

## The Any-Space-Whatever without Borders

*Or Why Bresson Secretly Made Lancelot du Lac for People Who Can't See*

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### Introduction

In the beginning of Robert Bresson's *Lancelot du Lac* (1974), Lancelot returns empty-handed to Camelot after a fruitless two-year quest for the Holy Grail. He reports back to Artus, the king, on the field in front of the castle. Artus expresses his relief over the fact that at least Lancelot was spared and commands his nephew Gauvain to inform queen Guenièvre that her knight has returned. Artus and Lancelot walk out of the frame and Gauvain proceeds to walk towards the castle. At 08.05 minutes into the film, Gauvain starts his stroll; he calmly walks over the field all the way into the castle. The cut to the next shot comes at 08.23 minutes, when Gauvain has disappeared out of the frame, into the castle. What one might expect to happen – to see Gauvain deliver his message to the queen – does not; instead, the focalization shifts to Lancelot. Why then, we might ask ourselves, do we have to watch Gauvain walk *all the way* into the castle? The shot exists for the sake of the shot itself, it seems, or for the sake of the rhythm of Gauvain's slow disappearance; its peculiar pulse announces itself stronger with every step Gauvain takes.

I suspect this shot is – or gradually becomes – what Gilles Deleuze calls an 'any-space-whatever'. Deleuze introduces the concept as follows, in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983):

Any-space-whatever is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible. (CI 109)

This defining introduction is followed by the sentence: 'What in fact manifests the instability, the heterogeneity, the absence of link of such a space, is a richness in potentials or singularities which are, as it were, prior conditions of all actualisation, all determination' (CI 109). If a character expresses an emotion, if he or she presents himself or herself in a state that we can determine as being

emotive, the image becomes what Deleuze calls an 'affection-image'. Any-space-whatever should be considered the genetic element of the affection-image: a potentiality, or a 'before' (C1 110). A character that establishes a certain blankness itself, by virtue of not expressing an emotion or undertaking an action, constitutes a disconnected space charged with *potential*. This is the first form of any-space-whatever. The second form is the first form taken to the extreme: not mere disconnection but *emptiness*, an 'after'. Event, character and action disappear from the image; they are being hung out to dry, so to speak, in a void (C1 120). Even though Deleuze distinguishes two forms of any-space-whatever, he emphasizes that the phenomenon retains one and the same nature: that of an uncoordinated, pure potential, that shows 'only pure Powers and Qualities, independently of the states of things or milieux which actualise them' (C1 120).

In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), Deleuze offers supplementary observations regarding any-space-whatever and typifies it as a situation we no longer know how to react to, a space we no longer know how to describe (C2 xi). The crisis of the 'action-image' – briefly put: an image that features a clearly motivated deed by a character, a movement towards a goal (C1 65) – loosens the 'sensory-motor linkage' (the motivational scheme) and subsequently presents the viewer a brief moment of time in a pure state, independent of action (C2 xi). What the any-space-whatever confronts us with is a pure optical and sound situation that indexes nothing, because it has no material links outside of itself: it exists on its own and for its own sake (C2 6).

Deleuze seems to have been the first to elaborately describe – in both *Cinema* books – the partiality in modern cinema (European cinema post-World War II) for spaces that are no longer determined. However, the academic discourse on what I would like to call autonomous cinematic space is longstanding. Aside from Deleuze, the most important contributors to this discourse are the following: Béla Balázs calls moments that feature events without context or causality, 'absolute film' (Balázs 159-161). Noël Burch refers to suspensions of diegetic flow as 'pillow-shots' (Burch 160). Seymour Chatman defines the moment that space becomes the scene itself 'temps mort' (Chatman 126). Gilberto Perez calls an accent on space 'thin air' (Perez 136), and Timotheus Vermeulen and Gry C. Rustad, although focusing on television predominantly, identify the 'late cut' as the lingering of the camera in a space longer than is necessary for the development of the plot (Vermeulen and Rustad 3-4). The most important difference between these concepts of and Deleuze's any-space-whatever concept resides in the circumstance that in Deleuze's conception, autonomous space is not

encoded with significance or meaning that can or should be decoded a posteriori. Any-space-whatever is a *potentiality* without additions. Balázs, Burch, Chatman to a lesser degree, Perez, and Vermeulen and Rustad all tick off, in varying degrees, possibilities they *read* in the potential. They seem to regard autonomous cinematic space as something that carries the seeds of actualization, seeds that they harvest themselves through textualization, that is to say: through interpretation, meaning attribution, translation et cetera. Deleuze refrains from this. He might describe cinema as ‘pure semiotics’ (C1 ix), but this does not mean that there is an understanding beyond the classification of cinematic images; his codification is a mere ‘system of images and signs independent of language in general’ (C2 29). The difficulty with regarding image as text lies, according to Deleuze, in the notion that ‘at the very point that the image is replaced by an utterance, the image is given a false appearance, and its most authentically visible characteristic, movement, is taken away from it’ (C2 27). Indeed, if an image can or should be read, it might not be an image first and foremost, but a sentence dressed up as an image; an instrument for a director to get his or her idea across, which, once understood, abolishes the potential of the image.

