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The Representation of Money in Film

Gold, Paper, Metal and Electronic.

by

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in Film and Television Studies.**

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the representation of money on screen, in its textual and contextual constructions. Money, itself a representation, has a complex status: it is both an abstract concept, a symbol of value, a social convention, and a concrete object in its embodiment as gold, metal or paper. This study then is that of a representation of a representation. Its starting point is the very paradox of money as both an object endowed with great value while at the same time not worth much more than the substance it is made of or the numbers referring to it in newer forms of electronic money. The paradox is particularly salient in a medium that works through images while at the same time requiring itself so much money. The distinction between the two Latin words *moneta* and *pecunia* offers an understanding of money in its main properties and functions, as an exchange tool in constant circulation and as an object of hoarding, as belongings. This distinction is operative in the present study and runs through the thesis, together with the Marxian concepts of use-value and exchange value. The objective is to analyse patterns, peculiarities and meanings linked to the portrayal of money.

This thesis does not encompass a comprehensive survey of money represented in all of cinema. Instead, the study is conducted in four groupings of films that are not necessarily thought of in connection with their images of money. Four chapters examine films from different contexts, periods, genres or trends in the cinema of various countries. The groupings are suggested partly by issues outside of money and partly by periods and kinds of money, and focus on case studies while simultaneously referring to a larger corpus. The first chapter examines the issues raised by the topic and surveys the existing literature. The second chapter undertakes an analysis of gold and gold mining in the context of the pioneering West in US films. The third chapter considers paper money and its meanings in neo-realist films. The thesis then proceeds to study films from the 1970s and 1980s. The fourth chapter concerns money in French films on high finance, and the last chapter looks at money as it appears in horror films. The thesis ends with a discussion of the recurrent patterns at work in the representation of money.

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Notes on Translations

Translation of Quotations

When no official English version existed, I have translated quotes myself. The original versions have been placed within the footnote space at the end of each page.

Translation of Film Titles

For foreign language films the official English title is in parenthesis where one exists and when it translates the original title. For films not distributed or shown in an English-speaking country, I translate the titles myself wherever possible.

Note on Filmography

For each chapter there is a detailed filmography of films that form its core. These titles, together with all the other titles mentioned in the thesis, are also referenced in the general filmography.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States in 1909, a concern about the reproduction of dollar bills in paintings led Congress to pass a law ‘prohibiting facsimiles of paper currency’ (Mattick and Siegel 2004: 25). In the United Kingdom, the 1981 Forgery and Counterfeiting Act and the Copyright law forbids artists to use or reproduce British pounds without prior authorisation (Lydiate with Odling-Smee 1990). There is then, a legal dimension to the representation of money: reproducing or using money in an artwork can amount to forgery in the eyes of the law. This legal dimension, specific to the object money, as minted and approved by the ruling authority, also demonstrates that the representation of money is, perhaps, not like that of most other objects.

In spite of the law, a number of artists have used money directly in their work. Several of them were sued, but seemingly not convicted. In 1987, for example, ‘JSG Boggs was prosecuted at the Old Bailey for contravening the 1981 Forgery and Counterfeiting Act by reproducing English £10, £5 and £1 notes which he had hand-drawn with coloured pencils’ (Lydiate with Odling-Smee 1990). The jury reached a ‘not guilty verdict, accepting his defence that he was not a criminal, merely an artist pursuing established traditions: deliberately using the “hand of the artist” to interpret something—a banknote—which was itself a reproduction in mass quantities’ (Lydiate with Odling-Smee 1990). The law applies to any

photographic reproduction of money. I have found no case, however, of a trial involving the filming of money. The existence of a law, beyond emphasising the singularity of money, explains perhaps why, despite many close-ups of money transactions, so few films actually show close-ups of banknotes and of their design. An exception that comes to mind is Godard's *Bande à Part* (*Band of Outsiders* 1964) with the detailed extreme close-ups of a five-hundred French franc bill.

Money, because of its legal dimension, is essential in an urbanised society based on the principle of individual ownership. It can be the change we use in everyday life and it can also be capital involved in the larger economic and financial system. The economic system itself is tied to a network of exchange of products and services for money; and money, as a state-produced and state-guaranteed tool, is a connecting element in a geographical, political and social entity. It is all of this that makes it special in a form of communication that represents it visually.

Money is also semiotically special because it is both an abstract concept, a symbol and representation of value, and a concrete object. In its embodiment as currency, it allows exchange and circulation. As a social product, it is a symbol, a convention, even when it is made of gold. One of the greatest paradoxes of money is that it is simultaneously worth a lot because we give it value and we believe in it, while at the same time it is worth nothing. Banknotes are only made of paper and coins of metal, they are convenient conventions in a social system but they bear little or no intrinsic value. In film, banknotes and coins can be reduced to useless

pieces of paper and heaps of metal. Even gold, in its weight and substance, can become dust indiscernible from sand, and ultimately valueless. Gold is not permanent or eternally valuable, and neither is money in general. The film medium accentuates this paradox: seeing a banknote or a cheque on screen means both seeing a bit of paper and a million pounds. The paradox, then, is particularly significant in a medium that works through images, and forms the organisational problematic for understanding just how money operates in cinema.

Money too, as a representation, as an abstracting device, is singular: it allows exchange, circulation and demonstrates a universal value like no other representation. It forms 'a vast social metaphor, bridge, or translator' and as a representation it translates 'the work of the farmer into the work of the barber, doctor, engineer, or plumber' (McLuhan 1994: 136). In this way money is more than a simple representation, it is special, it 'has exceptional powers of substituting one kind of thing for another' (142). Both abstract and concrete, the 'money medium' (18) thus raises questions about its exact meaning as itself a representation, and the meaning of its representation on screen.

From this perspective, examining the representation of money may seem a dynamic topic of research, but it is also a tricky one for devising a practical research agenda. Existing texts on the iconography and representation of money do not provide a sufficient framework for analysing and understanding it in any given genre or period. Furthermore, it is not easy to examine images of money, an object so familiar, obvious and

entrenched in our daily life that it seems impervious to isolation in its material form as such. It is less difficult on the other hand to view it as a simple prop. This study necessarily deals, then, with several paradoxes and problems. Beyond the mimetic relationship between money in our daily life and money as it appears on screen, filmed money raises epistemological questions: what, for example, is meant precisely by “money” and what is meant by its “representation”? This kind of theoretical, yet fundamental, question is addressed in the review of the literature. The paradox of money itself, worth a lot yet simultaneously worthless, is central to this thesis.

The thesis focuses on money as iconography. It examines primarily the filmed representation of money in its materiality: gold, banknotes, coins, cheques and electronic money—the way they are shown and the role they play in the story. Money does not necessarily mean wealth here, even if becoming wealthy in a film is associated with the display of money. Money as viewed in this thesis is limited to the concrete representation of an object, gold, banknotes, coins, and numbers used as measure of value and as general equivalent. Money represented says something about the world the film depicts and about the historical, political and economic context of the film itself. The goal here is to locate and highlight the meanings that money, when it is represented, introduces into stories and imagery. To do this I look at money in its textual and contextual constructions.

For this reason the corpus is composed of films in which money provides significant motifs and imagery, without necessarily being

obviously or centrally about money. The aim is to examine patterns, peculiarities and meanings linked to the actual portrayal of money in these films. Methodologically, one of the reasons for looking at a genre, a period or a movement is to cut across them, knowing that they are not necessarily centrally focused on money, in order to see if and how it figures in them.

A number of questions work as organizational core. How does money function in plot development? Is money shown? If so, how—as gold, ‘cash, cheque or click’ (Goux 2000: 221)? Who is manipulating it? What is the value of money in the film? What are its connotations? Money is also examined through the divide between the understanding of the two Latin words *moneta* and *pecunia*, two notions roughly corresponding to money as a bartering tool, a method of payment, and money as hoarding, as belongings. In addition to the understanding provided by *moneta* and *pecunia*, the representation of money is analysed with the further divide between the concepts of use-value and exchange-value.

The idea of studying the representation of money in film emerged from at least two factors: the quasi-absence of scholarly examination of money as shown on screen at a time when money seems so dominantly important in the world as a whole and with respect to a medium that is so greatly dependent on it, even fixed on it; and at a time of such major monetary change in the twentieth century context of Europe and the United States.

While there are few in-depth analyses of the representation of money, paradoxically, money occupies an important place in imagery and discourse. Likewise, in a form of entertainment where marshalling large sums plays such a central role, studies and publications on the film industry and its financing abound, whereas there is curiously little serious writing about money on screen.

Money is both universal as a medium and particular when embodied in currencies as banknotes and coins; in other words, the meaning of money is universal but its materiality is expressed in time and space. Currencies, likewise, are exchangeable one for another: their exchange rate determines their value against one another. Several major changes, in the design, value, and naming of money have occurred in the twentieth century: the end, for example, of the gold and gold-exchange standard which had international repercussions on the value of money; national changes in currency names and scale (old French francs to new French francs); changes in design (several major design changes in the dollar bill in the twentieth century); and changes in form (from solid gold, paper and metal to virtual money).

Recently twelve European countries agreed to balance their economies according to a common and strict set of rules. Eventually they abandoned their own national currencies to adopt a single European one and introduced the euro in 2002, without the possibility, in theory, of going back to the old monetary systems. After a period of anticipation, three hundred million people switched currency in one day, and, instead of using the lira, peseta or deutschmark, employed euro banknotes and coins.

Although the euro as such does not appear to have yet been centrally represented in film, it seems appropriate, nevertheless, to look at what money means in this time of significant shifts when shown in cinema.

This seems to make sense when proposed changes in money raise so much debate. One example here in the context of the European Union is the ongoing controversy and resistance in the United Kingdom as regards abandoning the national monetary sovereignty in favour of the euro. It also seems timely to look at the materiality of money when money is increasingly abstract, especially since it is no longer backed by a solid substance. With electronic money furthermore, money has lost its substance, its quality as a palpable thing. Its materiality becomes that of computer screens and transactions through cards and bank operations. Today most money circulating is in fact immaterial: only 0.5% is composed of bills and coins¹. The dematerialisation of money, addressed in this thesis especially in the context of films since the 1970s, figures importantly in the way money is actually represented, often in its very materiality.

In an intensely capital-driven form of entertainment, money necessarily plays an important role. Crucial in the making of a film, money in cinema is usually thought of in terms of numbers: production budgets, advertisement and marketing costs, spectator turn outs, box-office returns, DVD sales. The film industry, moreover, constantly keeps an eye on the trade press and on the official numbers of each new release, numbers that in

¹ This percentage number was given by the economist Michel Henochsberg during a talk in Paris on 'Filming Money' (Forum des images, 4 november 2004).

the end amount to sums of money. Regularly new films break budget or box-office records and show spectacular results entirely centred on money: *The Da Vinci Code* (2006) with a budget of \$125 million has already grossed \$753,683,645 worldwide since its release in May 2006; *The Passion of Christ* (2004) grossed \$611,899,420 with a production budget of \$30 million, while a film like *King Kong* (2005) cost \$207 million to produce with an advertising budget of \$38 million². Some films have become legendary in the relationship between their production costs and their returns: *Heaven's Gate* (1980) had an initial budget of \$11.5-15 million, but ultimately cost \$35 million to make and an additional \$9 million to advertise and distribute, while it only earned \$2 million at the box office (Allen 2003: 35). On the other hand, *Titanic* (1997) was produced for \$200 million, \$85 million above the anticipated \$115 million, while box-office returns were even more spectacular at a total of \$1,835 million worldwide. *Titanic*, in its relationship between expenditure and return, has, for this reason, become a model for business and study with respect to 'high-risk, high-finance, high-return blockbuster film-making' (Allen 2003: 35).

The ongoing focus of study to date has been the economic relation between money spent, the production value, and money earned, rather than how money is actually shown in its materiality on screen. It seems logical that the role of money in cinema should be the centre of so many studies,

² These numbers are taken from the World Wide Web: <<http://www.boxofficemojo.com>> and <<http://www.the-numbers.com>>.

especially given ‘the shifts in the financial and industrial landscape of American film-making over the past two decades bookended by *Heaven’s Gate* and *Titanic*, which allowed the first to fail, and the second to succeed, equally spectacularly’ (Allen 2003: 35).

The economy of cinema is intrinsic to the existence of cinema and in this sense cinema does not bear the same relationship to money as other art forms. The making of a film requires an intense search for sources of the indispensable funding simply to begin a project. Even when successful, this search is followed by a constant need for fresh money in the course of the project through completion together with the often attendant lag between promised sums and those actually delivered. Because they are so closely related in this way, the economy and aesthetic of cinema become difficult to dissociate. In such a context, however, it seems logical as well as interesting to examine how money itself is depicted in a media that employs seemingly ever-expanding amounts of it, far beyond other cultural, artistic or entertainment forms.

