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NIETZSCHE AND THE SEVENTH ART IN BRAZIL: A STUDY OF THE FILM *DAYS OF NIETZSCHE IN TURIN* BY JÚLIO BRESSANE

The reception of Nietzsche's philosophy began at the end of the 19th century, while the philosopher was still intellectually active. Given the way Brazil's academic formation took place, the European ideas that arrived in Brazil were mostly received in intellectual circles detached from educational institutions. Although Nietzsche's philosophy was initially received by an intellectual linked to one of the rare existing faculties at the time [Chagas 2023; Dias 2023; Pantuzzi 2023; Xavier 2024], it was only in the 1970s that academic work on the philosopher began to be developed in a consistent manner. Thus, on the one hand, there is a Brazilian reception that emerges from an intellectual stratum, helping to popularize Nietzschean philosophy; and on the other, the growing presence of his thought in academia.¹ What interests us here is to investigate the proper philosophical reception, with a very specific focus: the work of an important Brazilian filmmaker, Júlio Bressane, whose encounter with Nietzschean philosophy shaped the form of his films, which have influenced and continue to influence Brazilian culture as a whole.

In 2001, Bressane produced *Days of Nietzsche in Turin*.² He also has two other films "in progress" that explore Nietzsche's thought, which we refer to as *Nietzsche in Sils* and

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¹ Elaborating further on the distinction between reception and academic study of philosophy: there is something that characterizes reception and differentiates it from other approaches we might take toward a philosophical thought, such as those found, for example, in specialized philosophical works commonly produced within academic environments. On this matter, Agnes Heller, whom we have referred to in this text to methodologically work with the idea of reception, states: "[f]or the 'discipline of philosophy', as in so many others disciplines, philosophy is merely 'research material' [...] The problem is rather that these experts who approach philosophy as a discipline are described and understood as philosophers. The 'confusion' between experts and philosophers certainly merely demonstrates that philosophy is subordinated to the social division of labour, even though it actually does not have the character of a discipline or an occupation" [Heller 1984: 29]. By extension, it is clear that a philosophical reception cannot be understood within an academic framework in which works in the history of philosophy are mostly carried out. Philosophical reception should also not be confused with philosophy itself. Again, in Heller's words, this time regarding the differentiation between the objectification (or actualization, if you will) of philosophy and reception: "Philosophical objectifications suggest to the recipient: 'consider how you should think; consider how you should act; consider how you should live'. In their creation these three moments are one and indivisible, but it is *possible* that they can be relatively separate in their reception. Doubtless the reception of philosophy is as varied as there are recipients of philosophy" [ibid.: 28].

² Júlio Bressane's film is available on DVD, as well as at the following online address: [FCHD 2017].

Nietzsche in Nice. The first of these was shown publicly during a working session of a conference held in Natal in 2016, presented by Rosa Maria Dias, and later reworked and screened in 2018 at a Nietzsche event in Rio de Janeiro. Perhaps these two latest works will, like Nietzsche's posthumous fragments, remain unpublished, that is, posthumous. However, our focus here will be primarily on the completed film, with the aim of showing how Nietzsche's philosophy was received, and thereby also revealing the national needs the filmmaker believed he was addressing.

The initial question we pose, then, is to understand the reasons why Nietzsche's thought came to serve the artistic production of Júlio Bressane. Or rather: to understand which elements he needed but could not find among Brazilian thinkers, and which therefore had to be sought elsewhere, in this case, in Nietzsche's philosophy. The term "need" (used above) refers to this gap. This question, which is, in the end, methodological in nature, will guide our understanding of why Nietzsche's philosophy appears in a particular Brazilian film made at the beginning of the 21st century. In other words, it will help us determine what need could have been addressed or satisfied through the appropriation of Nietzsche's thought.³

A first thread to follow is: which "Nietzsche" are we talking about? That is, which interpretations of the philosopher, among the many circulating among Brazilian scholars, did Bressane adopt for the making of his film? Not being an academic, the filmmaker resorts to already established interpretations of Nietzsche in order to, from and through them, carry out his original reading (of a Brazilian Nietzsche) with the realization of the film; that is, through the very act of reception as it takes form in the cinematic work, and not based on a research project as those carried out in academia. In summary, the filmmaker inevitably begins from a pre-established academic interpretation, and then goes beyond it, creating something new. This does not exclude, of course, the possibility that

