier moment devant le fait accompli, comme cela se passe le plus souvent avec un compositeur vivant.*”

<sup>13</sup> Interview conducted by Gérard Langlois, in the book organized by Michel Estève, “Michel Deville” (*Études cinématographiques*. Paris-Caen: Lettres Modernes Minard, 2002), 15. In original French: “*Je ne mets jamais une musique pour soutenir une scène, sentimentale parce qu’il y a du sentiment, comique parce qu’il y a des gags, en somme une musique qui souligne un effet, qui ferait pléonasme. Pour moi la musique doit parler en elle-même, comme un personnage.*”

<sup>14</sup> Tinazzi, *Il cinema di Robert Bresson*, 118 .In original Italian: “*si trattava di proiettare nella sala del cinema dove andava la mia protagonista un film qualsiasi. La Parc-film e la Paramount, le case con cui lavoravo, erano anche i distributori di Benjamim, questo facilitava le cose. Il libertinaggio di Benjamim non andava incontro alla sensualità di Une femme douce*”.

<sup>15</sup> René Prédal, “Le mouvement des sentiments chez Michel Deville”, in : “Michel Deville”, book organized by Michel Estève (*Études cinématographiques*. Paris-Caen: Lettres Modernes Minard, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art* – vol. III (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Interview conducted by Gérard Langlois, in the book organized by Estève, “Michel Deville”, 14. In original French : “*En peinture, surtout en ce qui concerne les costumes, nous nous sommes principalement référés à Fragonard qui a peint ou dessiné des femmes dans des costumes aussi simples que les nôtres. Pour le reste, j’avoue que la peinture ‘ensoleillée’ des impressionistes nous a davantage inspirés que l’atmosphère un peu grise des tableaux de Watteau ou de Lancret*”.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Deville gave us this information in the interview of March 2012.

<sup>19</sup> According to Deville, this disguise was due to the fact that, in that time, Grünwald was writing an opera and his editor did not consider a serious duty to compose music for light movies. See in the interview conducted by Gérard Langlois, in the book organized by Estève, “Michel Deville”, 15. Also stated by Deville in our interview with the director, in March 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Deville, interview (March 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Hanlon, *Fragments* (1986).

<sup>22</sup> Michel Mohrt, “La faute qui ne sera pas pardonnée” (*Carrefour*, September 10, 1969). In original French: “*Certes, Hamlet est bien mal joué en France, mais le jouer si mal, si faux, c’est en soi un tour de force. La mort si belle du doux prince est escamotée, le duel réduit à une gesticulation dérisoire. Sans aucun doute Bresson a voulu ridiculiser une certaine façon de jouer la tragédie.*”

<sup>23</sup> Sémolué, *Bresson* (1993).

<sup>24</sup> Fiodor Dostoevsky, *Noites brancas* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2007), 32.



- <sup>25</sup> Nivaldo dos Santos, Afterword to *Noites brancas*, by Fiodor Dostoevski.
- <sup>26</sup> Cloquet had already worked with Bresson in three films: *Au hazard Balthazar*, *Mouchette* and *A gentle woman*.
- <sup>27</sup> Claude Beylie, “Quatre nuits d’un rêveur” (*Écran*, April 4, 1972).
- <sup>28</sup> Robert Bresson in interview with Beylie, “Quatre nuits d’un rêveur”, 68. In original French: “*Mon ami Ghislain Cloquet [...] m’a suggéré de changer de style. Il avait raison. J’ai essayé, mais je n’ai pas réussi.*”
- <sup>29</sup> Marcel Martin, “Une éducation sentimentale : *Quatre nuits d’un rêveur* de Robert Bresson”. (*Les Lettres Françaises*, February 9, 1972). In original French: “*Ce cinéma qu’il déteste, [...], Bresson le caricature sévèrement et savoureusement dans une séquence d’une production commerciale [...], un sanglant règlement de comptes à coups de revolver. Mais il intègre pratiquement cette séquence absurde à son film et [...] lui donne un tel air de famille, malgré une énorme et indécente flaque de sang, que la parodie s’achève en sublimation.*”
- <sup>30</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot, ou le chevalier de la charrette* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991).
- <sup>31</sup> *A morte do rei Arthur: Romance do século XIII* (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1999).
- <sup>32</sup> Robert Bresson, *Notas sobre o cinematógrafo* (São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2008).
- <sup>33</sup> Fiodor Dostoevsky, *Duas narrativas fantásticas: A dócil [A gentle maiden] e O sonho de um homem ridículo* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2003).
- <sup>34</sup> That opera was maintained in the Italian adaptation of the novel by Lucchino Visconti, what is quite convenient for an Italian context.
- <sup>35</sup> Luíza Alvim, “Robert Bresson : cineasta do contemporâneo?”, *Imagofagia*, 4 (2011).
- <sup>36</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “What is the Contemporary?”, in: *What is Apparatus and Other Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
- <sup>37</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>38</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps* (Paris: Minuit, 2000).
- <sup>39</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout* (Paris: Minuit, 2004), 174.
- <sup>40</sup> Bresson, *Notas sobre o cinematógrafo*, 44. Our translation to English.

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