Cinema appears paradoxically to maintain an ambiguous relationship with money: it requires money while at the same time adopts a critical stance in its discourse and representation of it. This critical stance towards money functions importantly in this work in relation to the visual dimensions of money.

The immediate problem raised by thematic studies of this nature rests in the immensity of the material, in this case, the sheer number of

films available in which money figures at some point or other. If it is, for all practical purposes, impossible to delineate exhaustively the representation of money in cinema worldwide from its origins, it is still difficult but necessary to reduce the number of available films to a manageable corpus. Arbitrary choices become necessary in order to sketch out different patterns of representation. Because this subject has not been much explored, it was necessary to view as large a number of films as possible, as candidates for more detailed study. Four groupings were selected from those that correspond to specific historic and cinematic periods, genres, or kinds of money. These groupings are partly prompted by issues outside of money and partly by periods and kinds of money. Each chapter is composed of a small number of central films that form its core. In addition to these core films, references are made to a wider range of films, mostly from the same period, genre, and deriving from the wider initial viewing.

The present research, however, ignores whole periods, genres, and national cinemas, as well as important individual films. Various reasons explain this choice. For convenience, most films examined in the thesis were made after World War II, or closely towards the end of the war (with occasional references to films of previous periods, such as *Greed* 1924 or *L'Argent* 1928) and produced mostly in Europe and the United States. With some exceptions, this thesis also deals mostly with works in which the languages are more familiar. Further, because of the decision to focus on films not obviously about money, this thesis does not address gangster

films or thrillers as a whole. Finally, some individual films are mentioned in the course of the study but are not the focus of a detailed analysis despite the importance of money in them or the original take they offer on money. In fact, films such as *Golddiggers of 1933* (1933), *The Gold Diggers* (1983), *De Stille Rond Christine M. (A Question of Silence* 1982) or *L'Argent (Money* 1983) are very much about money but either they do not fit any of the chapters of this thesis with its focus on groupings rather than on individual films, or they have been studied elsewhere³.

Although this thesis centres on fiction films, documentaries on money need to be acknowledged here. To understand how money works has been of interest to documentary filmmakers. In *I Love \$* (1986) Van der Keuken addresses the topic of money directly in a film that takes the viewer around the world as the filmmaker interviews all sorts of people in their relationship to the money they work with. Over the last few years, a trend in anti-corporate films has emerged. These films critique money, capital and corporate greed. *Wal Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* (2005) examines the impact on local communities of the giant retailer through its business practices. *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the World* (2005) investigates the US corporation's widespread corruption and insider trading, as well as its bankruptcy and shady business practices. *The Corporation* (2003) offers an extensive look at the legal, social and political history of corporations in general. *The Take* (2004) proposes an

³ Parsons 1994, Cook 2004, Mellencamp 1995, Kuhn 1994, Rich 1998 for *The Gold Diggers*; Kuhn 1994, Gentile 1985, Murphy 1986, Rich 1998 for *De Stille Rond Christine M.*; Jones 1999 for *L'Argent*; Seymour 1980, Mellencamp 1995 for *Gold Diggers of 1933*.

alternative to unrestrained capitalism: it depicts the attempt on the part of workers in Argentina to reopen and run closed-down factories as cooperatives. Other recent films dealing with the way corporations handle business, profits and citizenship issues include *Supersize Me* (2004), *The Yes Men* (2003), Michael Moore's films since *Roger and Me* (1989), *The Future of Food* (2004), and also Raoul Peck's *Profit and Nothing But! Or Impolite Thoughts on the Class Struggle* (2001).

If it seems difficult to justify the choice of a broad corpus, it would be still more difficult to justify limiting this study to a narrower and hence even less representative body of work—the films, for instance, of John Huston from 1945 to 1960, or American films made in the Great Depression era. It would also have been possible to choose only well-known, rather canonical, films about money as case studies (*Greed*, *L'Argent* or *Wall Street* 1987); films where money is central as a prop and evidently propels the story (banknotes in *The Night of the Hunter* 1955 or money-filled suitcases in many gangster films); films clearly aimed at denouncing the corrupting power of money (Soviet films of the 1920s for example), or films with titles that refer to money (*The Million Pound Note* 1953, *Le Franc* 1994, *Le Million* 1931, *Millions* 2004). Groupings of films that do not advertise themselves as being clearly, or only, about money appeared of greater interest in this work precisely because money is present in such a wide range of films.

The thesis is organised around a number of case studies: a grouping of films limited by period and treating social and economic issues as in

neo-realism; groupings limited by genre as in horror films and Westerns; and groupings limited by such motifs as high finance or gold. Following the first chapter, Concepts of Money and Representation of Money in Film, the thesis unfolds in four chapters: Gold in the American West, Paper Money in Neo-Realist Films, High Finance in French cinema, Money and Horror. Each grouping corresponds to a given historical, political and economic context and to the predominant, but not exclusive, use of certain monetary forms such as gold in north America, banknotes in neo-realist films, banknotes and more abstract monetary forms in high finance films, banknotes and real-estate investment in horror films. Money thus opens other perspectives on these groupings. In many of the films chosen, even when money plays an important role, it is not necessarily represented centrally. Sometimes it appears only briefly but at crucial points in the film. Moreover, neo-realist films are films made in the context of a country laid waste by years of war and fascism; while gold, high finance, and horror films, come from affluent societies and in some way reflect their preoccupations.

Chapter one addresses the main epistemological questions raised by the topic itself, and gives an overview of critical work on money in fields other than film studies, before summarizing the themes typically associated with money on screen.

When thinking about money represented in films, what immediately comes to mind, perhaps, is images of the lottery, gambling, robberies, gangsters; in other words, images of money linked to some kind of

irrationality, luck and destiny; or of money linked to the possibility of sudden riches or spectacular losses, rather than of money earned through the monotony of a regular job. The association of money and luck is present in the second chapter that focuses on films on gold mining set in the West during, or right after, the California Gold Rush. This chapter examines money as gold, a precious metal, a “solid” form of money, in a way pre-existing banknotes or coins printed, minted and approved by a State.

Gold is the most material, the most concrete form of money, and it has a fixed value in dollars in these films, not a floating one. Unlike the following chapters, money here is a seemingly indestructible mineral found in the earth rather than something produced by a central bank, like coins and banknotes. The search for gold requires much luck and hard labour. Gold is often held as a treasure that cannot be spent but it is also shown as a kind of pre-monetary tool for exchange, bearing its value in its weight and substance.

In films on gold and gold mining, money as gold is shown blatantly because of its materiality and the large quantities unearthed in prospecting. The opposite is also true: in the post-war Italian context, money is shown to emphasise its scarcity and lack. Neo-realist films, examined in the third chapter, mostly show paper money in an ordinary everyday context. Lira banknotes are almost the only form of money presented as at hand, and they are occasionally contrasted with cheques in order to emphasize the exceptional character of bank and savings accounts for the protagonists.

Scraping enough money together for survival is the main issue in these films that attempt to portray specific situations in a country impoverished by war. Money also appears in its direct connection to the nation: the lira as a unifying common symbol and also as the specifically Italian form of money used by the Resistance to drive out the German occupier.

The fourth chapter, focusing on 1970s and early 1980s French films on high finance, is composed of mainstream popular films set in the world of business, the Stock Market, banks and corporations. These films use banknotes and money in the context of simple exchange. Finance, however, also involves the further dimension of money as capital, as large sums to be managed and invested, and of business with profit as its only goal. Capital here is used to create more capital and is often a sign of power. High finance is about the business of money itself, about the management of money to yield more money. Films on high finance address the more abstract aspects of the monetary system, and also one of money's core dimensions. These films, like the horror films under consideration in the fifth chapter, were made at a time when the gold-exchange standard had been severed and currencies were no longer backed by a solid substance. They also reflect the new possibilities offered by risky speculation on the Stock Market, while addressing the new reality of abstract money in an increasingly global world. Here concrete money—banknotes—is often the sign either of illegal operations or of small quotidian exchanges while the money of power, of large financial transactions, is abstract.

The chapter on money and horror, the fifth chapter, examines US films from the 1970s and 1980s. The horror genre is of interest precisely because money is not one of its central features. After a broad viewing, two groups of films emerged that do actually use money either to create or signify horror. The chapter is therefore divided into two parts: the threat of the house as money pit and source of horror; and the threat to the existence of money itself with the onslaught of zombies. On the one hand, real-estate horror films offer a satire of American suburban life and they also address the terror provoked by the increasingly abstract character of money in the context of the US in the 1970s. On the other hand, zombie films question the use, value and necessity of money in a world where the zombie invasion has brought down national institutions. In this case money as a tool with exchange-value is useless both in the fight against the zombies or for escape.

The narrative of the thesis follows the narrative of money itself in Europe and the US since the end of the Nineteenth century. Gold corresponds to the notion of an 'origin of value, the source of transcendental "intrinsic" worth' (Rotman 1987: 100). This idea of an origin slowly loses its meaning after the end of the gold standard in the 1930s and of the gold-exchange standard in the 1970s. Paper money, that of neo-realist films and also of 1970s and 1980s French and Horror films, is no longer the promise of a potential weight of gold. Banknotes and coins float according to market forces and no gold – or silver – exists to back them. Finally, more impalpable forms of money come into play:

tangentially in neo-realism with a cheque, and more openly with the capital of finance, stock-exchange transactions and the electronic money of real-estate horror films.

Each of the four chapters provides a contextualisation with respect to twentieth-century history and in connection with the history of money itself. This contextualisation links with the films through such questions as: What happens in film when monetary changes occur? How, in a defined historical period such as post-war Italy, do films deal with or treat current events through their depiction of money? The representation of money in each chapter shares common characteristics in showing the circulation of money, or in playing with the different qualities of money: money to pay as well as money to keep. In this context, each grouping of films presents different images of money, nonetheless sharing themes and trends in representation.

CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTS OF MONEY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF MONEY IN FILM

Introduction

Money, either tangentially or centrally, is represented in many films, whether documentary, fiction or experimental. Retrospectives, seminars and talks discussing the filming, representation and importance of money on screen have been organised in major institutions and festivals¹, but corresponding in-depth critical studies of these films in relation to money are virtually non-existent. A number of books or articles with “money” in their title are in reality about the process of financing, producing and making movies as well as about the history of big production companies and of the film industry in general — ‘Show me the Money’ (Allen 2003, 35-60); *L’Argent d’Hollywood (Hollywood’s Money*, Augros 2000); *Le Cinéma et l’argent (Cinema and Money*, Creton 1999); *Money into Light* (Boorman 1985). In comparison, little, surprisingly, has been published on possible patterns or the specifics of money as filmed: ‘too much of the best writing on film, and the best film journals, studiously neglected the money’

¹ ‘Money’, National Film Theatre, London, February 1995; ‘Geld’, Deutsche Kinemathek, December 1997; ‘L’argent’, Festival international du film d’histoire, Pessac, 19-25 november 1996; ‘Geld’, Femme Totale Film Festival, Dortmund, 12-17 april 2005; Film program of the 2006 conference ‘Les Rendez-vous de l’histoire’ whose theme is ‘L’Argent, en avoir ou pas’, Blois, France, 12-15 october; series of three talks: ‘Filmer l’argent’ organised by Charles Tesson, with Olivier Assayas and Michel Henochsberg, Paris, Forum des images, 3-5 november 2004.

(Thomson 1995: 25). The present thesis is an attempt to address this gap by focusing on the study of money in its material representation on the screen. This chapter reviews thematically existing film studies literature as well as the literature of other areas relevant to the thesis.

Despite the number of films with money shown and in which money often drives imagery and narrative themes, no distinct film genre has emerged to express this focus. The representation of money is neither defined by a unified iconography, nor by a particular type of narrative. Instead, it cuts across various filmmaking types and styles. As such, the parameters of this topic are wide and require consideration not only from the perspective of film history and film-by-film case-study examples, but also with reference to the other areas of scholarship which examine the pursuit, necessity, corruption, socio-politics, psychology and burlesque of money. The latter issues have surfaced in a wide spectrum of canonical texts ranging from Aristotle in *The Politics*, to Simmel in *Philosophy of Money*, Marx in *Capital*, Veblen in *Theory of the Leisure Class* or Galbraith in *Money*. A few conferences with their corresponding publications have also specifically addressed money, in the intersecting areas of humanities, social science, economics, finance, politics and mathematics, with the exception of the visual arts (Halpérin and Levitte 1988; Pol-Droit 1991; Drach 2004).