³ We will not extend ourselves by addressing the methodological issues related to reception studies. However, on this point, it is necessary to say that we follow Agnes Heller, for whom reception, in terms of or in the totality of a thought, aims to fill a certain need of meaning or understanding inherent to human life. Thus, working with an expanded idea of reception, in which a given philosophy can be appropriated and considered in its entirety, encompassing acting, thinking, and living (complete reception, in Heller's terminology), or appropriated in parts, with emphasis on only one of the three elements that constitute philosophical objectification (partial reception), the author understands that, in general, reception cannot lead to philosophical objectification, but only to the most diverse appropriations of a philosophical thought, resulting in the fulfillment of a lack. In complete reception, this appropriation can, however, occur in various ways: that of the aesthetic receiver ("who receives philosophy *aesthetically* appropriates a philosophical work through its *form*") [Heller 1984: 30], the connoisseur recipients (who it "is a part of culture. They consciously appropriate philosophy as an organic part of human culture. They understand and interpret philosophical systems in their entirety and primarily admire in them the human achievement"), and the philosophical recipients (who appropriate "philosophy philosophically. They choose a philosophy and always one philosophy") [ibid.: 32]. Among these three types, the philosophical receiver is the most important, according to the author. The aesthetic and understanding receivers, although privileging one of the three moments of philosophy, without disregarding the other two, have more modest goals in the appropriation of an author. As for partial reception, which has its own specificities, it is not of primary concern to us at this moment. That said, the reception discussed here differs fundamentally from the theory of aesthetic reception proposed by Jauss, for example [Jauss 1978]. The latter could be better discussed in the context of doing History of Philosophy. Similarly, reception should not be confused with anthropophagy. Whereas in anthropophagy there is a deliberate intent to incorporate and transform the incorporated, in reception there is incorporation that keeps the ingested intact, even if it subsequently promotes developments stemming from it. For methodology regarding philosophical reception [see also Silva Jr., Dias 2021].

Bressane engaged directly and intensely with Nietzsche's texts. Regardless of that, the most likely scenario, as will be demonstrated, is that the interpretation of the philosopher resulted from a reading by specialists in Nietzschean thought.

This question can be quickly answered if we look at the film's script, or rather, at the screenwriter. It is well known that Rosa Maria Dias, an important Brazilian scholar of Nietzsche, was responsible for the screenplay. Taking as a reference some works by de Dias about the film whose screenplay she wrote, it becomes evident that there is a strong presence in the movie of the philosopher's interpretation as presented by Pierre Klossowski in the book *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* [Dias 2009]. At first glance, everything indicates the philosopher's portrayal in *Days of Nietzsche in Turin* was constructed based on the reading of the thinker by a French commentator, a commentary developed during a very peculiar historical moment in France. This is not to deny Bressane's own familiarity with Nietzsche's works, which is substantial, nor to exclude other commentators he may have read. Nor are we claiming that Rosa Maria Dias' interpretive framework is strictly aligned with Klossowski's. The point is rather to emphasize that the French interpreter seems to have played a prominent role in the version of Nietzsche presented on screen. This does not preclude the possibility that the filmmaker duly acclimated Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche's philosophy through a variant of late Brazilian modernism.

That said, up to this point, we have said little about how Nietzschean philosophy is actually received in *Days of Nietzsche in Turin* – apart from noting a kind of simple Gallicization of the philosopher, something that will become even clearer when we analyze the film's final scene. If Bressane's "Nietzsche" can be outlined, understanding the way Nietzschean thought is transposed into image is the next step we must take. Not a small step, for it is this operation that effectively constructs the "Bressanian Nietzsche".

This transposition occurs in Bressane's work through a translation from one language to another, specifically, the translation of philosophical concepts into images, based on what the philosopher's work evokes in the filmmaker-reader. This transposition will occur in Bressane's work through the translation from one language to another, the translation of concepts into images of what the philosophical work evoked in the reader-filmmaker. This is not about a verbal exposition of the concepts, which would keep the film within the register of philosophical discourse, but about giving philosophical discourse a new form. On this subject, in Bressane's own words:

Literature and cinema evoke a central theme: translation [...]. For an experimental translation, an intersemiotic translation, from one language to another, from text to film, what is required is a translation that identifies and pushes the limits of the translated medium. In cinema, translation is done with light-movement-angle-editing. [Bressane 2002: 25]

Clearly and directly, Bressane outlines how he translates texts and concepts into cinematic language, that is, how he experimentally translates his understanding (emerging from Klossowski's interpretation) of Nietzsche's thought into film. In parentheses: this translation does not disregard the one that preceded it, namely, the Brazilian Portuguese version, which necessarily had to falsify, at least in terms of language, Nietzsche's original wording, insofar as it employed foreign linguistic codes (or, as the filmmaker would put it, a way of feeling the world) to render Nietzsche's linguistic universe. In this sense, João Ribeiro's "Nietzsche", that is, the way in which this author initially acclimates Nietzsche's philosophy [Ribeiro 1964] through language, is, for Bressane, the paradigmatic case, since

language precedes (or induces) the image.⁴ To close this parenthesis: every translation of Nietzsche's writings ultimately becomes responsible, in its own way, for shaping the images we form of the philosopher – images that are, invariably, the likeness of a specific linguistic creation. For example, the presence of images of Rio de Janeiro in the film belongs in this category.

