

Marguerite Duras

COMBAT: Do you think *Au hasard Balthazar* an intellectual film?

MARGUERITE DURAS: It is not intellectual, it is total; it is also much more sensual than people think. If you will, what has been accomplished in poetry, in literature, Bresson has done with the cinema. One might say that, until Bresson, cinema was parasitic, derived from other arts. With him came a pure cinema . . .

It is perhaps the only film I've seen that best represents a solitary, therefore exact, kind of creation.

COMBAT: But Bresson's universe is not a simple one, one must enter into it, cleave to it, open oneself to it, believe in it.

DURAS: Belief is totally alien to me and yet . . . There was for me a spectacle . . . absolute, that is the precise word. . . . as if there were such a thing as the Middle Ages, if you will . . . modern and archaic. . . . All current cinema—even good cinema—compared to this seems conventional, thin. . . .

COMBAT: Bresson has a very particular way of approaching language, speech, actors' diction; have you been shocked by these elements [of his style]?

DURAS: No, I always marvel at this in Bresson; I think he has attempted to break the mould of language, well, let's say to . . . depunctuate language . . . For example, I have heard in Bresson an irreproachable language which is French . . . One no longer hears French because it is so thoroughly cast in a mould.

Interview excerpt translated from the French by James Quandt and Lara Fitzgerald