

## Filmmakers on Bresson – Jacques Rivette

From *Robert Bresson* by James Quandt (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 1998)

### Jacques Rivette

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The beauty of Robert Bresson's two most recent films [*Pickpocket* and *Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*] is one of pure information: the minimum of relays remain, and the greatest possible reduction in entropy is sought. It seems that no other filmmaker has ever pursued—so ardently—such direct communication with the viewer (that is, a relation of equality, not one of submission as with Hitchcock). Next to Bresson, in this aspect, even Buñuel and Rossellini seem rhetorical.

Here then are the most “public” films, the most commercial films that could possibly exist: it is clear what we are dealing with. And everything continues on as

though the public were not actually interested in the truth, but in its rhetorical alibis, not in the message, but in that part of entropy that muddles it. Take for example a film like *Le Doulos* which is nothing but pure entropy and, through an accumulation of relays and fossilized signifiers, it pleases amateurs such that they exclaim: Now, that's cinema! This of course is due to the fact that they are accustomed to this type of film, having developed a conditioned aesthetic reflex; Pavlovian cinema for cinephiles.

That being said, is pure communication the aim of art? The real world is expansive, it is a *mélange* of scattered, partial and sometimes contradictory information of ceaseless overlap and transfers secreting a cancerous, constantly renewing entropy; a confusing mix where the only exceptions are a few brief moments of illumination (the revelation of love, a masterpiece, or certain landscapes). Is art made to mirror the world or to try and put a little order into it, to improve it in its own way? Another question that cannot really be addressed here, but I simply wanted to point out the meaning behind such a search that has no equivalent other than what a Braque, a Fautrier or especially a Webern seeks (like many paintings, *Procès de Jeanne d'Arc* can be said to be as beautiful as a wall—albeit a wall of signs). And if Bresson reaches out toward the white screen (or rather to the modulated grey screen into which he never slips), it is not because he has nothing more to say, but rather everything to say. Or, at least to say one thing absolutely: one word perhaps, yet spoken so completely that it becomes the sign and the meaning of all.

*Translated from the French by Lara Fitzgerald*