

James Thiérrée and Georges Claisse
in



BARTLEBY

Melville's « Story of Wall Street »

a film by Andreas Honneth

© momentuMedia 2009



Technical Details

Lenght 96 min, Digital HD CAM Sound Dolby SR Shooting format 35mm and HD, Black&whith and colour, with a historical 35mm camera Debrie

Languages: Original Language English, German Version, German Subtitel





The film LETTERS is an experimental adaptation of „Bartleby, the Scrivener“, Melville’s „Story of Wall Street“, which interprets this „cult story“, commented by theoreticians like Deleuze, Agamben, Hardt/ Negri and Zizek, as being paradigmatic for modern times. It is a self-referential allegory in the form of a satiric tragicomedy.

In the office of a Wall- Street lawyer, who had been looking for a personal assistant, comes a pale and silent scrivener, a nobody called Bartleby. In contrast to the three other employees of the lawyer he is very busy at first, although he copies his papers mechanically and without passion. But after a while he starts using a formula of polite rejection: « I would prefer not to »



To the lawyer's consternation and confusion, through these refusals without agitation or anger the formula and its logic of preferences opens up a distance towards the routine of the office, a zone of indetermination and indifference, which gives way to the feeling for the what-could-be.

So the lawyer's phantasy fills this void with imaginations that try to solve the riddle of the other's ominous presence and, by that unconsciously starts reflecting his own situation and petrified estrangement.

When one Sunday he discovers that Bartleby is homeless and lives permanently in his lonely office, he feels pity for him. Nevertheless the next week Bartleby even gives up copying. In his despair the lawyer finally finds no other solution than to move to another office and leave Bartleby at the old one, from where the new tenant delivers him to the „Tombs“ prison.

On a last visit the lawyer finds a Bartleby starved to death in the prison yard and can only do no more than close the eyes of the corpse.

By writing down the story of this strange scrivener the lawyer not only becomes a writer but changes his standards through his gradual transformation as an eyewitness of Bartleby's passion, which started in Washington's Dead (unanswered) Letters Office. He thus can perceive the ethical act in Bartleby's refusal so that his downfall is no defeat but a true victory.

As a contribution to the archeology of cinema and to stress the affinity between Melville's sense of grotesque humour and the slapstick of the silent film we used a Deprie camera, old techniques, original footage of New York's history, and casted James Spencer Thiérrée, the grandson of the legendary Charly Chaplin, for the part of Bartleby.

momentuMedia

Film- und Medien-Produktionsgesellschaft

Bad Soden / Berlin

Ingrid & Andreas Honneth

Hundsgasse 2

65812 Bad Soden

06196 21257

www.momentumedia.de