What every cinematic space offers, always and unambiguously, is its own particular rhythm. What I am interested in is the rhythm of any-space-whatever, because I believe rhythm to be cinema’s most authoritative constituent (I will illustrate this viewpoint in the following paragraph). Since cinema is an audiovisual art that takes place within elapsed time, the immediate perception of a rhythmic shift to or the rhythmic dimension of autonomous cinematic space is just as imperative, if not of more significance, than its countless interpretive potentials. Meaning, interpretation (beyond categorizing something as any-space-whatever), translation, or what the semiotic sign of any-space-whatever might signify beyond its semiotic sign are of no interest to me. My sole interest lies in the rhythm of the semiotic sign.

### **Rhythm as the discourse of form**

As explained by Jean Mitry in *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema* (1963), rhythm is nothing more than the *dynamic extension in time of perceptual forms* (121). Now, if rhythm indeed is nothing more than the dynamic extension in time of perceptual forms – which is precisely what a film is – then the impression of the film as a whole is always the impression of its rhythm. Essentially, a film is nothing but a *delimited rhythm*, or, with a slight nod towards Deleuze and Guattari (though without using the word in the particular sense in

which they use it): a rhythm territory. A film: a congregation of rhythms, assembled within time; thus, a territory in the simplest sense of the word, ruled sovereign by rhythm. In its totality a film can be considered as *one single rhythm*; this single rhythm can be subdivided into a vast amount of macro- and micro-rhythms (I will explain these shortly), color rhythms, spatial rhythms, rhythms within rhythms, the rhythm of any-space-whatever et cetera, which, once again, all combined on their turn constitute the individual rhythm of the film. This is the main reason why I believe rhythm to be cinema's most democratic- element - and most authoritative at the same time, since it is all-pervasive. Undoubtedly, some rhythms draw more attention to themselves than others, for instance by virtue of an intense contrast between one shot and the next. But a hierarchy of importance is difficult to imagine, because the (discrete) rhythm of the eighth minute is just as influential for the impression of the whole, as the (intense) rhythm of the eightieth minute. Regardless of quality quantity, every single rhythm shapes the impression of the whole in equal amounts. This is why I would like to observe that rhythm is the discourse of form.<sup>1</sup> It governs everything, but it does so without language.

So, what does cinematic rhythm consist of, or perhaps more adequately put: what are the methods with which we can make rhythm concrete? Danijela Kulezic-Wilson distinguishes two main rhythm categories in her recent book *The Musicality of Narrative Film* (2015),: 'external rhythm' and 'internal rhythm' (59).<sup>2</sup> Since editing, or the cut, is imposed externally upon what is happening on the screen – the cut is not something that exists within the story world – all editing shapes or *is* the film's external rhythm. Everything that happens and is visible between two cuts, the organization of the mise-en-scène, lighting, color, movement et cetera, forms the internal rhythm (59). Indeed, one could state rather brusquely that within the film image (excluding independent peripheral factors that influence the consumption of the film and thus contribute to the impression of its rhythm, i.e. the projector speed, the location where the film is exhibited, the organization of the public, the mood of the viewer et cetera) nothing exists outside of external and internal rhythm.

The external and internal rhythm categories can each be subdivided into macro-rhythm and micro-rhythm categories<sup>3</sup>, which can both be subdivided into – or are made up out of – the rhythm elements I will enumerate below. Note that the following terms come from an online interactive textbook that was designed to support the *Art, Design, and Visual Thinking* course, taught at Cornell University and authored by former course instructor Charlotte Jirousek (1995<sup>4</sup>), but the

particular subdivision of those terms within the macro- and micro-rhythm categories is mine. I would like to subdivide macro-rhythm, i.e. the formal organization of the whole, the accents that form the structure and the cohesive unitization of the film (Kulezic-Wilson 65-67), into these four categories: repetition (of an editing pattern for instance); alternation (for instance between dream-images and reality); gradation (in a tragedy: things worsening until the ultimate downfall); and unity (of concept for instance). And I would like to subdivide micro-rhythm into these four categories: emphasis; interruption; contrast (between anything: color, shape, movement, texture, et cetera); and shifts in focalization – in short: practically everything that shows an alteration between one particular element (which can be anything) and what immediately precedes or follows it.