There are numerous publications and regular exhibitions concerned with the history of coins and banknotes. Many museums worldwide are

dedicated to the history of money and currency². While the artistry of coins is an object of study, and although several artists use money, actual or in facsimiles, in their work (Marcel Duchamp, Robert Morris, J.S.G. Boggs, Andy Warhol, Cildo Meireles, Helio Oiticica, Fiona Hall), there is virtually no in-depth systematic study devoted to the iconography of money in artworks to illuminate or counterpoint how comparable imagery might be manifest in cinema.

Several general resources have shed light on the visual dimensions of money. Among the exhibitions on the theme of money in art, at least two attempted to offer a panoramic view of some of the general aspects of money: 'Das Fünfte Element—Geld oder Kunst' (Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf 2000) and 'Les Couleurs de l'argent' (Musée de la Poste, Paris 1991-1992). Other exhibitions have focused on specific notions associated with money such as shopping, transactions, losses and profits, sales or the fetish³. The interactive-project and book, 'Capital', concerned the intersections of art, economy and philosophy, and mixed art work with seminars on the symbolic dimensions of money (Tate Modern and Bank of England May 2001)⁴. Exhibition catalogues have also proved of use to this investigation: *Les Couleurs de l'argent* (Ribettes 1991), for example, or *Fétiches et fétichismes* (Ribettes 1999) with a chapter devoted to money as fetish. The

² Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum, London ; Musée de la monnaie, Paris ; Money Museum and 'World's Fair of Money', Denver; etc.

³ 'Capital' (Crac, Sète [France] Summer 1999; 'Pertes et profits – troc, vente, emprunt, gratuité' (CNEAI, Chatou [France] July 2000); 'Trans_actions' (Galerie de l'université de Rennes II [France] Summer 2000); 'Art and Economy' (Deichtorhallen Hamburg 2002); 'Fétiches et fétichismes' (Passage de Retz, Paris 1999); 'Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture' (Tate Liverpool and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt 2002-2003).

⁴ conceived by artists Neil Cummings and Marysa Levandowska.

recent art book *Money* (Mattick and Siegel 2004) is also an attempt to divide art works according to the major themes concomitant with the use and representation of money ('credit', 'production', or 'speculation', for example).

In general, however, publications on money in art focus on the art market. Even when the magazine *Art in America* dedicates one issue on 'Art and Money', two pages only show art work based on money while fifty-eight are devoted to the art market (1988: 76-125). One possible exception perhaps is the book *Art and Money* (Shell 1995), which brings together a catalogue of representations of money in the Western history of art with a text that focuses on the origins of the representation and connotation of money in Christianity and Judaism and on the uses of money in painting and fine arts in general. The book, incidentally, includes no mention of cinema.

Money as a subject is a vast topic. To map out the fields in the study of money is not possible within the space of this chapter. To negotiate the large scope and multiplicity of studies concerning money in general, this review of the literature focuses on critical and scholarly works that help in determining how money is represented in film. It provides a discussion of the problems raised by the topic itself, the representation of money. After etymological clarifications of the term "money" in its different levels of understanding and representation, it briefly summarises some of the critical scholarship that examines money in art and literature.

The second part addresses film more closely in a thematic review of the critical and scholarly work done on money as it appears in film.

Because the thesis as a whole focuses on fictional feature-length films and not on documentaries, this chapter does not include the critical work done on documentaries.

1. Issues of Representation

Representation

Representation is a key term in the study of culture and images. To represent something is, on the one hand, to depict and describe it, and, on the other, to symbolise it or to make a substitution for it. The word representation means to re-present something else, but it also suggests to refer to: 'in a representation the original is never there but always absent, a representation of, a referring to, some authentic or original real' (Staiger 1992: 109).

There are many books and articles published on the matter of representation in film. Among these publications, however, the study of the representation of money is almost nonexistent, and the analysis of the representation of objects in general is scarce.

Money itself is a representation. It is the measure by which all commodities are compared and exchanged on the market, and in this sense it corresponds to Marx's concept of the 'universal equivalent'. Money, first precious metals then paper, in its specific 'social function' (Marx 1990: 184) is a universal equivalent in 'the process of exchange' (178) in that it 'crystallizes out of the process of exchange' (181). In this sense commodities 'relate to money as particular commodities relate to the universal commodity' (184). Money is a universal representation of value, in other words a sign of value that allows exchange. Therefore the representation of money is both the representation of an object and the representation of a representation.

Interest in the notion of representation itself lies in its various layers of understanding and practice. Hall (1997a and 1997b) sets out three main layers of representation: the reflective, that is, a simple *mimesis* of nature; the intentional, that is, the intended meaning of a given speaker, writer, filmmaker; and then, the constructionist, that is, a representation through a medium, such as language, image and cinema. These three layers (or levels) are all of value for examining the representation of money in film in the sense that they all call into question the meaning of what we see on the screen, and therefore raise the question of what one should look at when talking about money.

The notions of signifier and signified also help in evaluating images of money and money as a representation: 'both are required to produce meaning but it is the relation between them, fixed by our cultural and

linguistic codes, which sustains representation' (Hall 1997a: 31). Different forms of money shown correspond to different forms of a second degree representation that in turn correspond to value, in other words to what is signified. The value of money, like its representation and the connection of one to the other, exists in a specific context and according to given codes.

Peirce's taxonomy of different classes of signs and Wollen's subsequent work on it can be seen as the necessary groundwork for understanding the different layers implied by the representation of money. The three classes of signs (icon, index, symbol) correspond roughly to the three layers of representation cited above: the icon implies 'resemblance or likeness'; the index is 'a sign by virtue of an existential bond between itself and its object'; the symbol 'is conventional and has the force of law' (Wollen 1998: 83).

These categories are not mutually exclusive and apply to the different types of money representation as much as to money as a representation. In any given context, a banknote is different from a cheque, a credit card, or from sums of money listed on a computer. These different forms of money are, however, similar in their absence of "real", "intrinsic" value, and even more so nowadays when money is no longer backed by a concrete substance like gold. Further, money on screen, like representation, is more than a simple *mimesis* of the money we use in the "real" world, is more than a 'direct and transparent relationship of imitation or reflection between words (signs) and things' (Hall 1997a: 35). Nevertheless, money bears to some extent the qualities of the three categories outlined above.

Beyond the problematic of representation in its different layers, little has been written on the representation of objects in film. Sipièrè attempts, however, in 'Où est la réalité des objets?' ('Where is the reality of objects?' 1997), to categorise the different types of representation of objects according to their historical contexts and modes of understanding. Not unlike Peirce's categorization and based on Souriau's theory (1953) that the objects enjoy various levels of existence, Sipièrè's system is divided into five layers of reality and of filming.

The 'profilmic' (*profilmique*) is what is in front of the camera as part of the narrative line and a result of the decision-making process. The 'afilmic' (*afilmique*) is the exterior world "independent of any relation with the film"⁵ (Souriau in Sipièrè 1997: 337). The 'creatorial' (*créatoriel*) concerns the conception and making of the film itself, but not its utterance. The 'diegetic' (*diégétique*) 'is what belongs to the world that would exist if the story that is told were the reality'⁶. Finally, the 'spectatorial' (*spectatoriel*) is what resides in the viewer's mind. To extrapolate, then, from Sipièrè's reasoning, money filmed exists here at the border of the afilmic, which exists outside as an invariable, and at the border of the profilmic, which exists on the screen as part of the narrative line and as a result of decision making. Money on screen, like money itself, is heretofore one of the objects that is simultaneously 'real, manipulated, [and] artificial'⁷ (1997: 337). As an on-screen representation, money is both an

⁵ "indépendamment de toute relation avec le film"

⁶ 'ce qui relève du monde qui existerait si l'histoire racontée était la réalité'

⁷ 'réel, manipulé, artificiel'

index and an icon. Money itself is both a real and an artificial representation of value, and in this sense it can be either an index, or a symbol, of that value.

Although not directly concerned with film, it is also of interest here to consider Barthes' analysis of the representation of money. Barthes, in *S/Z*, a book on Balzac's *Sarrasine*, uses the 'index' and the 'sign' to explain the representation of money: the difference between the 'index' as the old code of money linked to ancestry and the 'sign' as the new code of money linked to representation, exchange and equivalences. Index and sign share a common mode, 'the mode ... of "inscription"' (1974: 39) while their relation to history and the past differs, as does the origin of their value. Far from anything inscribed in the depth of history or of a family's glorious past, money as sign is a product of its own time and it therefore represents its immediate and contemporary values (39-40):

In the past (says the text), money "revealed"; it was an index, it furnished a fact, a cause, it had a nature; today it "represents" (everything): it is an equivalent, an exchange, a representation: a sign. Between index and sign, a common mode, that of inscription.... The difference between feudal society and bourgeois society, index and sign, is this: the index has an origin, the sign does not: to shift from index to sign is ... to enter into the limitless process of equivalences, representations that nothing will ever stop, orient, fix, sanction.

If we follow Barthes' argument, the indications that money traditionally conveyed have evolved from a feudal order where ancestry and blood gave value, to a new order, a new system of representation and equivalencies without any personal referent. He shows how new money corresponds to a different way of inscribing it in society, without having to refer to ancestry or to a past in which a noble title was the guarantee of social status and of money's value. This idea of money as having become a sign rather than index could help explain the representation of money in films as well as money as a representation of value. Money's meaning would change depending on who guarantees its value but also according to what guarantees its value (gold or a floating system of exchange).

Money's Meanings

The epistemological problems raised by the representation of money find some solution through a consideration of the etymology of the word money itself. Goux, and to a lesser extent Shell, have both looked at the etymology of money to understand its meaning and analyse its figuration in art, literature and philosophy. The Greek and Latin roots of "money" throw light, not only on the meanings, but also on the moral connotations of money. Goux shows that the roots of the French words *argent* and *monnaie*

differentiate the notions of *argent* as property and belongings from *monnaie* as a tool of exchange (2000: 236). In Latin, two words, *pecunia* and *moneta* correspond to these two understandings of *argent* and *monnaie*. This differentiation, central to the conception of money in general, is operative in the problematic of this thesis.

Moneta corresponds to an exchange tool, a measure of value and the act of exchanging itself. *Moneta* was originally a cult title of the great goddess of the Roman state, Juno; and it is in her temple and under her sovereign authority that money was coined and minted. *Moneta*, like *denarius*, *nummus* (Latin) and *nomismos* (Greek), carries the notions of payment in ready money, of coined money, and of counting and measuring value⁸. *Pecunia*, on the other hand, is what belongs to someone and carries the idea of fantasy and treasure. In other words, *pecunia* is money as one's own (Goux 2000: 237):

Pecunia: goods, fortune, assets, possessions, wealth, cash, change, sum of money, pay-day; it is also the goddess of gain and one of the attributes of Jupiter. And, significantly, the word *pecunia*, from *pecus*, "cattle", retains semantic traces of having been an asset with value in itself, a real and even vital good, regardless of its exchange value.⁹

⁸ Language and etymology dictionaries have also been consulted: *Dictionnaire étymologique du français*, Larousse, 1998; *Oxford Dictionary*; *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano y hispanico*, 1980; *Dictionnaire Littré de la langue française*, 1956; *Dictionnaire latin-français Felix Gaffiot*, 1963; *A Latin Dictionary* by Charlton T. Lewis & Charles Short, 1957.

⁹ '*Pecunia*: biens, fortune, avoirs, possessions, richesse, argent comptant, monnaie, argent, somme d'argent, jour du paiement ; c'est aussi la déesse du gain et l'un des attributs de

In this sense, ‘whereas “*monnaie*” [*moneta*] has an exclusively objective meaning that excludes psychological or moral judgement, “*argent*” [*pecunia*] implies a personal relationship with “*monnaie*”, which becomes wealth’¹⁰ (Goux 2000: 236). *Pecunia* is money possessed or desired by someone, money as invested with a quality or tied to an owner who suffers or enjoys, loses or wins, accumulates or spends it, it is money in relation to a human subject who judges this money in relationship to herself or himself. *Pecunia* retains an emotional character while *moneta*, here in its French translation as *monnaie* remains more neutral (236-237):

That is why when one talks of a sum, it will always be a “sum of money [*argent*]”; whereas, when the discussion is of economic exchange, one will talk of the “history of *monnaie*” or “devaluation of *monnaie*”, of “metal *monnaie*”, “paper *monnaie*” or “fiduciary *monnaie*”. Because, in those cases, the *monnaie* is the object, placed at a distance by theoretical reflection, and not explicitly connected to an owner directly affected by his relationship to *argent*. *Monnaie* is the object of economics and politics, while *argent* concerns daily life, not to mention novels

Jupiter. Et, significativement, le mot *pecunia*, venu de *pecus*, “bétail”, garde la trace sémantique d’un avoir ayant une valeur en soi, un bien réel et même vital, en dehors de sa valeur d’échange.’