Having identified the reading of Nietzsche that the filmmaker draws upon, Klossowski's interpretation, and how he transposes that philosophy into a different medium, Ribeiro's procedure, we can finally turn to the film itself, to observe how the reception is concretely realized.

The narrative of the film follows in a linear fashion the events of 1888 and early 1889, the period during which Nietzsche stayed (even if intermittently) in Turin. From his arrival in the city to his strolls, visits to the theater, cafés, tailor shops etc., until the psychic collapse, *Days of Nietzsche in Turin* highlights, through the philosopher's letters, addressed to various recipients, key episodes from this period. In this sense, the film begins with a first "confrontation" with Wagner (let us recall that *The Case of Wagner* was being written at that time) and continues until Nietzsche's final days in the Italian city (before being taken by Overbeck to Basel after the psychic collapse).

The narrative interweaves Nietzsche's life and thought. Understanding that Nietzsche's philosophy would be less a theory and, above all, the expression of intense experiences of thought, which necessarily leads to a psychological collapse, Klossowski's reading provides the appropriate framework for presenting the events, giving them a precise sense or framing. However, the film's construction arises from transpositions of this understanding, already filtered through a translation of the philosopher's "text", now converted into cinematic language. Moreover, this interlude between life and thought construct, throughout the narrative, even in the most banal events, such as a glass of water on the philosopher's desk, the concept-images that form the film's plot, ultimately leading to the final scene in which Nietzsche "becomes what he is" in the figure of Nietzsche-Dionysus.

The film's central concepts, translated, transposed, and strategically arranged to construct the tragic denouement of Nietzsche's life, are, on one hand, the dissolution of the subject, of identity, that is, of the idea of unity; perspectivism; and the Apollonian and the Dionysian. This core conceptual cluster, especially the first two notions, receives a treatment that involves the precise use of the camera. Thus, in order to depict the rending of Nietzsche's body, which will allow the philosopher to embody other historical figures but also to merge with Dionysus or simply transfigure into that figure, the camera projects Nietzsche from multiple viewpoints, imparting movement, usually circular, that dismembers and fragments the philosopher's body throughout the film. To portray perspectivism on screen, in an effort to dethrone unity, two strategies are most frequently employed: in one, the camera is wielded as a means to construct scenes that are never shown from a single point of view, but are instead constantly reframed from multiple angles, creating a labyrinthine experience for the spectator and disorienting them; in the other, the use of

⁴ João Ribeiro (1860–1934), an intellectual and journalist, was one of the first to write about Nietzsche's philosophy in Brazil. With several articles published in newspapers about the philosopher (for example: [Ribeiro 1964]), Ribeiro is believed to have transcribed Nietzschean terms into Portuguese for the first time, initiating a linguistic acclimatization of Nietzsche's writing – a translation into another culture. As Bressane has already stated in interviews, it is this procedure by Ribeiro that inspires him to acclimatize Nietzsche's writing into national images, through academic interpretations.

various textures, through 35mm film, blown-up 16mm, and Cinemascope, implodes the very possibility of conceiving the real, of positing the in-itself, and generates an atmosphere of unreality, dream, and suspicion, thereby placing the notion of truth (especially as representation) under scrutiny. To mark the omnipresence of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, certain images and sounds are mobilized: grapes bought at a fruit stand in Rio de Janeiro, explicitly evoking the idea of a tropical Dionysus; the tapping of the philosopher's feet echoing dithyrambs as he writes a letter; the use of light; the presence of the sun; and the deliberate selection of a soundtrack (featuring both Nietzsche's own compositions and Bizet's, as well as Brazilian songs and various ambient noises, such as ocean waves).

Related to these concepts, on the other hand, there are also three others translated into images, which, apart from the previous ones – more strongly marked by a critical variant – would now form part of a more propositional strand of Nietzsche's philosophy, involving values more directly: these are of the eternal return of the same and the transvaluation of all values, as well as key ideas such as flux and movement. The concept-images created to evoke these include: the breasts of a young woman and the mountains (in the shape of breasts) of Rio de Janeiro, referring to the idea of the circle; the image of Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*, with Nietzsche replacing the figure of the wanderer, with the gaze turned toward the distance, referring to a going beyond; and the photographs of Nietzsche, at the end of the film, which are digitally animated to gain movement, among many others, against all statism linked to a Christian morality.

