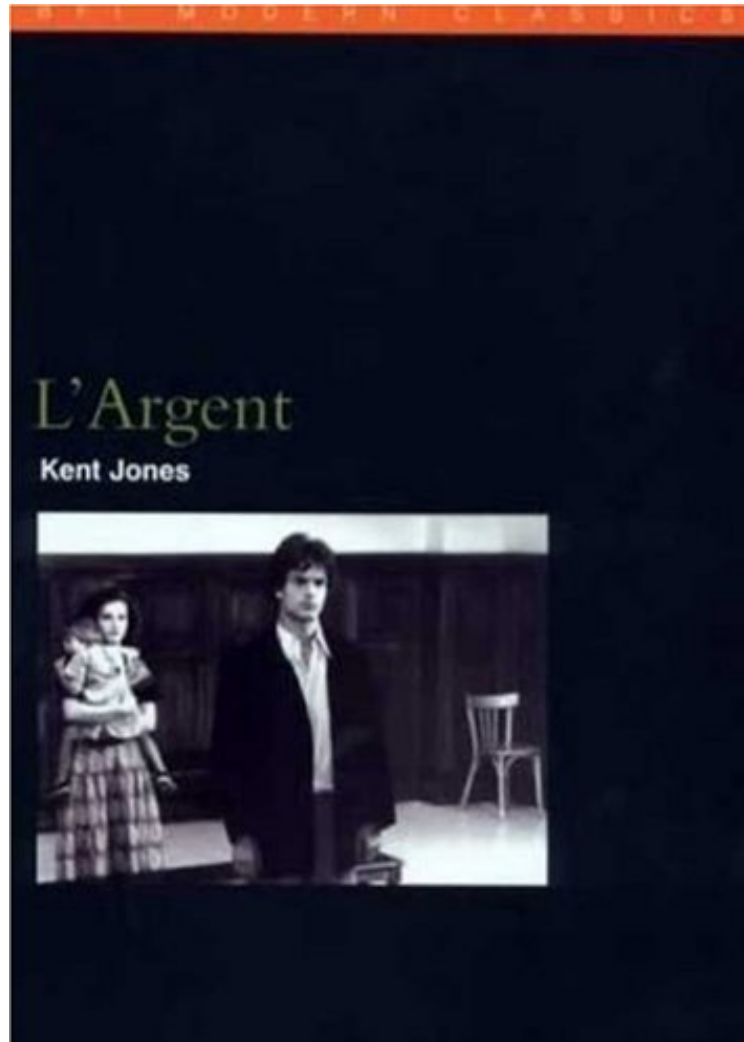


[Mobile ebook] L'Argent (BFI Modern Classics)

## L'Argent (BFI Modern Classics)

*Kent Jones*

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**Kent Jones : L'Argent (BFI Modern Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised L'Argent (BFI Modern Classics):

19 of 20 people found the following review helpful. Demystifies Bresson, and makes him NECESSARY. By darragh o'donoghue Kent Jones offers a third way for film lovers who want to appreciate the films of Robert Bresson, but are daunted by both their reputation for austere formal rigour, and by critics' insistence on their Christian doctrinal severity. Jones advises us to reverse the usual process, which is to weld Big Themes onto the films, and instead look at what's on the screen closely, the 'sensual details' of Bresson's art, such as the hands that do routine work, the sway of coffee in a mug, a glass of wine falling on the floor, the sound of a rushing stream. On a purely visual level, the expainter Bresson's films can seem unusually flat, but if you connect this deliberate flatness to Bresson's use of sound