¹⁰ ‘Alors que “*monnaie*” a un sens exclusivement objectif, qui n’implique aucun jugement psychologique ou moral, “*argent*” implique une relation personnelle avec la *monnaie*, qui devient une richesse.’

and film (in the form of bucks, dough, moolah, loot, and so on).¹¹

Moneta and *monnaie*, in Goux's view 'could and can refer to an objective process of exchange which is not marked by the same affective coefficient and which moves to a substitution more and more mediated by a sign or written instrument'¹² (2000: 237). This distinction clearly separates *argent*, object of a moral judgment (clean money, dirty money, *argent roi*), from *monnaie* which concerns the act of exchanging or money within the financial system and regulations. Goux talks of 'the colour' of money as *argent*, as personal possession ("my money"); and of the 'transparency' of money as *monnaie*, the process of exchange (2000: 236). But this terminological distinction, quite clear in French and Latin, is more blurred in the English language but not in the notions of money that the etymology conveys.

The terminological differentiation *argent/monnaie* does not exist as such in English. *Monnaie* does not always translate as "currency", which in turn refers to a national monetary unit and not to the other possible

¹¹ 'C'est pourquoi, lorsqu'il s'agit d'une somme, ce sera toujours une "somme d'argent" ; en revanche, s'il s'agit de discuter des structures de l'échange économique, on parlera de l'"histoire de la monnaie", de la "dévaluation de la monnaie", de la "monnaie métallique", de la "monnaie de papier", de la "monnaie fiduciaire". Car, dans ces cas-là, la monnaie est l'objet, mise a distance par une réflexion théorique mais non rattachée expressément à un propriétaire directement affecté par son rapport à l'argent. La monnaie, c'est l'objet de l'économie et de la politique, tandis que l'argent concerne la vie quotidienne, sans parler du roman et du cinéma (sous la forme du *fric*, du *blé*, du *pognon*, de l'*oseille*, etc.)'

¹² 'pouvaient et peuvent ... se référer à une procédure objective de l'échange qui n'est pas marquée du même coefficient affectif et qui peut dériver vers une substitution de plus en plus médiatisée par le signe ou l'écriture'

meanings of *monnaie*. *Monnaie* also, for example, refers to change and even to coins (Derrida 1992: 103):

Monnaie, money, change: in French, at least, it is the same word (and the word is a coin, a piece of change). The word says at once the monetary thing in general and the remainder of a monetary operation, for example, the “*monnaie qu’on rend*,” the change on returns or “*la petite monnaie*,” small change.

Argent, likewise, differs from the English term “money” in that *argent* carries with it the notion of a material substance, for *argent* also translates as silver. This distinction, moreover, corresponds to the two main characteristics of money in general—to possess and to exchange—as expressed largely in the single word “money” in English—and this *moneta/pecunia* distinction functions centrally in the representation of money in film.

Money is also related to the word number, as Shell remarks in an article reflecting on the meaning of coins in relation to truth in Lessing and Heidegger. The etymology of number, related to *nomismos* in Greek and *nummus* in Latin, refers to coined money or coin. In this sense, ‘a coin, like a number concerns both things and symbols’ (1977: 563). It has material properties, just as the word *argent* in French, *dinar* in Arabic, *plata* and *dinero* in Spanish and *dinheiro* in Portuguese retain to this day a metaphoric reference to a weight of silver, and ‘pound’ a reference to

material properties (e.g. weight). At the same time a coin is exchangeable. As a counting unit, it 'has numerical or symbolic properties' (1977: 563).

As a consequence of the meanings and connotations of money, 'the primitive categories of pure and impure refer to money [*argent*], never to *monnaie* (which on the other hand can be authentic or counterfeit)',¹³ (Goux 2000: 239). Categories that concern the notions of giving and receiving, of having, of possessing and of sharing, of appropriation and of abundance belong primarily to money as a possession, as *pecunia*, rather than to money as a tool of exchange, *moneta*.

Furthermore, the Marxian distinction between the concepts of use-value and exchange-value is useful in considering the representation of objects with respect to their value and therefore to money as a representation of that value. This distinction adds another dimension to that of *moneta* and *pecunia*. Marx's definition of use-value derives from Locke's notion of "worth": the "natural worth of anything consists in its fitness to supply the necessities, or serve the convenience of human life" (Marx 1990: 127). For Marx (127):

The usefulness of a thing makes it a use-value.... It is therefore the physical body of the commodity itself, for instance, iron, corn, a diamond, which is the use-value or the useful thing.

¹³ 'Les catégories primitives du pur et de l'impur se rapportent à l'argent, jamais à la monnaie (qui en revanche peut être vraie ou fausse).'

The exchange-value, which leads to the 'value-form' (or 'money-form'), exists in relation to the use-value of a given thing or commodity and allows its exchange (Marx 1990: 137):

[The] exchange-value appears first of all as the quantitative relation, the proportion, in which use-values of one kind exchange for use-values of another kind. This relation changes constantly with time and place.

There are parallels and similarities between the etymological distinction provided by the word money and Marx's definition of use-value and exchange-value: *moneta* is closer to the concept of exchange-value in that they both concern 'the process of exchange' (Marx 1990: 6), although in different ways, while *pecunia* bears comparable traits with the concept of use-value in that one's own belongings often bear use-value. Furthermore many of the functions of money according to Marx, as a symbol and 'measure of values' (188), as a 'means of circulation' (198) and as 'means of payment' (232) and of 'hoarding' (227) parallel the understandings that come from an etymological review of the meanings of money. Films constantly play on the concepts of use-value and exchange-value, alongside the notions of *moneta* and *pecunia*, and, simultaneously, question the value of money itself as a universal equivalent.

‘Homologies’: From Literature to Film

If little has been written on the way money is shown or functions in the plot development of film, Shell (1977, 1982, and 1993), Goux, and Michaels (1987) have worked on parallels between language and money. Based on the investigations of the ‘morphology of language and money’, they stipulate the existence of homologies between language and money, or how comparable artefacts and entities both historically and ontologically can lead to the discovery of ‘a common anthropogenic root’ (Osten & Woodmansee 1999: 14-15).

Goux in particular (1973, 1978, 1984, 1988, 2000, Forest 2000) works on these parallels, these homologies and remarks: ‘the way we think about signs, representation and truth at a given period is remarkably similar to the way we think about money’ (Forest 2000: 20). This parallel is expressed in the ‘remarkable homology between the imaginative treatment of money’ in economic discourse (Turgot, for example), linguistic discourse and ‘their form of aesthetic representation’, in writings by such authors as Zola, Gide or Ramus. Henceforth, ‘it is as if the fictional status allotted to money functioned as a kind of reflector of questions of language and of representational devices’ (Forest 2000: 21).

Homologies are also to be understood in relation to Marx’s notion of the general equivalent.

The notion of the value of money at a given period in time has parallels in the mode of enunciation in literature and other art forms. President Nixon's decision, for example, on 15 August 1971, to suspend dollar convertibility into gold by 'closing the gold window' (Ferguson 2001: 317), meant that it would no longer be possible for those possessing dollar bills to exchange them, at a fixed rate, for the precious metal. The decision created 'an *inconvertible* world currency' together with '*floating* rates of exchange' (Rotman 1993: 88). This evolution introduced a decentralisation of monetary value heretofore backed by gold.

The overturn of the gold equivalent has also modified the modes of enunciation of literature and art: from one referent, one 'symbolic grounding, be it Gold, Language, the Father or the Phallus or any other form of Oneness' (Goux in Forest 2000: 23) to a multitude of points of reference, micro-centres operating like the floating exchange rate of currencies. This notion of inconvertible signs exclusively referring to other signs has had parallels in the philosophy of language, for example, in the work of Derrida (1967, 1971, 1992, 1993, 2004), and in the fine arts through non-figurative practice.

In the medium of cinema, paper money, electronic money and gold are different in the ways in which each of them affects the mode of enunciation. Although little has been written on the topic, two studies tangentially mention how money and its value at a given time have influenced a film's very form. The first concerns *Greed*, and the second *L'Argent* (1928).

Greed was read by Dahan (1977) as revealing a certain fear as regards the loss of value in gold, a mineral substance replaced by the fragile paper banknote. *Greed* is set in working-class America in the 1920s, following a second wave of immigration after that of the Gold Rush. At that time, US gold resources had been virtually exhausted. As a consequence, international currencies had come to be valued less from their convertibility into gold than from their convertibility into the US dollar (1977: 9). Dahan links the disappearance of gold as a substance with a 'resistance to an abstraction (of exchanges) and with a regression to an archaic stage of animality'¹⁴ in *Greed* (8). Soon after Trina (Zasu Pitts) wins a large sum of lottery money, she converts it into gold coins with their 'shimmering materiality the radiance of which blinds and hypnotises her'¹⁵ (10). Trina gives up everything for her gold horde and grows rather mad in her stingy resistance to making any practical use of it in bettering her life. It is only through a 'tactile and fantastical consumption of her loot'¹⁶ (9) that she gets any satisfaction from it, as in the scene of her gold-strewn bed upon which she lies down naked. In an attempt to accentuate the hypnotising effect of gold, Stroheim had all gold elements of the original (and lost) version of the film tinted yellow: mine gold, coins, Trina's tooth filling, the huge gold tooth of McTeague's (Gibson Gowland) fake dentist's surgery, the bird's cage, copper kitchenware, and even the fatal desert sun in the end. Dahan sees in this display of gold's materiality an expression of

¹⁴ 'résistance à une abstraction (des échanges) et une régression à un niveau archaïque d'animalité'

¹⁵ 'matérialité chatoyante dont l'éclat l'aveugle et l'hypnotise'

¹⁶ 'consommation tactile et fantasmagorique de son magot'

the insecurity generated by the current change in the monetary order from gold to paper banknotes and base-metal coins: by refusing the increased value given to paper and to paper money, '*Greed* dismantles (and demonstrates) an abstraction that is only a delusion'¹⁷ (11).

Made around the same period on the other side of the Atlantic, *L'Argent*, a film of more than three hours, was also recognised as creating 'homologies', to use Goux's vocabulary, between money (or, in this case, capital) and mode of enunciation (Abel 1984: 513). *L'Argent* focuses on Nicolas Saccard (Pierre Alcover), a powerful financier whose only goal is to accumulate more capital than his rivals. His main conflict is with Alphonse Gunderman (Alfred Abel), a major Paris banker. This story is paralleled with and connected to other stories, especially that of the aviator Jacques Hamelin (Henry Victor) and his wife Line (Marie Glory). Abel discusses in detail (1990: 37-50 and 1984: 513-526) the characterisation of the main protagonists, their relationship, the spectacular production and its history, the immensity of the decors, the narrative line of the film and its criticism of 'the capitalist system of speculation and accumulation' (1984: 515). He remarks that *L'Argent's* achievement, in its very form, by not showing money itself, rests on 'the correlation it makes between discourse, narrative and the subject of capital' (1990: 45). This correlation is achieved partly by camera movements and editing patterns indebted to the French narrative avant-garde (namely, for example, the joining of stable shots or stylistic breaks): 'all of these patterns foreground the film's discursive

¹⁷ '*Greed* démonte (et démontre) une abstraction qui n'est qu'un leurre.'

process of signification in a way that reflects on the narrative and its articulation' (Abel 1984: 526; see also Burch 1973: 138-162). In this way L'Herbier creates parallels between the immateriality of high finance and the absence of concrete money on screen.

These two readings allow an understanding of the films in their connection to a given monetary context and create a link between certain money forms (gold, capital) and their representation on screen, a link that is useful for this thesis.

2. Critical Studies of Films and Money

In general, existing articles, essays or book chapters, whether in English or French, focus on a number of recurrent themes that have come to be associated with the representation of money. The French magazine *Cinématographe* (April 1977 and May 1977) appears singular in having devoted two special issues to the 'filmic *representation*'¹⁸ of money (Audibert 1977: 1). English, however, does not offer as many studies of money in film as one might expect.

¹⁸ '*représentation filmique*'

US Cinema

Most texts and articles which deal in some way with the representation of money look at European and US films and focus particularly on Hollywood cinema. Hollywood is viewed as the paradigm of the 'treacherous mix of beauty and the numbers' (Thomson 1995: 25), a place of 'rare intimacy with money' (Fieschi 1977a: 2), as intimate as the scene in *Young Mr Lincoln* (1939) in which Lincoln (Henry Fonda) bites a gold coin to check its validity. Hollywood cinema is an 'obvious' object of study when it comes to looking at images of money, because it is 'more liberal, more cynical and more enterprising, it does not fear to show one of the nerves of its society'¹⁹, going so far as to create images that are as 'most often cruel and disillusioned'²⁰ (Audibert 1977: 1) as those of the desolate landscape that provides the conclusion for *Greed*. This is true from its origins with films recounting stories of gold fever (*Desert Greed* 1926, *Gold is not All* 1910, *Gold and Glitter* 1912) to later stories and fables about money (*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* 1936, *The Killing* 1956) (Fieschi 1977a: 2). Money shown in US cinema, in Thomson's view, is everywhere. It is 'the most reverent, erotic, and fatal image on the American screen' (1995: 21). Money is 'like the answer, the dream, the destination, and the question. When it appears, the characters on screen tend to sigh, and smile, and expand, as if in assent or confirmation' (21). Furthermore, Fieschi remarks the almost organic character of money in US film when he writes

¹⁹ 'Plus libéral, plus cynique ou plus entreprenant, il ne craint pas d'imager un des nerfs de sa société.'