In summary, these specific concepts, in fact, concept-images, such as the fragmentation of the subject, whose unity is sustained only fictitiously; the multiple perspectives, which open paths toward value inversion or the exclusion of the possibility of objective, certain, and immutable knowledge; the Apollonian and the Dionysian, which, along with the eternal return of the same and the transvaluation of values, point toward the opening of a new path after the collapse of Christianity, outside a Christian framework, are the film's driving forces, constructed according to a highly precise scheme, "light-movement-angle-editing", aiming at a new configuration of the subject, which, in this case, will result in madness.

It is along these lines that the plot leads to Nietzsche's final days in Turin – to a philosopher who is no longer a single individual, but many, always interpreted through the lens of Klossowski, in which lucidity – madness forms the core. This becomes evident in Rosa Maria Dias's commentary on the final chapter of *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, "Euphoria of Turin." In her words regarding this:

Klossowski interprets Nietzsche's letters and final notes from late 1888 and early 1889 as the moment in which the philosopher is under the confluence of the law of the eternal return, which demands the Dionysian shattering of his identity, and the opening of his soul to an intensive series of other possible individualities. Surrendered to a circular and dismembered movement, like Dionysus Zagreus, who was torn apart by the Titans [...]. In this way, for Klossowski, "Nietzsche's journey through the lives of various individuals" ceases to be a pathological condition and becomes something affirmative. It should be seen as an experimentation with the dark side of thought – with the unthought – when thought itself takes on the tone of delirium. [Dias 2009: 171]

Based on these statements by Rosa Maria Dias, we are led to the final scene of the film. Yet it is another, earlier moment that makes it possible: the scene featuring *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* by Andrea Mantegna, transfigured into the dead Nietzsche.

This moment opens the path to the dissolution of the self – not through the eventual decomposition of Nietzsche’s physical body, but through the suppression of the “true world”, as enacted in Nietzschean philosophy by the announcement of the death of God, which once again situates man within a changing and plural world. A dissolution of dualism from within, through the implosion of the idea of unity, revealing that its very postulation was fictitious. At this point in the film, there is an influx that will henceforth allow for the emergence of the other of reason, not irrationalism, but the instincts, which had sought expression through reason and had been filtered and organized according to criteria foreign to them. These instincts now find a more integral form of expression, no longer subjected to that prior filtration and organization – even if, from a rational point of view, this new form of expression bears the name of madness. With the necessary shift in perspective, former lucidity reveals itself as a true lack of lucidity; and madness becomes the most lucid mode for the proper expression of instinct.

Thus, after the scene with the horse, in which the psychic collapse occurs and a definitive break with a certain rational structure takes place, Nietzsche’s figure can be fused with that of Dionysus. In this sense, in her reading of the French commentator, Rosa Maria Dias remarks:

Klossowski presents Nietzsche’s madness as an element of his philosophy; as a consequence of the dissolution of the self and the identification with the cycles of the eternal return, with the memory of history. He shows that Nietzsche had two options: either to go mad or to create something equivalent to madness, this is the Nietzschean tragedy [...]. Delirium as loss of identity, madness as the fading of reason, does not mark Nietzsche’s unmasking but rather his supreme realization. [Dias 2009: 194]

In this direction, at the end of the film, we have a critique of the subject that culminates in the dissolution of Nietzsche’s self, which now becomes many and ultimately transforms into Nietzsche-Dionysus, in a true vicious circle between lucidity and madness, in order to “become what he is”:

Oswaldian Nietzsche, surrendered to circular movement and dismembered by the Titans, gives his last laugh, dissolves, traverses the series of intensive fluctuations that pass through him and constitute him as Nietzsche-Caesar, Nietzsche-Prince Taurinorum, Nietzsche-Prado, and then Dionysus and Christ, to finally “become Nietzsche” in the photographs of the philosopher that gain movement in the film’s final scenes. [Dias 2009: 171]

It is with this conclusion, where one of the pivotal points of Nietzsche’s philosophy is realized, the tearing apart of the subject, in which the eternal return of the same plays a decisive role, according to Klossowski’s interpretation, that the film ends, having meticulously traversed the stages of the deconstruction of the philosopher’s own identity, intertwining life and thought.