With these methods, I want to explore if particular any-space-whatever rhythms can be discerned in *Lancelot du Lac*, how these rhythms function specifically, and what consequences they have for the extension and/or better understanding of the concept of any-space-whatever and its exact rhythm(s). Such an analysis =questions three important things: a) the existence of any-space-whatever in *Lancelot du Lac* (which cannot be considered an a priori fact); b) how rhythm functions within the film's any-space-whatever(s); and c) what those specific rhythms enlighten about the concept of any-space-whatever. Note that steps a and b are not necessarily consecutive. Moreover, they take place simultaneously: what pronounces itself as any-space-whatever does so *by virtue of* its particular rhythm.

### **The difficulty of assessing any-space-whatever in Bresson**

In his *Notes on Cinematography* (1975), Bresson comments on rhythm twice, the first time on page 23: “*Rhythmic value of a noise*. Noise of a door opening and shutting, noise of footsteps, etc., for the sake of rhythm”. In *Lancelot du Lac*, the foregrounding rhythms of doors that are continually opened and shut, the continuous walking towards or away from something and the rattling sounds of the knights' armors are taken to such an extreme that the film's central action, the legend of Lancelot, almost appears to be little more than an excuse, a coat rack upon which these rhythms can be draped. Rhythm is mentioned for the second time on page 31: “*Rhythms*. The omnipotence of rhythms. Nothing is durable but what is caught up in rhythms. Bend context to form and sense to Rhythms”. A rigid, complete poetics seems to reside within these sentences. Rhythm rules sovereign, in Bresson's point of view, it overrides milieu and governs the logic.

And it also supersedes meaning, as he makes clear in a 1967 interview with Jean-Luc Godard and Michel Delahaye:

I attach enormous importance to form. Enormous. And I believe that the form leads to the rhythms. Now the rhythms are all-powerful. That is the first thing. Even when one makes the commentary of a film, this commentary is seen, felt, as first as a rhythm. Then it is a color (it can be cold or warm); then it has a meaning. But the meaning arrives last. (12)<sup>5</sup>

So, while Bresson expresses himself resolutely regarding the importance of rhythm, he has not explicitly (and publicly) referred to what could be attributed to something that could pass for autonomous cinematic space. He does say something about the whole of film art, though, in which one can hear, with a little goodwill, an echo of any-space-whatever: “Cinematography, the art, with images, of *representing* nothing” (Bresson 59). Indeed, it seems very easy, at first glance, to discern a massive amount of any-space-whatevers in any of Bresson’s films. This supposed effortlessness resides in the vast amount of empty spaces/frames his films contain, and the fact that the models (not actors) in his films do not act; that they are rather speaking robotically into a void, which habitually transforms all characters in humanoid any-space-whatevers of sorts. At a second glance, though, it becomes much more problematic. The difficulty lies in the fact that often, what seems to be an any-space-whatever to our *eyes*, is an action-image – or perhaps more adequately put: an action-sound (Deleuze never mentions such a concept) – to our *ears*. The clearest, most poignant example that demonstrates this observation is a shot from Bresson’s final film, *L’Argent* (1983). In this shot, the criminal Lucien and his two accomplices escape via the Paris subway. The camera is positioned at the top of the stairs that lead to the subway platform. The moment Lucien and his two accomplices have descended down the staircase and disappear around the corner, onto the platform, the camera statically lingers for eleven more seconds (34.12 until 34.23 minutes) before the camera cuts to the next shot. On a purely visual plane, for eleven seconds the viewer seems to be lingering in any-space-whatever (the second form; the void). The informing sounds of the pending and departing subway, however, unmistakably announce to the viewer the fact that the subway is about to leave and eventually departs. So, the viewer does not linger in any-space-whatever; Bresson has simply replaced an image with a sound. With a poetics like that in mind, the presumption that Bresson’s films contain any-space-whatever at all might go up in the air. However, I believe that in *Lancelot du Lac*, there resides something within that conscientious attention to and interplay of movement and sound, that transforms

the *whole film* into an optical and sound situation that indexes *nothing beyond the rhythm of movement and sound*.