²⁰ 'image cruelle ou désenchantée le plus souvent'

that 'the breathing of money in American cinema is so natural that it is not even thematic'²¹ (1977b: 2). Money, however, appears more as 'the hopes of a material idealism than the cynically aligned figures of the sharks of finance'²² (Fieschi 1977a: 2).

Invisibility

Despite US cinema's fluid relationship with money, its representation in the cinema of other countries is often that of an absent presence. Audibert notices that the study of money on screen is made difficult by the lack of images of money. This leads to an examination of money shown as that of 'an object both invisible and all-powerful, in other words repressed'²³ (Audibert 1977:1). Money in this view would appear less to the fore in cinema outside the US. Soviet cinema, especially in the 1920s, 'condemns' money but does not really show its mechanisms in capitalist society; and French cinema 'dissimulates' money (Fieschi 1977a: 2). In a statement on French cinema that includes the works of Renoir and Truffaut, Fieschi writes that 'money is never referred to graphically, it is not taken for a noble substance; one moralizes on its circulation as one would a covert malady, the name of which one ought to keep quiet'²⁴ (1977a: 2). This extreme argument is proven wrong in the same issue of *Cinématographe*

²¹ 'La respiration de l'argent dans le cinéma américain est si naturelle qu'elle n'est même pas thématique.'

²² 'les espoirs d'un idéalisme matériel que les chiffres cyniquement alignés des requins de la finance'

²³ 'un objet invisible et tout-puissant, c'est-à-dire refoulé'

²⁴ 'L'argent n'est jamais désigné graphiquement, il ne passe pas pour un matériau noble, on en moralise la circulation, comme une maladie occulte dont on doit taire le nom.'

where Truffaut explains (Fieschi 1977c: 21) how *La Sirène du Mississippi* (1969) is not just based on money in its plot, but it also shows it blatantly on-screen in several scenes.

In the history of cinema, some major films show money in its very materiality (*Greed*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* 1948, *L'Argent* 1983), others, despite being on the topic of money, keep money invisible (*L'Argent* 1928). With its title and its setting in the financial world, *L'Argent* is a film that constantly talks about money, with intertitles specifically referring to money: "Saccard believes in only one thing: money"; "With money you can buy anything"²⁵. No gold and no banknotes, however, are to be seen (Jouvet 1977: 7): in the credits section the title 'L'ARGENT', shaped rather like bullion, stands as the sole exception. Then too, though neither gold nor banknotes, there is Saccard's chequebook which he hands over to Line: 'It is therefore money in the second degree, the cheque being a substitute for the banknote, which itself is already a substitute for gold'²⁶ (8). Furthermore, the chequebook is an imprecise materialisation of money since it refers to no precise amount. *L'Argent* does not offer a 'problematic on the representation of money, for L'Herbier has chosen not to represent it'²⁷ (8).

While money remains invisible in the example above, in other films it remains invisible for the simple fact that the film projects on money

²⁵ "Saccard n'a qu'une croyance : l'argent"; "Avec l'argent tout s'achète."

²⁶ 'C'est donc de l'argent au second degré, le chèque étant un substitut du billet de banque, qui est lui-même déjà un substitut de l'or.'

²⁷ 'problématique sur la représentation de l'argent, car L'Herbier a choisi de ne pas le représenter'

themselves failed to make it to the screen. This is particularly true in the case of two of Eisenstein's Hollywood projects. Eisenstein was commissioned by Paramount to write a script for Marx's *Capital*, but the project quickly fell through (Michelson 1976: 26-38), and what remains are recorded discussions with Alexandrov, preliminary diary notes (12 October 1927-22 April 1928) and the outline of a scenario. Eisenstein's notes were published under the title 'Notes for a film on *Capital*' (1976: 3-26). Eisenstein was also hired with Alexandrov and Montagu by Paramount in 1930 to write and direct an adaptation of Cendrars' book *L'Or* (*Sutter's Gold* 1925), but despite his completion of the script which has since been published (Montagu 1967: 149-206), direction of the film was denied him and given some years later by Universal to James Cruze instead and with a different script (Frayling 1981: 16-26).

Finally, *Greed* is a case of invisibility in itself: an invisibility that concerns the "missing" reels, from the mythical forty-seven-reel film (forty-two according to the *American Film Institute Database*) that almost no one saw, to its final release version of ten reels (Dahan 1977; Rosenbaum 1993 and 2000). In fact, the existing film is usually discussed 'in relation to a "complete" or "uncut" version that remains perpetually out of reach', a kind of '*unseen legend*' rather than as a closed and established text (Rosenbaum 1993: 9).

Psychoanalysis

From Freud on, psychoanalysis has developed theories about money²⁸. Jouvét uses a Freudian interpretation to understand the absence or invisibility of money in *L'Argent* (1928). Freud in his elaboration of the notion of 'filthy money'²⁹ (1977: 8) developed an antagonism between an active-sadistic phase and a passive-anal phase. The will to dominate corresponds to the active phase, which suits Saccard's character with his obsessive gambling and his 'sadistic satisfactions—to establish a fortune by ruining that of others (Gunderman), to hold someone in his power, at his mercy (the Hamelins)'³⁰ (8). L'Herbier himself claimed that he made his film because of his own hatred for money, a point that will be expanded further in the chapter on French cinema. L'Herbier's hatred explains for Jouvét why he, 'bound to an elegant aesthetic...rejected any image of money itself, which he considers filthy material. The sight of banknotes, of gold as ingots or coins, can only be ugly'³¹ (10). In accord with this line of thought, Saccard's passion for money, his capitalism, can be shown; but

²⁸ Money in psychoanalytic theory has largely been studied in relation to bodily functions and to excrement. The main texts of reference are: Ferenczi, Sandor (1914) 'The Ontogenesis of the Interest in Money', in (1952) *First Contributions to Psycho-analysis*, London: Hogarth Press, 319-331; Freud, Sigmund (1905) 'Three essays on the Theory of Sexuality', *Standard Edition* 7: 130-243; (1909) 'Character and Anal Eroticism', *Standard Edition* 9: 169-75; (1927) 'Fetishism', *Standard Edition* 17: 179-204; Lacan, Jacques (1969) *La Lettre Volée*, Paris: Seuil; (1958) 'The signification of the Phallus', in (1977) *Écrits: A Selection*, London: Tavistock, 281-91; (1994) *Séminaire livre IV: la relation d'objet*, Paris: Seuil; O'Brown, Norman (1959) *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.

²⁹ 'l'argent ordurier'

³⁰ 'satisfactions sadiques—établir une fortune en ruinant celle des autres (Gunderman), tenir un individu en son pouvoir, à sa merci (les Hamelins)'

³¹ 'attaché à une esthétique élégante ... s'est refusé toute image de l'argent lui-même, qu'il considère comme une matière ordurière. La vue des billets de banque, de l'or en lingots ou en pièces, ne peut être que laide'

not money itself: 'L'Herbier shows the patient; he does not show the revolting object of his illness'³² (10).

Materiality

Greed is viewed as paradigmatic in its representation of the materiality of money (Dahan 1977; Trosa and Carcassonne 1977). In *Greed* 'Trina's miserliness will confirm money as palpable materiality, ultimate existence and the world's centre of gravity'³³ (Dahan 1977: 8). Here money does not consist of fragile paper banknotes, but of hard substantial gold, a 'rare and unalterable substance that one possesses far from other people's view'³⁴ (8). Gold is shown in all its materiality here, losing any 'realistic' quality and evolving into a 'fantasy-substance'³⁵ (Fieschi 1977a: 3).

Moreover, gold and gold hunters already figure in Nickelodeon films, as if 'money must, before being the urban money of a large nation in which capitalism is blossoming, be justified, participate in the very humus of the colonial soil and obtain its legitimacy rooted in the land'³⁶ (Fieschi 1977a: 2). Also, with the dynamic expansion of the US film industry in the 1920s comes a new 'ideological materialism'³⁷ (4). There is a shift: poor and working class people disappear, as do some of the pejorative moral

³² 'L'Herbier montre le malade ; il ne montre pas l'objet répugnant de sa maladie.'

³³ 'L'avarice de Trina affirmera l'argent comme matérialité palpable, comme existence suprême et centre de gravité du monde.'

³⁴ 'substance inaltérable et rare qu'on possède loin du regard des autres'

³⁵ 'matière-fantasme'

³⁶ 'L'argent, avant d'être monnaie urbaine d'une grande nation où le capitalisme prend son essor, doit-il être justifié, participer de l'humus même du sol colonial, acquérir une légitimité terrienne.'

³⁷ 'matérialisme idéologique'

lessons about gold. Poor people are replaced by rich people and by the joyous display of money and wealth with an abundance of tales about how to get rich (*The Miracle of Money* 1921, *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford* 1921, *Money! Money! Money!* 1923, and *That Certain Thing* 1928).

In French cinema, Bresson has been singled out for showing money in all its materiality, whether in *L'Argent* (Frodon 1995: 593-594; Martin 1999) or previously in the close shots of banknotes, coins or luxury items visible in *Pickpocket* (1959), *Au Hasard Balthazar* (1965) and *Une Femme douce* (1968): 'a value simultaneously concrete and symbolic, a power of fascination and a meaningful charge of a negative coefficient'³⁸ (Latil le Dantec 1977: 17).

In US cinema since the 1960s, the exposition of money in its very materiality is blatant (Thomson 1995): sack loads of 'untidy cash' in *Scarface* (1983); an old metal briefcase filled with seven-hundred thousand dollars in banknotes in *The Last Seduction* (1994), leaving Clay Gregory (Bill Pullman) to carry home the huge amount under his shirt, before his girlfriend Bridget (Linda Fiorentino) stuffs the banknotes in a canvas bag and flees to the suburbs where she hides her loot in the attic; a parcel containing ninety-three thousand dollars in cash in *Point Blank* (1967); a suitcase stuffed with two million in cash in *The Killing* (Thomson 1995: 21). The materiality of money is expressed, in US films especially, 'in rooms larger and houses grander than characters might afford in real life'

³⁸ 'une valeur à la fois concrète et symbolique, un pouvoir de fascination et une charge significative de coefficient négatif'

(24). The meaning of this on-screen extravagance of wealth is the ongoing 'advertisement for the nation's supposed bounty and the conscientious pursuit of happiness' (24).

Money and Morality

The display of money mentioned above, however blatant, is totally 'blare and unimaginative' (Thomson 1995: 21). What characters do with their money lacks fantasy, as if to underline the films' 'anal reticence with money' (21) while highlighting 'money's gloomy moralizing' or the 'fatuousness of money' (24). From the beginning, stories about money tend to express a morality. Its moral message in films holds an important place throughout the existing scholarship. This moralizing tendency culminates, as Fieschi remarks, in *Greed*, as does the representation of greed itself (1977a: 3).

Illegal Money

Illegal money is an important aspect of the representation of money, especially in 'crime movies' (Brode 1995). In the 1920s, with the rise of gangster films and thrillers, images of illegal money emerge: 'the gangster is an illegal capitalist'³⁹ (Fieschi 1977a: 5). This is the case with Guino Rinaldo (George Raft) in *Scarface* (1932) who gambles his destiny on the toss of a coin; or of the rich gangster Daniel 'Bugs' Raymond (Spencer

³⁹ 'le gangster est un capitaliste illégal'

Tracy) in *Quick Millions* (1931), who builds an empire and in the suddenness of a moment loses everything.

Sudden Fortune

The 1930s saw several films in which unsuspecting but lucky characters find themselves struck with sudden fortune (Fieschi 1977a). *If I Had a Million* (1932) features a dying billionaire, John Glidden (Richard Bennett), who consults the phone book to lavish cheques for vast sums on randomly picked individuals. Mr. Deeds (Gary Cooper) in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* inherits twenty million dollars and has no idea what to do with it. Disgusted by New York City high-society life and confronted by a small ruined farmer, he becomes convinced that he must redistribute his fortune: he opens an office in his home where poor people queue up, 'as for a prophet or miracle worker'⁴⁰ (Fieschi 1977a: 5), to register for seed money and a parcel of land. In other films, sudden fortune also strikes, for example, the lucky lottery winners in *Antoine et Antoinette* (1947) (Lederle 1977: 11-14).