and light, and the careful way he builds scenes through precise composition and 'punchy' editing, a unique three-dimensionality is achieved. If you know how to look, Bresson's pessimistic films glow with life; if you don't, they seem mean and drab. Jones' book does what literature on film should do and rarely does - it opens your eyes. I rewatched 'L'Argent' soon after reading this study and the experience was revelatory. What I had previously watched with dutiful admiration suddenly became vibrant and urgent. Jones' book is a very old-fashioned piece of film-criticism, with no recourse to psychoanalysis or feminism, no attempt to discuss the film's production process or its cultural context, or to apply biographical information (probably because, in Bresson's case, there is so little known). For Jones, 'L'Argent' is a Great Film by a Great Auteur, and analysed accordingly, as if it were a book, each detail dissected and related to the whole. This procedure is so refreshing because in most theory-based criticism, the actual films tend to get lost (never mind any love for the medium), as minor details are absurdly inflated into whole theses. Jones begins with an overview of the critical reception of Bresson's work (either over-reverent or baffled), the ways in which Difficult Ideas have obscured the essence of Bresson's cinema. He then discusses the film's source, Tolstoy's relentlessly didactic novella 'The Forged Coupon', locating the radical differences between the two works, in narrative detail, thematic emphasis and aesthetic process, thus revealing the deeper meanings of 'L'Argent'. The bulk of the study comprises a meticulous, scene-by-scene, shot-by-shot analysis of the film, the story of a young worker who, paid off with counterfeit notes, is dragged into an inexorable narrative of robbery, jail, marital breakdown, suicide and serial murder. This procedure could have been plodding, but Jones alerts us to every camera angle, every cut, and, especially, every sound, making this film in particular, and, potentially, films in general, live and resonate. He shows how Bresson gives each scene its own heightened integrity, free from the mechanical, explanatory chaff that blights most movies, resulting in high-pitched narrative of uncommon intensity. Only when we have properly absorbed what's on the screen, can we begin talking about what isn't, abstract themes, morality, religion etc. Jones' high-minded, high-art tone should grate, but seems refreshing in post-modern times that promised egalitarian energy and gave us nothing but conformist sludge.

The career of Robert Bresson (b. 1907) is one of the richest in the history of cinema, but also one of the most enigmatic. For some commentators, Bresson is a severe moralist who's almost medieval in his concern for the darker aspects of Catholic theology. For others, he's best seen as a stylist whose work has consistently anticipated cinematic trends. Just as Bresson's 1959 "Pickpocket" was remodelled by Paul Schrader as "American Gigolo" (1980), so "L'Argent" (1983) is a study of spontaneous murder and a meditation on evil that has a striking kinship with contemporary vigilante and serial killer films. Kent Jones disputes some of the received wisdom about Bresson's work as it's epitomized by "L'Argent": the work can't simply be reduced to its austere, pessimistic, or religious elements. By exploring the many dimensions of "L'Argent," Jones finds other elements: beauty, compassion, an overriding concern with the meaningful depiction of experience. "L'Argent" is the culminating work of one of the select group of directors able "to push the cinema, through the force of their own genius, onto a new plain."

From the Back Cover The career of Robert Bresson (b. 1907) is one of the richest in the history of cinema, but also one of the most enigmatic. For some commentators, Bresson is a severe moralist who's almost medieval in his concern for the darker aspects of Catholic theology. For others, he's best seen as a stylist whose work has consistently anticipated cinematic trends. Just as Bresson's 1959 "Pickpocket" was remodelled by Paul Schrader as "American Gigolo" (1980), so "L'Argent" (1983) is a study of spontaneous murder and a meditation on evil that has a striking kinship with contemporary vigilante and serial killer films. Kent Jones disputes some of the received wisdom about Bresson's work as it's epitomized by "L'Argent": the work can't simply be reduced to its austere, pessimistic, or religious elements. By exploring the many dimensions of "L'Argent," Jones finds other elements: beauty, compassion, an overriding concern with the meaningful depiction of experience. "L'Argent" is the culminating work of one of the select group of directors able "to push the cinema, through the force of their own genius, onto a new plain." About the Author Kent Jones has written widely on the cinema, notably for Film Comment. He has been a guest programmer and jury-member for film festivals around the world, and is programmer at The Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York City.