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L'ARGENT

Director: Robert Bresson

France/Switzerland 1983 85 minutes

Cast: Christian Patey, Caroline Lang

Bresson's last film and certainly one of his three best, the bluntly titled *L'ARGENT* is a work of severe and intimidating beauty. (Christian Patey's blue eyes are just one element of the Vermeer-like compositions.) Bresson transposes a Tolstoy novella to contemporary Paris, and turns it into a terse and chilling indictment of capitalism and modernity. A young man unwittingly passes a counterfeit bill, his crime setting off "an avalanche of evil" that leads to mass murder and, finally, to expiation. Voted the greatest film of the Eighties in a poll of critics, filmmakers and programmers, *L'ARGENT* is, like *PICKPOCKET*, a work that other directors speak of with awe and reverence. (Its admirers range from Olivier Assayas, Atom Egoyan, and R. Bruce Elder to Martin Scorsese and Richard Linklater.) As a summa and final testament, *L'ARGENT* is magisterial. It makes most other films look puny and inconsequential by comparison. "At nearly 80, Bresson's power to renew our faith in cinema is as firm as one could wish for" (*Time Out*).

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