### **Rhythm peculiarities in *Lancelot du Lac***

For the readers of this article who have not seen *Lancelot du Lac* or are unfamiliar with Bresson's oeuvre, reading a plot summary online might evoke the impression that the film contains a lot of drama, blood, action and whirling emotions. But very little of that is the case, at least explicitly. Only the prologue contains some very un-Bressonian violence: the beheading of a knight, the stabbing of a knight, and the bashing-in of a knight's helmet. The rest of the drama takes place outside of the frame or is hinted at with sound. More so than spectacle, Bresson's interest seems to lie, as noted in the former paragraph, in having people *arrive at* and *depart from* places. In those very rare instances when a character does not first arrive at the scene where the action – a dialogue most of the time – is going to take place, Bresson replaces the arrival with a small act, a little *movement-conduit* so to speak, such as the picking up of a helmet or the putting down of one's sword. But a scene never begins *in medias res*. I will illustrate this formal particularity for the remainder of this paragraph, recounting various examples as clearly as possible, while leaving the reason why they can be considered fragments of a single, all-encompassing, all-usurping any-space-whatever to be exemplified in the following paragraphs. For the sake of convenience, I have italicized those sentences that mark the arrival/commencing movement and/or the departure/final movement of the sequence.

In the sequence of *Image 1*, the opening shot shows Lancelot's helmet placed on a stretcher. The tolling of a bell can be heard. *Lancelot enters the frame, picks up the helmet and walks towards the opening of the tent* to ask a servant who is leading two horses if it is time for mass. The servant responds that it has not chimed three yet and proceeds to walk around the corner, leading the horses with him. The camera cuts back to Lancelot, who watches the servant and the two horses disappear around the corner (this seems the most logical assertion, although his eyes do not follow the servant). The camera cuts back to the servant and the two horses, that start to drink water out of a trough. In the next shot, the camera is positioned inside Lancelot's tent, pointed downwards slightly. *Lancelot leaves the tent and consequently the frame*. He then proceeds to pass through a door. The continuity of the bell-tolling sound – which can still be heard, but slightly weaker as he is now outside of the settlement's walls – clearly communicates to the viewer

a continuity in diegetic time. (Interestingly, in this shot, Lancelot's underpants are of a different color; blue instead of purple. This has to be a continuity error.)

In the shot of *Image 2*, a servant of Guenièvre's quarters opens the door, closes it and passes by Guenièvre and Gauvain, who are conversing – or more adequately put: the dialogue starts the moment the servant starts to pass them by. After the conversation between Gauvain and Guenièvre ends, Gauvain leaves Guenièvre and walks to the left. Artus and Lionel enter through a door. A short dialogue between Gauvain and Artus ensues after which Artus and Lionel leave through yet another door. The camera then cuts back to Gauvain, who shrugs and repeats Artus' command. And it is after this small action that the closing movement-conduit ensues: *two servants pass in the background – through the frame of a door –, their footsteps audible*, demarcating the end of the sequence.

At times, the arrival or the departure of the main characters goes hand in hand with an accompanying movement-conduit. In the two frames of *Image 3*, Lancelot leaves the tent in which he and Mordred have had an exchange. In the left frame his shadow is still visible on the canvas of the tent. *The moment his shadow disappears from the frame, a servant with a light passes by between the corners of two tents in the background*, as is visible in the right frame. The sound of the servant's footsteps gets lost in the clattering sound of Lancelot's armor, which seamlessly liquefies into the sounds of the next sequence, in which a horse *is brushed by a servant*. Lancelot and Gauvain enter the frame and proceed to walk around the corner of the tent, but again only after *two other servants with horses have passed through the frame*.

A final example. When the two riders from Escalot arrive in Camelot to extend an invitation to the jousting tournament, their arrival is compartmentalized in three shots that are interspersed with three shots from inside Camelot and in which Gauvain and Lionel are watching the arrival of the riders. The riders arrive in three shots and they depart in two. *They approach in a long shot, the volume of the footsteps of their horses gradually increasing*. Then the camera cuts to Gauvain and Lionel, who observe the arriving riders from inside the settlement. Gauvain verbally confirms that the two riders are from Escalot (two shots). *The following shot follows the flag the riders are carrying, then the camera cuts to a shot of the riders passing over the drawbridge and into Camelot*; the sound of the horses' hooves on the drawbridge clearly demarcating the entering into new territory. The third shot from inside Camelot ensues, which shows Lionel and another knight departing after the knight has expressed his surprise concerning the

arrival of the two riders from Escalot. The next shot, the first shot of departure, shows a close-up of one rider *spurring his horse, subsequently riding out of the frame*. In the final shot of this sequence *the camera follows the two riders on their way out*, and then shifts back to Artus, Lancelot and Gauvain, who speculate about the upcoming tournament.