⁴⁰ 'comme chez le prophète ou le faiseur de miracles'

Criticism of Capitalism

The onslaught of the Great Depression challenges the presentation of money as a free-for-all and mildly raises questions about capitalism itself (Fieschi 1977a: 4), as in *Our Daily Bread* (1934) in which John and Mary Sims (Tom Keeneare and Karen Morley) are city-dwellers hit hard by the financial fist of the Depression. They flee to the countryside and, with the help of other workers, set up a farming community which, after much hardship, ends up a good success. Welles, Huston and Kazan later raise harsher criticisms of capitalism (Audibert and Bonnet 1977: 15-19). *Citizen Kane* (1941), *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) and *The Lady from Shanghai* (1949), for example, form 'a virulent critique of American civilisation and the all-encompassing power of money'⁴¹ (Audibert and Bonnet 1977:15).

Certain forms of political cinema also show money 'striving to make its social, cultural or ideological presence or effects felt sensible'⁴² (Trosa and Carcassonne 1977: 3). Money in this case can function in different ways: it can be put to the fore in brutal opposition with the social background as in *Faustrecht der Freiheit* (*Fox and His Friends* 1975); it can highlight the 'contradictions that oppose the different possessors of wealth'⁴³ as in *The Honey Pot* (1965); and it can accentuate a certain 'opacity', whether money as treasure (*Greed*) or money as wads of banknotes (*Monsieur Verdoux* 1947) (Trosa and Carcassonne 1977: 3).

⁴¹ 'une critique virulente de la civilisation américaine et de la toute puissance de l'argent'

⁴² 'en s'efforçant d'en rendre sensible la présence ou les effets sociaux, culturels ou idéologiques'

⁴³ 'contradictions opposant les différents détenteurs de la richesse'

Denouncing money appears as a regular feature in young German cinema after World War II with, for example, *Jagdzenen aus Niederbayern* (*Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria* 1969) or *Der Plötzliche Reichtum der armen Leute von Kombach* (*The Sudden Wealth of the Poor People of Kombach* 1971). Money is also shown in its 'monetary value' and not only as a tool in its day-to-day workings 'far from golden dreams'⁴⁴ in the "Neue Sachlichkeit" trend in film of the Weimar Republic with *Die Abenteuer eines Zehnmarkscheines* (*The Adventure of a Ten Mark Banknote* 1926) (Trosa and Carcassonne 1977: 4).

Another problematic is the denunciation of money understood as capital that functions as the 'abstract stake'⁴⁵ of the social contract (Offroy 1977: 12). Offroy discusses this problematic in *Ziemia Obiecana* (*The Promised Land* 1974), *David Golder* (1930), *Heroes for sale* (1933) and *Network* (1976). Money's role is either that of 'passive—monetary sign, loot—or active—exchange tool, transfer of power'⁴⁶ (12). In *Ziemia Obiecana*, Wajda shows the relationship, in a capitalist system, between 'money, men, raw material and machines'⁴⁷ (12). The film exposes the triple aspect of money in this relationship, as 'economic calculation—investment—profit'⁴⁸ in order to denounce money-capital as devoid of any moral sense.

⁴⁴ 'loin des rêves d'or'

⁴⁵ 'enjeu abstrait'

⁴⁶ 'passif—signe monétaire, butin—ou actif—instrument d'échange, passation du pouvoir'

⁴⁷ 'l'argent, les hommes, les matières premières et les machines'

⁴⁸ 'calcul économique—investissement—profit'

David Golder concerns a capitalism without borders, financial capitalism, based on the circulation of money and on the existence of banks and Stock Markets. With *David Golder*, Offroy demonstrates how certain films emphasise the absence of purpose in money so as to condemn finance as useless and as a perversion of intimate social relations. Money, in *David Golder*, is not only 'the translation of material flux', it is shown as evil because it is more intellectual than palpable. Speculation in this sense is seen as responsible for all the evils of the world and as the reason for the nation's misfortune (12). Here, 'money is not the embodiment of evil: it is the revelation of evil'⁴⁹ (13). Money is not condemned in its function as exchange tool, but in its obscene 'waste' by certain social classes. Money reveals capitalism's contradictions in *Heroes for Sale*, with particular emphasis on the drive for profit as leading to inequality and unemployment (13).

Network highlights capitalism's contradictions as well: here not through the dynamic of the factory and its workers as in *Heroes for Sale*, but rather through the workings of a new form of capitalism, at once more global and more opaque, as exemplified in the world of unbridled competition among television networks for audience ratings, where 'the complexity of the flow of money spreads over the screen. The condemned cult takes hold in the light of day'⁵⁰ (13-14). Going one step further, Bresson's *L'Argent* has been read as 'a film about the making of a

⁴⁹ 'L'argent n'est pas l'incarnation du mal : il est le révélateur du mal.'

⁵⁰ 'La complexité des flux monétaires s'étale sur l'écran. Le culte condamné se répand au grand jour.'

murderer by a capitalist society' (Martin 1999: 54). *L'Argent*, in its very material representation of money, according to Frodon (1995: 593), is a film "“against money”"⁵¹: 'a terse and radical denunciation of the contamination of a society in its grip'⁵². Money appears as one of the evils of the last part of the twentieth century, predicting other 'characteristic diseases', such as AIDS and drugs: the 'contamination' and the spread of the disease inside the human body, in Frodon's view, 'is identical, and similar to the one of money'⁵³ in the social body (593).

Mac Guffin

Perhaps money in cinema, Fieschi argues, is 'nothing else than a Mac Guffin', always pursued and never really found (1977b: 2). Trosa and Carcassonne notice the difficulty that arises from any attempt to look at its representation on screen. They highlight how money, used in different circumstances and for different purposes, tends to escape analysis: money 'very often plays the role of a Mac Guffin'⁵⁴ (1977: 2) in cinema in general and more particularly in social cinema as, for example, the lottery ticket in *Antoine et Antoinette*.

⁵¹ "“contre l'argent”"

⁵² 'une dénonciation lapidaire et radicale de la contamination de la société sous son emprise'

⁵³ 'est identique, et similaire à celui de l'argent'

⁵⁴ 'joue bien souvent le rôle du Mac Guffin'

Fetishism

‘The description of the materiality of money’⁵⁵ is ‘always’ of an instrumental quality drawing less on materialism than on the most classic of fetishisms (Trosa and Carcassonne 1977: 5). In this way films highlight how money’s value is less the result of an intrinsic and natural value than it is the result of social and class relations. Fetishism here is used in the Marxian sense as born ‘of the necessary existence of a universal equivalent (money form) for radically heterogeneous labour’⁵⁶ (5). Money’s value is determined by the social product of men’s work, leading to money’s ‘opacity’, to its being an abstract construct, almost a kind of delusion. This is emphasised in the representation of money in *Greed*.

Money in *Greed* appears clearly as this purely abstract construct resulting less from a “natural” value inherent in money and more from the social construct of the value of money. The image of money and the object money are seen as entities difficult to reconcile. Even the representation of money in *Greed* is read as a pursuit of the reality of money together with all the problems such a pursuit entails up to the final scene where ‘the representation of the object never came so close to triumphing’⁵⁷ (5). In this view, despite serious attempts to capture it, ‘money seems doomed to the role of impenetrable monolith’⁵⁸, its opacity is difficult to catch and, in this sense, ‘McTeague’s failure, dying in the desert beside the treasure, is also

⁵⁵ ‘la description de la matérialité de l’argent’

⁵⁶ ‘de l’existence nécessaire à l’échange d’un équivalent universel (forme argent) pour des travaux radicalement hétérogènes’

⁵⁷ ‘La représentation objectale ne fut jamais si près de triompher.’

⁵⁸ ‘L’argent semble voué au rôle de monolithe impénétrable.’

rather the filmmaker's failure to capture money'⁵⁹ (6), money that remains a kind of delusion. Moreover, the obsessive behaviour of the characters towards gold is understood as 'the impossible quest for an essence, a magical link (the fetishism of gold)'⁶⁰ (6).

Treasure

Money in film is often characterised by its value as a block, an undivided sum, a treasure. Just so, some of Huston's films involve a constant search for an illusive treasure: the quest for gold through gold mining in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, stolen hoards of banknotes through robbery in *Asphalt Jungle* (1950), a priceless statue in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) (Audibert and Bonnet 1977: 15). Reduced to fragments, a treasure is of no more interest, since 'the classic desirability of the big bundle is less in the paper chase than in that solid block of bills, impacted hope, that also resembles a coffin or a headstone' (Thomson 1995: 24). It can, however, be broken up in seconds, in scenes such as the blizzard of money at the end of *The Killing*: the banknotes are blown away 'in the slipstream of an airplane engine' (24). This dream of possession, of holding close without spending, is a recurrent theme of money in films. Money, when divided up, loses its magical quality and becomes closer to everyday life. After all, the whole point of films like *Greed* is to keep the treasure intact (24).

⁵⁹ 'L'échec de Mac Teague, mourant dans le désert à côté du trésor, c'est aussi un peu celui du cinéaste à capter l'argent.'

⁶⁰ 'la quête impossible d'une essence, d'un lien magique (fétichisme de l'or)'

Money, Evil, Destruction, and Death

The equation between money, evil, destruction, and death is recurrent and takes the idea of money's morality further. This sometimes even leads to a misreading with respect to a given film, as when *Bande à part* is mentioned in its representation of money: Trosa and Carcassonne only notice the money that Arthur (Claude Brasseur) is holding when shot dead towards the end of the film (1977: 5), while in actuality wads of banknotes in quantity and in close-up appear early on in the film.

Money and its negative influence are present throughout Stroheim's films and it acts as 'the main source of social division, even at the heart of a privileged love relationship'⁶¹ (Dahan 1977: 8), as in *The Wedding March* (1928). In *Greed*, gold and death are associated in every scene in which gold is shown (11). Each shot of gold is followed by a shot of death: in the marriage scene, for example, when McTeague and Trina exchange rings, shots of a burial immediately follow. The film is constructed as a continual narrowing down on money: opening as a naturalist portrait of the US, its immigrants and its gold hunters, the film progressively focuses on the exclusive relationship of the characters to money (Trosa and Carcassonne 1977: 6). Here shots of money introduce breaks that lead on to disastrous events.

⁶¹ 'la principale source des clivages sociaux, même au sein d'une relation amoureuse privilégiée'

Money shown as leading on to disaster is viewed as common to many ‘money films’⁶² (Trosa and Carcassonne 1977: 6): *David Golder*, for example, here like *Greed*, changes direction with money shown leading to the breakdown of social relations. Huston is also seen as concentrating, especially in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *Asphalt Jungle*, and *The Maltese Falcon*, on money’s ‘corrupting and damning aspect’⁶³ in a world where other values are more important than money (Audibert and Bonnet 1977:15). In Bresson’s *L’Argent*, money likewise appears as a corrupting force that leads to destruction and death (Martin 1999: 53):

It is indeed money that animates and corrupts everything in this world—at one point resembling the excremental “filthy lucre” Norman O. Brown immortalized in his classic text *Life Against Death*, as it spits out of another ugly ATM.

In US films Thomson points to the almost necessary equation between money, destruction and death. In *The Last Seduction*, for example, ‘the precious bag of money... is like a slow-acting painkiller, but a killer nonetheless’ (1995: 21) as Bridget disappears with the proceeds of pharmaceutical drugs that, towards the end of the film, transform her into a figure of death. Bridget is addicted to money as she would be to drugs. Likewise, in *Scarface*, Tony Montana (Al Pacino) knows only how to buy cocaine with his huge amount of cash. Money implies both destruction and

⁶² ‘films d’argent’

⁶³ ‘aspect corrupteur et damnateur’

death as the drugs work as a metaphor for their deadly relationship to drug-money.

Here money shown provokes a break, a cut in the established order, and is often couched in the recurrence of ‘that self-righteous subtext—that rich people are cursed’, and that money, beyond the average wage, is ‘too dangerous, too ridiculous, or too sacred to be touched’ (22), like the parcel in *Point Blank* that just remains in Alcatraz, untouched and uncollected. In US cinema ‘money will ruin you and cast a blight on your life’ (23). A further extension of this view arises in the ‘explosion and disruption’ (25) provoked by the display of money and wealth in proportion to the often huge amounts of money shown, like the explosion of everything money stands for at the end of *Zabriskie Point* (1970).

Big Money: “Bad” People

“Bad” money and “bad” characters come to be associated, even equated, in films in which they carry on professions that in their very nature are in some way connected with big money: high finance professionals, corporate leaders and business men in general (Williamson 1991; Roffman and Simpson 1994); film producers (Ramirez 1999); art dealers (Rickey 1988); dealers of all kinds; and gangsters (Fieschi 1977a).