Having presented the translation that Júlio Bressane carries out in his *Dias de Nietzsche em Turim*, we are now in a position to take one step further: to examine the nature of the reception of Nietzsche’s philosophy in the film and, from there, draw some conclusions, albeit briefly. With the elements we have so far, we can affirm that the reception in question is of a complete nature and of an aesthetic order. Let us listen once again to Agnes

Heller, now providing more detail about this type of reception, which we briefly touched upon in footnote three:

The fact that aesthetic reception does not primarily stimulate further thoughts, and so does not “transpose” the philosophical work, in no way contradicts the claim that this is a complete reception, for at the same time the feeling that is released in catharsis is a world view. Aesthetic recipients do not seek in philosophy an answer to the problems of their own life, but rather an answer to the problem of “life” in general. For them the reception of form means: “I’ve found it! One should think *thus*, act thus, live thus”. The reception opens up to them an *interpretation of the world*. That catharsis involves feeling merely that aesthetic recipients have no *critical relationship* to the work that is received. They feel: “This is true and one must think thus, one cannot think any other way”. Reception is not followed by any further astonishment (“thaumazein”) and the clarity cannot be reserved. [Heller 1984: 31]

As we observe from the film, it is the beauty of the Nietzschean work, in terms of its composition, that immediately mobilizes feelings rather than strictly ideas. Bressane’s contact with the entire Nietzschean corpus and the manner in which he read Nietzsche’s works (whether using philosophical methodologies or not) is secondary or altogether irrelevant, as we have already suggested. With the mobilization of feelings, a cathartic effect ensues, in the sense of revealing a truth or a very precise and defined interpretation of the world, effectively emerging in this translation of text into images. And it is precisely Klosowski who provides the clue to this catharsis (which culminates in the explosion of a self-arising from the implosion of the foundations of Western thought identity) that Bressane stages here. A catharsis that removes all critical elements from the object being received, largely due, in the terms Bressane would use, to a pathos between the object of reception and the receiver. Following the French commentator and his peers, within a Nietzschean “soixante-huitard” line, a catharsis of the oppression arising from Western civilization, which, through reason, has developed the most elaborate stratagems of domination. In the film, the conclusion unfolds as the full realization of a catharsis.

Thus characterized the manner in which the reception of Nietzsche’s philosophy occurs in Bressane’s film, based on the framework provided by Heller, much remains to be done, that is, it is still necessary to understand the importance of Nietzsche’s philosophy within the filmmaker’s entire body of work, as well as to evaluate the place of this film in the national cinematic landscape and, more broadly, within Brazilian culture. This evidently goes beyond the aims of this study. However, the aesthetic “framing” of this reception clearly reveals the type of catharsis achieved, with a very well-developed worldview behind it, largely aligned with the French commentator’s perspective. And this already constitutes, even if only a small one, an indication of the need for elements necessary to move beyond a regressive situation, arising, in broader cultural terms, after 1968, which the reception of Nietzsche’s philosophy in *Days of Nietzsche in Turin* successfully fulfills.

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Nietzsche and the seventh art in Brazil: A Study of the Film *Days of Nietzsche in Turin* by Júlio Bressane

Considering the work of Brazilian filmmaker Júlio Bressane as the most representative for a study of the reception of Nietzschean philosophy in Brazilian cinema, this article aims to analyze the film *Days of Nietzsche in Turin*. To this end, we examine the filmmaker's strategies for transposing a theoretical corpus into visual language, seeking to identify, throughout this process, the interpretative frameworks that inform his reading of Nietzschean philosophy. Through the use of unconventional cinematic techniques, an innovative handling of the camera, and elements drawn from Brazilian culture, the director translates Nietzschean concepts into visual form, turning this film into a singular example of the artistic reception of philosophical thought, that is, a cultural intervention through the incorporation of elements exogenous to Brazilian culture, which thereby become part of it.

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Ніцше і сьоме мистецтво в Бразилії: Дослідження фільму «Дні Ніцше в Турині» Жуліо Брессане

Розглядаючи творчість бразильського режисера Жуліо Брессане як найбільш репрезентативну для дослідження сприйняття ніцшеанської філософії в бразильському кіно, ця стаття має на меті проаналізувати фільм «Дні Ніцше в Турині». Для цього ми досліджуємо стратегії режисера щодо перенесення теоретичного корпусу у візуальну

мову, прагнучи протягом цього процесу визначити інтерпретаційні рамки, які формують його тлумачення ніцшеанської філософії. Завдяки використанню нетрадиційних кінематографічних прийомів, інноваційному поводженню з камерою та елементам, запозиченим з бразильської культури, режисер перекладає ніцшеанські концепції у візуальну форму, перетворюючи цей фільм на єдиний приклад художнього сприйняття філософської думки, тобто культурного втручання через включення елементів, екзогенних по відношенню до бразильської культури, які таким чином стають її частиною.

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