### **For the ear**

I could go on and on recounting the myriad arrivals and departures, and the opening and closing movement-conduits – a highly dominant macro-rhythm to say the least – the film is larded with, but the above has made clear that the sound part of this macro-rhythm is what complements and constitutes one big any-space-whatever. Undeniably, most things that happen in *Lancelot du Lac* happen for the sake of the ear just as much – sometimes even more so – as for the sake of the eye. This particular sound approach to the film image could be considered equitably unique, in contrast to a musical approach, which is more common. Kulezic-Wilson lists a few examples of the musical approach in the second chapter ('Music as Model and Metaphor') of *The Musicality of Narrative Film*, which I will briefly summarize here. Eisenstein, she writes, approached his silent films from a musical point of view, envisioning them as complex polyphonic networks that would unify both image and soundtrack (32-33). Alain Resnais employed an organization of musical parameters to subjugate the structure of his *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) to (33). A type of audiovisual kinesis that features 'expressive gestures, choreographed actions, rapid editing, amplified sound effects and music' has been conventional in action films since the 1990s (39). There is the interplay, also, between image and music in musicals, which Mitry and Lea Jacobs (in her book *Film Rhythm after Sound: Technology, Music, and Performance [2014]*) extensively write about. In general, however, throughout cinema history, the soundtrack – in silent film or sound film – has been considered primarily as an addition *to* and not a primary constituent *of* the image (Kulezic-Wilson 35-36).

*Lancelot du Lac* seems distinctive in the sense that sound – and not music – vigorously *outlines, shapes and dictates* the mise-en-scène, in such a consistent manner that – as peculiar as this might sound – the film seems to have been composed principally for the ear. Before I proceed, I believe it is important to note here that it is not my intention – the title of this article is not devoid of irony – to create the impression that *Lancelot du Lac* is a film that is as listenable as much as it is watchable, or that it *should* be listened to with one's eyes closed. At

the end of the day we are dealing with a film here, and not a radio play. What I want to elucidate is the notion that the judiciousness of the style and the rhythms of *Lancelot du Lac*, of Bresson's poetics, becomes profoundly clear once one has understood that sound *dictates* the image, and consequently the rhythm of the image (of all images).

Let us go back to the sequence of *Image 1*. The sounds of the tolling bell and the picking up of the helmet by Lancelot seem to demarcate the beginning of a new sequence, while the shot of the two horses drinking from the trough – which pauses the sound of their footsteps – seems to provide the ear with an auditory rhythm cessation. This cessation is crucial, because the ear could not have established its position in cinematic space if Lancelot had departed from his tent at the exact same time the servant and his two horses left around the corner. Not the *exact position in space* – the ear is not placed in a three-dimensional environment – but a position that provides a clear enough understanding of what is happening on the screen. First, the horses need to arrive at the trough. The drinking from the trough pauses the footsteps of both the servant and the horses, providing the ear with a continuation and closing signal – they have now reached their goal (the trough) – of their presence, and affording the metrical rest that enables Lancelot's departure from his tent, which the ear can subsequently detect. The different volume level of the bell-tolling outside of the settlement's walls indicates to the ear that the forbidden rendezvous between Lancelot and Guenièvre takes place *outside* of the settlement, but still *within* hearing distance.

The three arrival-shots of the two riders from Escalot all contain different conduits of aural information regarding the *process* of their arrival, while the interbedded shots within the settlement contain verbal information regarding the *reason* of their arrival. In the first arrival shot, the swelling volume of the horses' hooves indicates to the ear that the riders are approaching. In the second arrival shot, the horses are walking towards the drawbridge, ready to enter Camelot; the sound of their footsteps rather neutral. In the third arrival shot, the sound of the horses' hooves changes somewhat, and takes on a different character when they start walking on the wooden drawbridge, demonstrating to the ear their passing into Camelot. When the two riders leave again, we first see and hear them riding sixteen seconds (from 26.32 minutes into the film until 26.48) before they pass over the drawbridge again, marking their departure from Camelot audible. Bresson clearly demarcates through time, sound and dialogue what happens, *without the strict necessity of seeing it*. (Note that the planks of the drawbridge are

never revealed to us visually; they only exist by virtue of the sound the horses' hooves make while they are on the bridge.)