Propaganda

Money 'as an abstract sign' was used as a propaganda tool in Nazi cinema (Schulte-Sasse 1996: 234). By its very nature, 'money is implicated in the abstracting process of modernization so suspicious to National Socialism with its privileging of the "thingly", of production and not finance capitalism' (234). *Jud Süß* (*Jew Süss* 1940), a major Nazi propaganda film, in the design and construction of its anti-Semitic text, plays on the myth that would link Jews to 'money, abstractness, a distorting rationality, rootlessness, deception, and sexual degeneracy' (67). Jews, like money, are portrayed as necessarily producing nothing (70). In *Jud Süß*, 'Jews do not merely *represent* capital; they come to personify its intangible, pernicious power' (71).

Conclusion

In film studies, several recurrent themes have come to be associated with the way money appears in film. This thesis, while taking into consideration the whole existing literature, makes a greater use, because of the angle of analysis chosen, of works on the materiality, the invisibility, and the moral connotations of money, as well as the notion of money as treasure. Based on the existing material referring to these themes, it links them to the understanding of money through the meanings offered by its etymological

roots in *moneta* and *pecunia*. The distinction between *moneta* and *pecunia* is central to the conception of money in general and operates as an organizing problematic here. In this sense this work examines the representation of money in film, tracing it through the divide between *pecunia* and *moneta* and through the further divide between the concepts of use-value and exchange-value.

In extending Goux's line of thought from language to the film medium, the distinction between *moneta* and *pecunia* informs the display of money on screen: money as sums shown, money as hoarded, money as a tool of exchange, as well as money in its strictly representational form as gold, coins, banknotes, cheques or electronic money. Often, films tread a thin line that simultaneously separates and unites "money" in its various connotations as reviewed above. Money is considered at once as a tool of exchange, as an object of hoarding and, in its hoarding, as treasure, a fantasy possession that, to retain its value, cannot be spent. This distinction also contributes to an understanding of money on screen in its moral connotations, in its "good" and "bad" dimensions and in the patterns of evil, death and destruction that its representation introduces in many of the films of the four groupings under discussion here: in US films on gold and gold mining, in neo-realist films, in 1970s and early 1980s French films on high finance, and in 1970s and 1980s US horror films.

This thesis, furthermore, employs the notions of index and sign (Barthes), icon and symbol (Peirce), the concepts of use-value and exchange-value, together with the notions of *moneta* and *pecunia*, to

examine the dimensions of the materiality of money in its different representational forms: as a mineral substance in films set in the American West, as the paper money of post-war Italy or of horror films, and in the various forms of money in films on high finance (coins, banknotes, shares, stock options, Stock Market quotations, electronic money). The same distinction informs the supposed invisibility of money, the absent presence of money which can also be understood as money's own paradox—worth so much, yet worthless. Money is a universal equivalent, yet its materiality on screen often only hides the absence of any concrete referent to its value. This aspect of money is explored in all four groupings of films, and drawn to an extreme in the chapter on horror films with Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Day of the Dead* (1985) and *Land of the Dead* (2005).

The four following chapters address directly genres and groupings of films in the way they represent money, while making use of some of the themes and questions addressed in this review of literature.

As mentioned in the introduction, this analysis follows more or less the pattern of the history of money itself throughout the Twentieth century: from gold, corresponding to the idea, and perhaps illusion, of an "origin" of money as illustrated in films on the American West featuring gold mining and the desperate quest for the precious substance; to paper money after the end of the gold-standard in neo-realist films; to more impalpable forms of money as capital in the "numbers" of finance and other forms of impalpable transactions in 1970s French films on high finance. In 1971, the gold-exchange standard itself was severed; this left money to float

according to market fluctuations and without a concrete value referent. The last chapter, focused on US horror films made after the end of the gold-exchange standard, establishes a contrast, perhaps a twist, in relation to the previous chapters and the representation of money each film grouping offered. The films selected for the horror chapter question the meaning, use and *raison d'être* of money itself: if real estate horror films return to the notion of money being transformed into a solid commodity – a house – Romero's zombie films offer a vision of the world where money is no longer central or even useful for anything.

CHAPTER TWO: GOLD IN THE AMERICAN WEST

Introduction

The lust for gold is not new in history, arising from early antiquity it persists up to our own time. In the period of the discovery of the New World, Western Europeans, and the Spanish conquistadors in particular, were obsessed with it. They spent much of their time hunting gold, longing to bring it back to the imperial court of Spain, to fill the royal coffers, to ornament the kingdom's castles and churches. Their never-ending quest for gold, the shining object of their lust, is at the centre of films set during the period of Spanish exploration in the Americas.

Aguirre (Klaus Kinski) for instance, in *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (*Aguirre, the Wrath of God* 1972) is sent by Pizarro (Alejandro Repulles) to find, along the Amazon, El Dorado, the fabled city of gold. In his desperate search, which functions in the film as a kind of magical talisman, Aguirre is instrumental in letting all his crew perish and ultimately dies himself, miserably adrift on a raft lost in the jungle. Ironically gold never makes an appearance in *Aguirre*, yet its absence creates an almost palpable presence. Gold in its very absence provides the tension of the film, its *raison d'être*. In another film, *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1969), Pizarro (Robert Shaw), gold-hungry and once more on the hunt, kidnaps the Inca god-chief and

promises to release him in exchange for his horde of gold. Again here the story is guided by a lust for gold.

The focus of this chapter is the representation of gold and gold mining in the northern part of the American continent and in US films. The films chosen are set in the Gold Rush period, in the West, and also in Mexico. The 1848 California Gold Rush marks a central moment not only in the history of the West, but also in the history of gold, of money and of its representation in film. Gold is an obvious and almost necessary choice when looking at the representation of money in film, because gold, like silver, predates banknotes and other human fabrications of minted money, and was itself, as a dust or powder, used as a means of direct exchange. Since gold was also perceived as wealth, the representation of its discovery in the North American pioneering context brings into play many of the recurrent patterns and themes usually associated with money. This becomes clear in film in the purely visual aspects of gold or in the reactions and behaviours that result from its discovery.

Gold (or gold dust) is a raw material that must be extracted with difficulty from the soil. Finding it is often the result of sheer luck. In its use, gold was for many years the material of coinage and actually set the standard of value for currency alongside silver. Gold dust is, in many films, the embodiment of money at a time when the gold standard was about to become *de facto* the monetary system of reference (1873). A unit of account would then be a fixed weight of gold.

It is the first stage of finding or “striking” gold that this chapter focuses on. The gold referred to is the immediate product of mining, gold not yet transformed into ingots or exchanged for paper money or coins, or gold as deposited in banks. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to look at gold as a form of money that is not yet transformed into a standardised national currency, a kind of pre-monetary unit.

Yet, even when it is not yet transformed or cashed-in, gold is a dreamt-of substance, something envisioned like a concrete or supreme form of wealth. In itself, it somehow represents to the mind vast sums of money, sums beyond those represented by mere bills or coins. The promise of gold, for many, justified long months and even years of back-breaking work often at the risk of life itself in search of fabled veins; and this, despite the knowledge that very few ever really struck it rich and managed to keep their wealth afterwards. The object of a desperate quest, the desire for gold often leads to foolish and sometimes fatal decisions in films. This chapter considers gold as an exchange tool as well as the magical object of people’s wildest dreams: gold as currency for spending as well as gold held as treasure to be hoarded.

Working from this notion of gold as paralleling money, as something to be spent or something to be hoarded, the idea here is to see how it works in a given set of films that feature gold and gold mining. The study will attempt to demonstrate how a film such as *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948) plays on a thin line of signification that separates but also unites the word “money” in its various connotations as deriving from

the Latin words, *moneta* and *pecunia*. The distinction between *moneta* and *pecunia*, as is already mentioned in the previous chapter, separates money as an exchange tool, a kind of currency (*moneta*), and money as something that one ‘owns’, goods or wealth (*pecunia*), ‘money as possession, in other words our “money”’¹ (Goux 2000: 237). *Moneta* refers to an ‘objective process of exchange ... which can tend towards a substitution more and more mediated by the sign or by writing’² (237). *Pecunia* refers to the actual object money and to material property in all its concrete guises. Therefore, *pecunia* links to a certain imaginary quality of wealth, while *moneta* remains more neutral in connoting an actual monetary exchange. Although the meanings of the two words often overlap and are not mutually exclusive, the distinction between the notions they refer to can help in analysing the representation of gold as both a concrete possession and as fluid currency.

Just as there is little written on the representation of money in general, there is little written on the representation of gold and of the Gold Rush in cinema, despite the occasional mention here and there in books and articles (Fieschi 1977a, Buscombe 1988, Kowalewski 1997, Simmon 2003). The Gold Rush and gold mining are surprisingly underrepresented in films on the West, and there is virtually no in-depth analysis of gold in cinema despite some films featuring it at the centre of their narrative (*Greed*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Gold Rush* 1925, *Paint*

¹ ‘la monnaie en tant qu’avoir, c’est-à-dire notre “argent”’

² ‘procédure objective de l’échange qui n’est pas marquée du même coefficient affectif et qui peut dériver vers une substitution de plus en plus médiatisée par le signe ou l’écriture’

Your Wagon 1969, *Pale Rider* 1985). Instead, what has been investigated and analyzed are the emotions that commonly arise when gold enters the picture as well as the criticism, real or implied, of capitalism and greed that these films convey, often through an opposition between farmers and miners.

The question, however, of the representation of gold or the question of gold mining as a significant historical moment for the Western film and for the West in general, have often been set aside in favour of looking into the more generic aspects of the films and not into the examination of gold as a motif. A case in point comes to mind with the scholarship regarding *Pale Rider* (Sadoux 1998: 104-109; Smith 1993: 115), considered a restoration of the major generic elements of the classical Western film in a process of restitution starting with *Hang 'Em High* (1968). These studies fail to emphasize that this modernised version of *Shane* (1953) differs from *Shane* precisely because its plot unfolds out of conflicts between small and large-scale gold mining whereas *Shane* has nothing to do with gold or gold mining at all. Instead, what has been noted is the way *Pale Rider* explicitly 'revisits *Shane*, though with a new emphasis on questions of gender and ecology' (Smith 1993: 115).

Despite the fact that gold mining is not central in Westerns and in films set during the Gold Rush period, many films feature gold at one point or other: the *American Motion Picture Database*, for example, lists nine hundred and eighty six films with "gold" as a keyword, and the *American Film Institute Silent Film Database* gives one hundred and sixty

matches, with titles specifically referring to gold mining such as *A Nugget of Gold* (1909), *The Gold Seekers* (1910), *The Gold Prospectors* (1909) and *Gold Madness* (1923).

Since the silent cinema era, however, gold mining has not been represented in that many feature-length films compared with films essentially on farmers and cowboys. Moreover, some “classic” titles are not available in any European archive and are hardly ever screened in cinemas. This is the case with *Sutter’s Gold* and *The Tide of Empire* (1929), two films commonly referred to in relation to cinema on the Gold Rush.

This chapter, by considering mostly post-war films, examines the different patterns of representation of gold, more specifically in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and in other films about the West, the frontier and the mining for gold, at a time when most films on the West are not about gold mining. The goal here is to locate and highlight the meanings that the representation of gold and gold mining, when central in a given film, introduce into stories and imagery, and how they inform the representation of money in general. This study considers gold and its mining in its textual and contextual constructions.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre clearly advertised itself as being about gold. The advertisement campaign preceding the release of the film in the US played with the two first words of the title, “the treasure”, and thereby focused on what the film condemns most: greed and quick money. Exhibitors were (Naremore 1979: 22):

...advised to promote the picture through newspaper contests and “treasure hunts” for free passes. The Warner’s press book even suggested that theatre owners could visit local banks and negotiate a display of bullions or gold coins—in other words, the studio was trying to lure audiences into the theatres by means of the very greed that the film had satirized.

The Strand cinema in Los Angeles organised fake treasure hunts featuring free cinema tickets as their reward. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, like *The Gold Rush*, *Sutter’s Gold* or *Paint Your Wagon* may be better known films, yet other examples, like *Pale Rider* and the perhaps less known *Barbary Coast* (1935) and *MacKenna’s Gold* (1969) are also overtly and equally about gold. In all these films gold corresponds to a specific form of money, while gold mining figures as the historical basis of the stories they tell.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre is a singular film that stands out as not really belonging to any one genre, a mixture of Western and adventure film, not dissimilar in this to *MacKenna’s Gold*. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* keeps its focus mostly on the relationship of Dobbs (Humphrey Bogart), Curtin (Tim Holt) and Howard (Walter Huston) and particularly their mutual reaction to money, to gold, and to the gold they find together and share. The story takes place on the Mexican side of the border circa 1925, long after the California Gold Rush of 1849. An

adaptation of the eponymous novel by B. Traven, a mysterious anti-capitalist and anarchist German-born writer, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* eschews romance to concentrate on the dynamic workings of capitalism and greed in the protagonists' lives and nothing else. Other films, such as those mentioned above, as well as others drawn from a broader viewing, set during or after the Gold Rush, involving gold prospecting and sometimes also the search for a treasure that evaporates at the end of the film, also come into consideration in the course of this chapter. In the films of the present corpus, moreover, gold itself provides significant motifs and imagery, allowing an analysis of the patterns and peculiarities linked to its actual portrayal.

