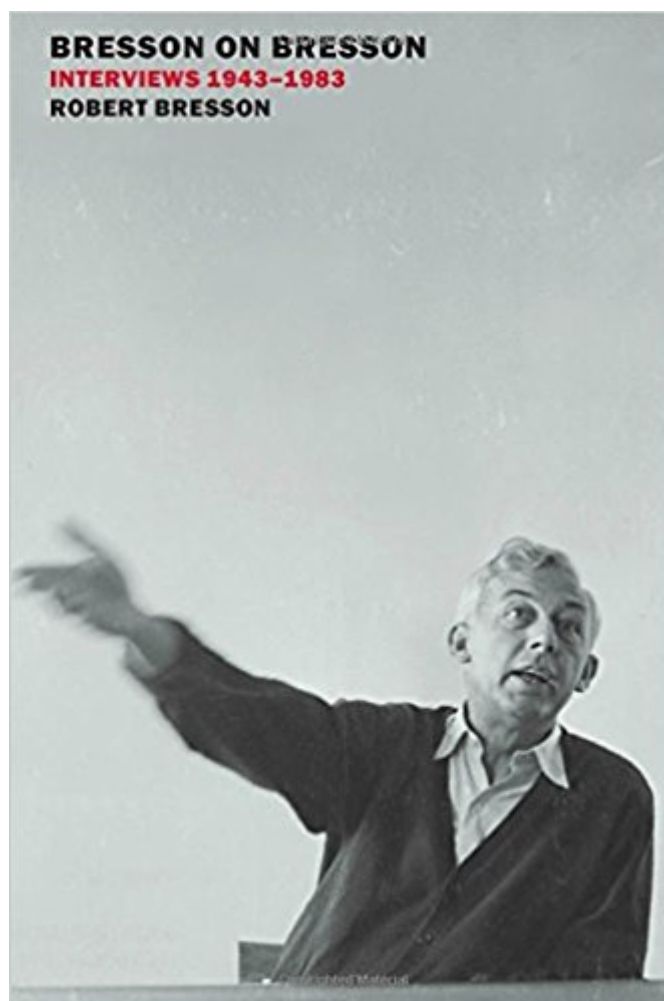


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# Bresson On Bresson: Interviews, 1943-1983



## Synopsis

Robert Bresson, the director of such cinematic master-pieces as *Pickpocket*, *A Man Escaped*, *Mouchette*, and *L'Argent*, was one of the most influential directors in the history of French film, as well as one of the most stubbornly individual: He insisted on the use of nonprofessional actors; he shunned the "advances" of Cinerama and Cinema-Scope (and the work of most of his predecessors and peers); and he minced no words about the damaging influence of capitalism and the studio system on the still-developing art of film. *Bresson on Bresson* collects the most significant interviews that Bresson gave (carefully editing them before they were released) over the course of his forty-year career to reveal both the internal consistency and the consistently exploratory character of his body of work. Successive chapters are dedicated to each of his fourteen films, as well as to the question of literary adaptation, the nature of the sound track, and to Bresson's one book, the great aphoristic treatise *Notes on the Cinematograph*. Throughout, his close and careful consideration of his own films and of the art of film is punctuated by such telling mantras as "Sound...invented silence in cinema," "It's the film that...gives life to the characters—not the characters that give life to the film," and (echoing the Bible) "Every idle word shall be counted." Bresson's integrity and originality earned him the admiration of younger directors from Jean-Luc Godard and Jacques Rivette to Olivier Assayas. And though Bresson's movies are marked everywhere by an air of intense deliberation, these interviews show that they were no less inspired by a near-religious belief in the value of intuition, not only that of the creator but that of the audience, which he claims to deeply respect: "It's always ready to feel before it understands. And that's how it should be."

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## Customer Reviews

"We are still coming to terms with Robert Bresson, and the peculiar power and beauty of his films." [•Martin Scorsese](#) "The collection Bresson on Bresson: Interviews 1943-1983 and Bresson's own Notes on the Cinematograph are primers for the gradual understanding of Robert Bresson, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein...The interviews in Bresson on Bresson are grouped chronologically and organized by film. Reading it, one can see Bresson refining his answers to the similar questions that inevitably arose with each new production, even as he refined his filmmaking style." [•J. Hoberman, The New York Times](#) "Bresson was the only director who knew how to captivate and surprise me. I consider him a unique phenomenon in the world of film." [•Andrei Tarkovsky](#) "Bresson's characters, his movies, and Bresson himself all become icons. . . . Bresson has transcended himself: he is blazed in mosaics in some moss-grown temple." [•Paul Schrader](#) "The power of Bresson's...films lies in the fact that his purity and fastidiousness are not just an assertion about the resources of the cinema, as much of modern painting is mainly a comment in paint about painting. They are at the same time an idea about life, about what Cocteau called 'inner style,' about the most serious way of being human." [•Susan Sontag](#) "Cinephiles will delight in reading this book and following Bresson's thinking as it develops further and makes each interview more compelling than the last." [•Publishers Weekly](#) "To not get Bresson is to not get the idea of motion pictures--it's to have missed that train the Lumière brothers filmed arriving at Lyon station 110 years ago." [•J. Hoberman, The Village Voice](#) "Robert Bresson's 13 features over 40 years constitute arguably the most original and brilliant body of work over a long career from a film director in the history of cinema. He is the most idiosyncratic and uncompromising of all major filmmakers." [•Alan Pavelin, Senses of Cinema](#)

Robert Bresson (1901–1999) was born in Bromont-Lamothe, France. He attended the Lycée Lakanal in Sceaux, and moved to Paris after graduation, hoping to become a painter. He directed a short comedy, *Affaires publiques*, in 1934, but his work was curtailed by the outbreak of World War II. He enlisted in the French army in 1939 and was captured in 1940, spending a year in

a labor camp as a prisoner of war. After his release he returned to Paris and directed *Angels of Sin* (1943), his first full-length film, under the German occupation. *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne* followed in 1945, and in 1951 *Diary of a Country Priest* was met with widespread acclaim. His next film, *A Man Escaped* (1956), which follows the memoirs of Andr   Devigny, a French Resistance leader incarcerated during World War II, became a hit. He made eleven more films over the next three decades, including *Mouchette*, *Au hasard Balthazar*, *Pickpocket*, *Lancelot of the Lake*, and *L'Argent*. Throughout his career Bresson eschewed the use of theatrical techniques and employed nonprofessional actors whom he referred to as models. Raised in the Catholic faith, he worked on and off throughout his career on an adaptation of the book of Genesis, which never saw fruition. He died in Droue-sur-Drouette at the age of ninety-eight. New York Review Books also publishes Bresson's celebrated *Notes on the Cinematograph*. Anna Moschovakis is a translator and editor, and the author of several books of poetry, including *Three Others Are Approaching a Lake* (2011). She lives in Brooklyn and Delaware County, New York. Myl  ne Bresson is Robert Bresson's widow and the manager of his estate. Pascal M  rigeau is a journalist and film critic who has published numerous books, among them biographies of Joseph L. Mankiewicz and Maurice Pialat, and a forthcoming biography of Jean Renoir. M  rigeau lives in France.

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Bresson is the greatest!

INDISPENSABLE musings/opinions/criticism/observation by The Master himself, his gaze fixed upon his own work. He discuss each of his films with an eye few filmmakers care to cast upon their own creations. For both the layman and the scholar, no lover of Bresson and his films should be without this volume...

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