The persistent and continuous dissolving of sequences into a void (of the sound of footsteps into a void), as one can see an example of in *Image 4*, marks the ending of a space, a conversation, and consequently the beginning, the introduction of a new space. A similar, but not quite the same, principle applies to the sequence of *Image 2*. The servant opens the door; her walking by Gauvain and Guenièvre; Gauvain walking to the left side of the space after the conversation between him and Guenièvre has ended; the entering and departing of Artus and Lionel; and finally the walking through the frame of the door in the background by the two servants, to rhythmically demarcate the end of the sequence: every movement-conduit seems to serve as a form of *mapping the territory through aural information, promulgated by movement*. If everything that happens in the film had started or ended in medias res, and if the characters had not walked anywhere, it would have been impossible for the ear to have any clue about the surrounding space. One would have only heard people talking, for which one could have gone to the theater just as well.

Regarding the departure of Lancelot from his tent, in *Image 3*, and the immediate passing through the frame of the servant in the background between the two tents, there seems to be an incongruity in the argument I am trying to make, because the sound of Lancelot's rattling armor, close to the camera, obliterates the sound of the footsteps of the servant who is much farther away from the camera. The fact that Lancelot leaves so abruptly, offended as he appears to be, and that he is not monitored in his departure (in contrast to other departures in the film, provided that they do not come snappishly and with rattling armor), makes this shot an exception, micro-rhythmically rebalanced by the slow and serene passing through of the servant in the background.

At times, whole sequences seem to be staged for a blind person, as it were, as is the case with the jousting tournament, the film's *pièce de milieu* (Bresson, in the pressbook for *Lancelot du Lac*, notes: "The tournament sequence was staged for the ear... as elsewhere, eventually all the other sequences"<sup>6</sup> []). The entire jousting tournament is little more than the repeated sound pattern of an introduction tune played on a bagpipe, the embarking of the horse and knight, the running of the horse, the crash of the lance on the armor of another knight, the crash of the knight falling on the ground and the cheering of the public. And every single time Gauvain announces the winner to Artus, who is seated next to him.

“Lancelot”, he says again and again, which, surely, Artus can see for himself. But a blind person, and I mean this literally, *has* to be told who the winner is, otherwise he or she would remain in the dark, both literally and figuratively.

### **Any-space-whatever without borders**

In an interview with Michel Ciment, Bresson plainly states: “I listen to my films as I make them, the way a pianist listens to the sonata he is performing, and I make the picture conform to sound rather than the other way round” (499). Although severely neglected in the academic writings on Bresson and *Lancelot du Lac* – and surprisingly so, since, as one can see in the citation above, Bresson openly states that the sound component outlines the images of his films – this sound component is extremely important if not essential in any visual or rhythm analysis of *Lancelot du Lac* (and perhaps of Bresson’s other films). Because the film, to me, does not seem to be or try to be anything more than a pure optical and sound situation; a rhythm territory whose edges were traced out a priori, by virtue of a highly rigid poetics. It is as if the solution to certain personally formulated cinematic problems was found beforehand (before committing anything to celluloid), and merely committed to film subsequently in order to have the results at hand, to see how these rhythms operate within the world of Arthurian legend. (*Lancelot du Lac*: merely the result of an aesthetic algorithm of sorts, put into the cinematic computer by Bresson.)

