

Olivier Assayas

1.

The truth of my feelings about the cinema of Robert Bresson is very simple. When walking out of a screening of *Pickpocket* as a young man, with close friends who hadn't understood a thing about the film, who had missed what seemed so incredibly obvious to me, I felt, deeply, that it had let me see into the inner beauty of cinema in a way that would someday allow me to make films myself.

There are a lot of filmmakers I admire: Bergman, Fassbinder, Cassavetes, Visconti, Mizoguchi, Rohmer, Scorsese, Dreyer, Rossellini, Pasolini, Renoir, Tarkovsky, just to mention the few that most naturally come to mind.

But Bresson is, for me, in a category of his own. He is what keeps me faithful to what cinema can achieve. In moments of discouragement, he reminds me how great films can be . . .

And I don't think I would be making films if not for him, or certainly not the same films.

2. *L'Argent*

When it came out in 1984, *L'Argent* had a profound impact on me as few films had ever done, probably because it brought together all of what I expected from modern cinema, or a cinema to come. . . .

The work of Bresson in particular . . . ever since I discovered it on television as a teenager, has given me the conviction that filmmaking as an art form *is worth it*. Because he had been able to reach such a summit, to express what is essential in the world with such force, this art form *had to be* the modern art form par excellence, the art form one could devote one's life to: if there was only one little chance to reach the height which Bresson attained with such supreme authority.

L'Argent is a masterpiece of formal audacity, of pure beauty dedicated to showing raw truth, a harrowing and almost unearthly light that pierces the world with its lucidity. Faith is no longer there, idealism seems meaningless, nothing transcends the actions of humanity. All that is left is a cold material world, a desolate land where humanity wanders in bondage to diabolical evil.

L'Argent is the testament of a director in his eighties. It is also the film of a radical young man, which dares everything, without compromising with the taste of the time, its eyes wide open to reality. Look at the picture it leaves us: the world that is ours.