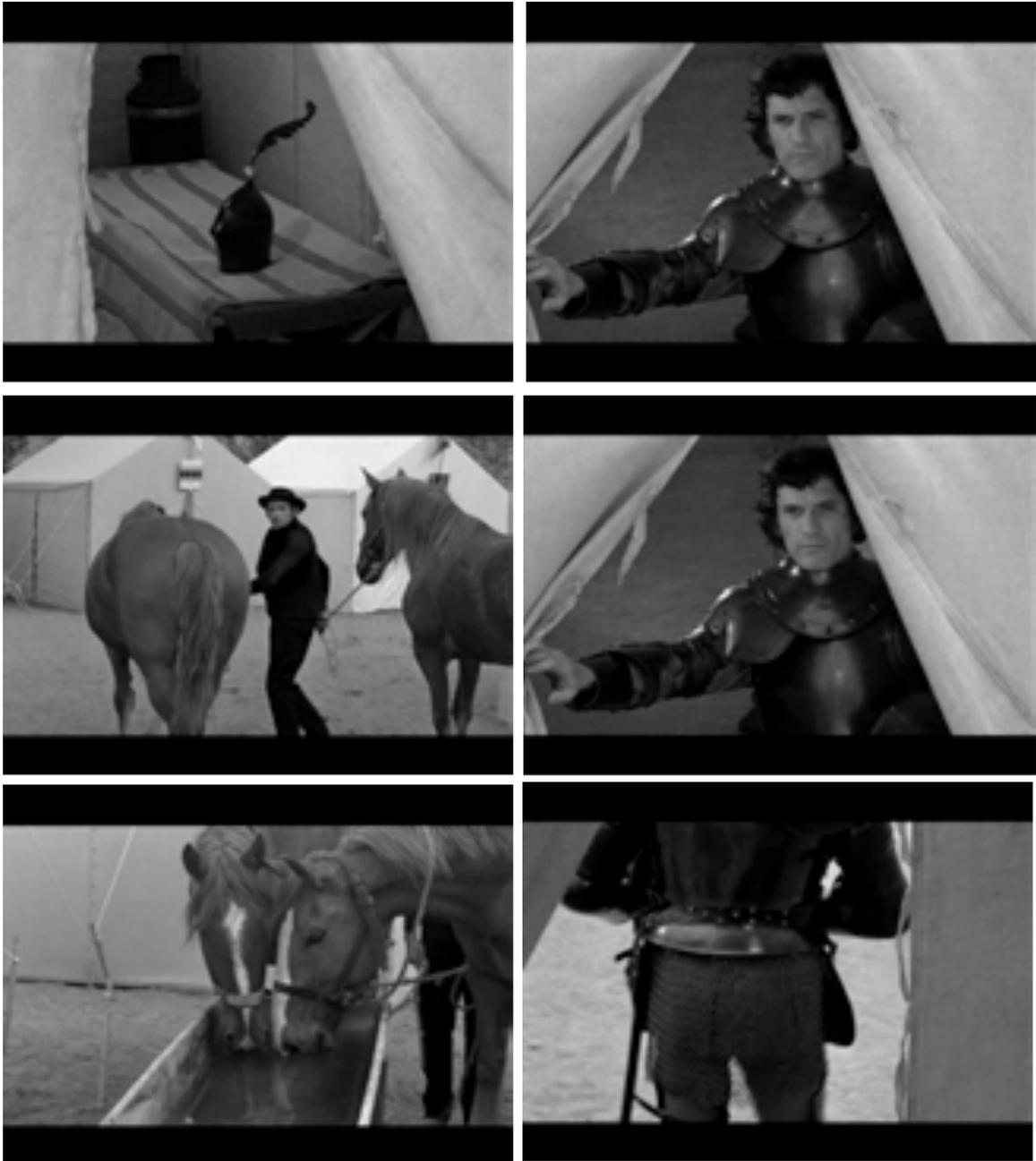
In *Lancelot du Lac*, movement and sound exist within a sturdily entwined rhythm relay. This rhythm relay functions as the governing principle of the film. All internal and external rhythm resolutions the film contains seem to have been made to fit this relay. This is the main reason why there are no tangible action-images or multiple any-space-whatevers that one can single out: everything is acute, either for the eye or for the ear, or both. The characters do not seem to be caught up in language or in action first and foremost; they do not seem to move in order to reach a goal, or because their words have an effect on the world around them. Moreover, they are caught up in movement and sound. *They move for the sake of movement and the sound their movements make*; indeed, one could say that they primarily exist *by virtue of the rhythm that the movement and sound relay creates*. I believe *Lancelot du Lac* is quintessentially little more than movement and sound united for the sake of rhythm: a pure optical and sound situation in itself, as a whole. This is what I would like to call an ‘any-space-whatever without borders’. The any-space-whatever without borders is an any-space-whatever released from its human coordinates that lasts for the entire

duration of the film, and in which rhythm is the all-usurping factor. In the any-space-whatever without borders, rhythm coordinates, overrides and governs everything. Undeniably, in the any-space-whatever without borders, rhythm rules sovereign.

I want to conclude this article<sup>7</sup> with a few comments on any-space-whatever, cinematic rhythm and the implications and goals of my research. Regarding the any-space-whatever notion and the difficulty that comes with the apprehension of such an abstruse concept, I deem it necessary to observe that what an any-space-whatever is exactly is partially determined by how strict one wants to delimit its borders. (Where does it begin? Where does it end? Is it even any-space-whatever?) I believe this demarcation is largely up to the researcher. More so than facts, any-space-whatevers are judgments. What I have judged to be any-space-whatever in this article, might be judged as something else – or not any-space-whatever enough – by other researchers.

If the *raison d'être* of this article has remained somewhat obscure throughout this article, let me end it by stating the following. To my (very personal) dissatisfaction, I find it too often to be the case that the concrete and formal characteristics of the objects of study within the humanities, habitually get concealed in favor of text excavation – the endless drilling into the artwork to excavate a numerous amount of subtexts. Necessary perhaps, and highly valid in its own right, but some point of saturation may have been reached. The specific ways in which cinema has the possibility to affect, by virtue of its rhythm potentialities, has been somewhat underexposed within its academic discourse. Why? Is not rhythm a much more unassuming, more universal denotation pattern or method, more concrete to identify, recognize and verify – while promoting intersubjectivity at the same time – than any form of text excavation? I would love to seek an answer to that question, and explore and elucidate cinema's rhythm potentialities further in possible future endeavors.

## Appendix <sup>8</sup>



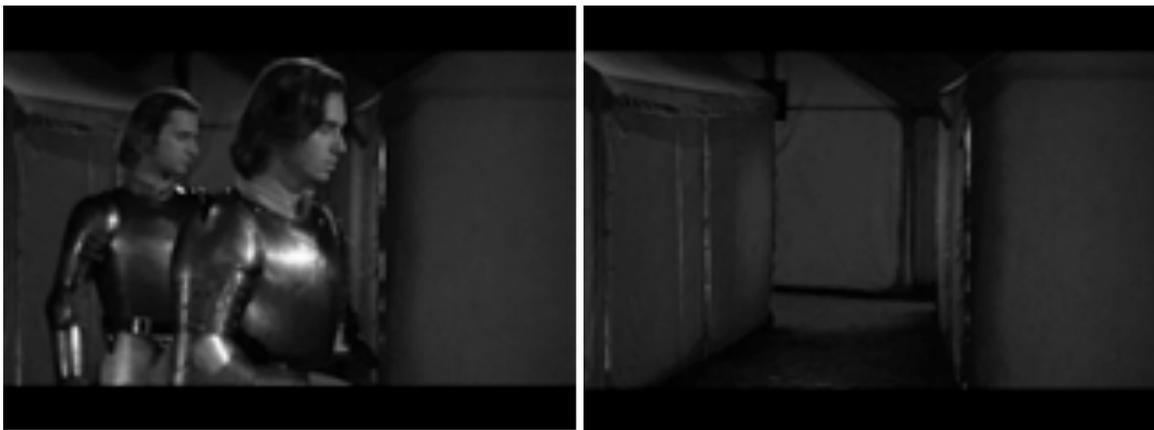
*Image 1.* « Lancelot du lac », a film by Robert Bresson. © 1974 Gaumont / Laser Production / France 3 Cinema (France) / Gerico Sound (Italy).



*Image 2.* « Lancelot du lac », a film by Robert Bresson. © 1974 Gaumont / Laser Production / France 3 Cinema (France) / Gerico Sound (Italy).



*Image 3.* « Lancelot du lac », a film by Robert Bresson. © 1974 Gaumont / Laser Production / France 3 Cinema (France) / Gerico Sound (Italy).



*Image 4.* « Lancelot du lac », a film by Robert Bresson. © 1974 Gaumont / Laser Production / France 3 Cinema (France) / Gerico Sound (Italy).

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November 2017. [http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/robert-bresson.com/Words/LancelotDuLac\\_pressbook.html](http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/robert-bresson.com/Words/LancelotDuLac_pressbook.html)

## Filmography

*L'Argent*. Dir. Robert Bresson. MK2 Diffusion, 1983. DVD.

*Lancelot du Lac*. Dir. Robert Bresson. Gaumont, 1974. DVD.

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<sup>1</sup> In a metaphorical-Foucauldian sense.

<sup>2</sup> Kulezic-Wilson, on her turn, borrows these terms from Léon Moussinac (1925/1978, pp. 94-9).

<sup>3</sup> Again, these terms come from Kulezic Wilson 65-66.

<sup>4</sup> <http://char.txa.cornell.edu/language/principi/rhythm/rhythm.htm>

<sup>5</sup> A citation that is also included – and where I derived it from originally – in Kristin Thompson's 'The Sheen of Armor, the Whinnies of Horses: Sparse Parametric Style in *Lancelot du Lac*' (1988).

<sup>6</sup> [http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/robert-bresson.com/Words/LancelotDuLac\\_pressbook.html](http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/robert-bresson.com/Words/LancelotDuLac_pressbook.html)

<sup>7</sup> Please note that the corpus of this article is a significantly revised version of the third chapter of my master thesis, which can be accessed here: <http://theses.uhn.nl/handle/123456789/2643>.

<sup>8</sup> The copyright and ownership of all the images featured in this appendix belongs to Gaumont: « Lancelot du lac », a film by Robert Bresson. © 1974 Gaumont / Laser Production / France 3 Cinema (France) / Gerico Sound (Italy).