This chapter opens with a contextual presentation of the American pioneering West of the Gold Rush period and continues to fictions generated by this period and the fictionalisation of this era since. The second part explores the particularity of the representation of gold as palpable, material and concrete, in opposition to the contemporary, more impalpable and ethereal forms that money takes. The third focuses on the illusory aspects of gold and its patterns of disappearance in a number of films and includes an analysis of gold mining in films as a pre-capitalist phenomenon.

1. The American Pioneering West and its Fictionalisation

Gold Rush: The Pioneering Context

It is futile to attempt to list the similarities or discrepancies between films set in the Gold Rush era and actual historical events of the nineteenth century. Even if the story lines have a basis in fact, Gold Rush films are neither pure “reproductions” nor simple illustrations of past events. Most of them are mixtures of real and fictional stories and not wholly based on historical accounts. This chapter focuses, then, on the conceptions that underlie representations of gold in film. Contextual discussion of the Gold Rush is only necessary and useful for providing a general framework for the period, its overall atmosphere and the myth it created. It is not meant to be exhaustive or to parade a series of facts that the films would only illustrate.

This being said, the Gold Rush still remains a major historical phenomenon in US history. Not only did it mark the emergence of a new extractive industry, but it also attracted tens of thousands of fortune hunters to the “unexplored” land of the West, land in fact inhabited by many

different native peoples and by a few earlier settlers³. All this changed very abruptly. California in this period was not just the pioneer State that became the focal point of a major gold rush. Rather, the way the Gold Rush emerged in California set California up as a kind of type or model or pattern of other gold rushes to come—in North America as well as in other parts of the world. Fascination with California sprang in this way ‘from the interplay of geography, social history, and imagination’ (Kowalewski 2000: 205). The sudden influx of great masses of people combined with the rapid growth of a new type of mining economy deeply altered the society and politics as they had existed up to this time. The California Gold Rush thus gave birth to a rich literature and was the inspiration, direct or indirect, for a number of films, although fewer than one might expect given the magnitude of the event.

The Gold Rush really started with the discovery of gold on Johan August Sutter’s farm. Sutter was a destitute Swiss immigrant who had left his home country in 1834 and established an empire (La Nouvelle Helvétie) in the Sacramento Valley in the early 1840s, based on new agricultural techniques and a cheap work force. He had managed ‘to become, temporarily, the wealthiest man in the Western hemisphere’ (Kellman 1985: 21-22). On 24 January 1848, however, one of Sutter’s employees, James Marshall, working on the construction of a sawmill, came upon gold nuggets near the junction of the American and Sacramento Rivers. In no

³ In 1846, two years before the Gold Rush, about sixty indigenous communities represented 90% of the population (Crété 1982: 10).

time the news spread throughout California and soon to the rest of the country and the world as well. Once confirmed, as Kowalewski notes (1997: xii):

The effect was electric. The adult male population of San Francisco on May 12, 1848, was roughly 600. Within three days it was perhaps 2000. Everyone else—doctors, lawyers, teachers, sailors, shopkeepers—was feverishly attempting to get up the Carquinez Straits or to the east side of the bay in order to head for Sutter's Fort and the American River.

All activity stopped. Neighbouring towns and settlements soon became ghost towns as everyone rushed to the site of the gold. Within a few months, tens of thousands were boarding ships from Hawaii, Japan, Peru, Chile, Argentina and Europe, sailing across the Pacific or around Cape Horn, sometimes trying to cross the Isthmus of Panama on canoes, men fired by the gold fever and full of hope, leaving family and previous life behind—at least temporarily. As *The Californian*, a San Francisco newspaper put it on 29 May 1848 (Holliday, 1981: 35):

The whole country... from the seashore to the base of the Sierra Nevada resounds to the sordid cry of gold, gold! GOLD! While the field is left half-planted, the house half-built, and everything neglected but the manufacture of shovels and pickaxe.

Once in California, after the perils of their journey, prospectors relentlessly worked the rivers, panning for gold in the hope of striking it rich. While a worker in the East was earning perhaps between one and one and a half dollars a day, rumour had it that in California that same worker might make 'hundreds, perhaps thousands of dollars a week' (Kowalewski 1997: xii)⁴. Sutter's story and the subsequent history of the discovery of gold on his land became a source of fiction and film as noted later in this chapter.

San Francisco was a focal point for all of this new activity. With the Gold Rush, it became the major stopping point for all prospectors en route to or from the mines. The population exploded, prices soared. The city itself, as a colourful centre of quick money exchange, came to be known as the Barbary Coast, a place where gambling houses and brothels and every other form of exploitation flourished to help separate prospectors from their hard-earned gold findings. As Mark Twain in *Roughing it* (1872) remarks (2003: 222-223):

The honest miner raked from a hundred to a thousand dollars out of his claim a day, and what with the gambling dens and the other entertainments, he hadn't a cent the next morning, if he had any sort of luck.

⁴ The sheer volume of the gold mined in California spells out this history and in this sense speaks for itself: in 1848 the equivalent value in dollars of gold mined stood at \$245,301; in 1850 this figure had jumped to \$41,273,106. The skyrocketing figures culminated in 1852 at \$81,938,232, a record that from this point began to fall until gold production petered out to nearly nothing (Crété 1982: 10).

This aspect of San Francisco finds itself reflected in the film *Barbary Coast* where the opposition between the “good” money of the prospectors and the “bad” money of lawless San Francisco is central to the film.

At the same time, myriad smaller towns, usually quite bleak, often very dangerous, emerged. It was to these shantytowns that the new prospectors had to go for their food, tools, and other provisions. It is these one-horse towns, lurid and colourful, lawless centres of gambling and prostitution (in this respect not unlike San Francisco) that often figure prominently in films of the Gold Rush period (the gold mining camps in *Ride the High Country* 1961, *Pale Rider*, and *Paint Your Wagon*).

The kind of ‘gold most readily available in California was placer gold, that is, loose gold which had been extracted, transported, and deposited in foothills and streambeds by the ancient actions of water and erosion’ (Kowalewski 1997: xv). In California, ‘the central portion of the gold country was located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada’ (Kowalewski 1997: xv). California was the first region of the US to undertake the mining of precious metal on a large scale. Later there were other, less spectacular gold rushes in the West⁵. They all came to play their part in the formation of the mythology of the West. By the beginning of the

⁵ In Colorado the first gold rush took place in 1859. That same year gold was found in Nevada. In the 1860s the “mining boom” moved North; first to Idaho, then to Montana, and finally, in 1876, to the Dakotas. The last major US gold strike was at Cripple Creek in Colorado in 1890. On the North American continent as a whole, the Yukon in Canada, where *The Gold Rush* takes place, was to follow with a major gold strike in 1896, although ‘the Canadian mining frontier differed from the situation in the States. A legal and administrative structure was already in place’ (Buscombe 1988: 189). Later two sources of gold were discovered in Alaska: in 1898 at Nome and in 1903 in Fairbanks, allowing ‘the boom in the mining of precious metals to survive into the 20th century’ (189).

twentieth century, though, rather than gold itself, two other more valuable sorts of precious substances were being sought for in the earth: the metal copper and, above all, the fluid petroleum—"oil". The period of the Gold Rush, starting in 1849, corresponds to the period that the Westerns depict.

Outside North America, other gold rushes took place in the nineteenth century⁶. These were places, where, each time, men rushed headlong in hopes of quick fortune and great riches. The first of a number of gold rushes, the California one, however, proved to be the most important, for it attracted the highest number of people over the longest period of time and established the pattern for the ones to follow. It also had the greatest psychological impact, for what happened in California gave birth to a dream that was pursued for half a century, and films on the Gold Rush are precisely about that dream, that lust for quick riches in the form of a heavy metal.

Gold and Fiction

The California Gold Rush ended for good in 1856 as all the available gold had been found. California, and the West generally, were becoming more organised and settled as members of the Union. However short, the California Gold Rush soon became the stuff of legend for storytellers. The

⁶ Australia (1851–53) and South Africa (1884)

legend grew out of an immemorial fascination with gold in conjunction with the context of the Gold Rush itself. The Gold Rush is probably one of the most documented events in nineteenth century North American history after the Civil War.

Documents dating from the Gold Rush era are numerous because thousands of these latter-day argonauts, most of whom could read and write, left diaries, reports, letters and books about their daily lives. They described everything from the long voyages to the Pacific coast, to the harsh living conditions and the daily circumstances of gold mining itself. Although the life of the prospector was far from ideal and many of them never found any gold at all, nevertheless, 'the lives of these rugged pioneers, some of them vagabonds, has entered into legend: their adventures, captured in cinema and literature are now part of the folklore of the Western world'⁷ (Crété 1982: 10).

Local newspapers of the time ran chronicles and published abundant articles about these same things. In the US and abroad, important literary figures such as the already mentioned Mark Twain, but also Bret Harte, Jack London, Blaise Cendrars, and more-contemporary authors wrote stories of gold mining in the American West.

The figure of Sutter is a good example of the fictionalisation of the Gold Rush. After thousands of gold prospectors took over his land, destroying his agricultural "empire", Sutter lost everything. Despite years

⁷ 'La vie de ces hardis pionniers, parfois gens de sac et de corde, est entrée dans la légende: leurs aventures, saisies par le cinéma et la littérature, font partie aujourd'hui du folklore du monde occidental.'

of legal proceedings, he never managed to win compensation from the government for his land and died in poverty in 1880. Since his death, Sutter has been at the centre of several films. Two films and a screenplay were adapted from Blaise Cendrars' novel *L'Or*: the Nazi film industry produced *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien* (*The Emperor of California* 1936) directed by Luis Trenker; and Universal subsequently released *Sutter's Gold* by James Cruze⁸; and as already mentioned, Eisenstein, with the help of Alexandrov and Montagu, wrote a screenplay for Paramount in 1930 that fell through (Frayling 1981: 5-33; Montagu 1967: 149-206). A few other films have focused on the Gold Rush through the history of its discovery on Sutter's property: *Days of '49* (1924) *California in '49* (1924), *California Gold Rush* (1946 and 1981 [TV]), *Fortune* (1969 [TV]) *General Sutter* (1999).

Sutter's story, even in its unsavoury elements, illustrates perfectly the tension projected in many Westerns between choosing the stability and security of land and agriculture or choosing, regardless of any other consideration, the unstable enterprise of fast money with all the risk and insecurity it implies. The story of an entrepreneur and his dramatic rise and fall, offered, compared to the monotonous life of so many anonymous miners, an obvious choice for cinema.

Despite Sutter's story and despite the abundance of fiction that arose out of the Gold Rush, historians of the Gold Rush and of Western

⁸ James Cruze may not have been the only director. The entry for *Sutter's Gold* in the *American Film Institute Database* gives more precision: 'In the Universal shooting schedules at the USC Special Collections Library, Hawks is credited with direction along with James Cruze, and Hawks and William Faulkner are included among the writers of this production. The exact nature of Hawks's and Faulkner's contribution to the final film has not been determined' (anon.).

film have noticed that 'gold fever never really caught on in the Western film' (Buscombe 1988: 189). Most films on the West, and Westerns in particular, while being set between 1830 and 1860, are nevertheless not about gold mining, and this in spite of the fact that the Gold Rush is the single event that precipitated California into a new historical era by suddenly giving rise to such unprecedented wealth and drawing so many people to her shores.

Hollywood, according to Kowalewski, 'has been unable to exploit the dramatic possibilities of the Gold Rush in the way, say, the Civil War provides the backdrop for innumerable movies' (1997: xx). While Buscombe is surprised by the disproportionate absence of images of the Gold Rush, Kowalewski points more specifically to the non-representation of the California Gold Rush in Hollywood films (1997: 20):

With the exception of *Paint Your Wagon* (Joshua Logan, 1969) that nearly bankrupted the Paramount studios, there has been no *Gone with the Wind* [1939] no *Glory* [1989] about the California Gold Rush. Charlie Chaplin's wonderfully inventive comedy *The Gold Rush* (1925) was set in the Yukon gold rush of fifty years later.

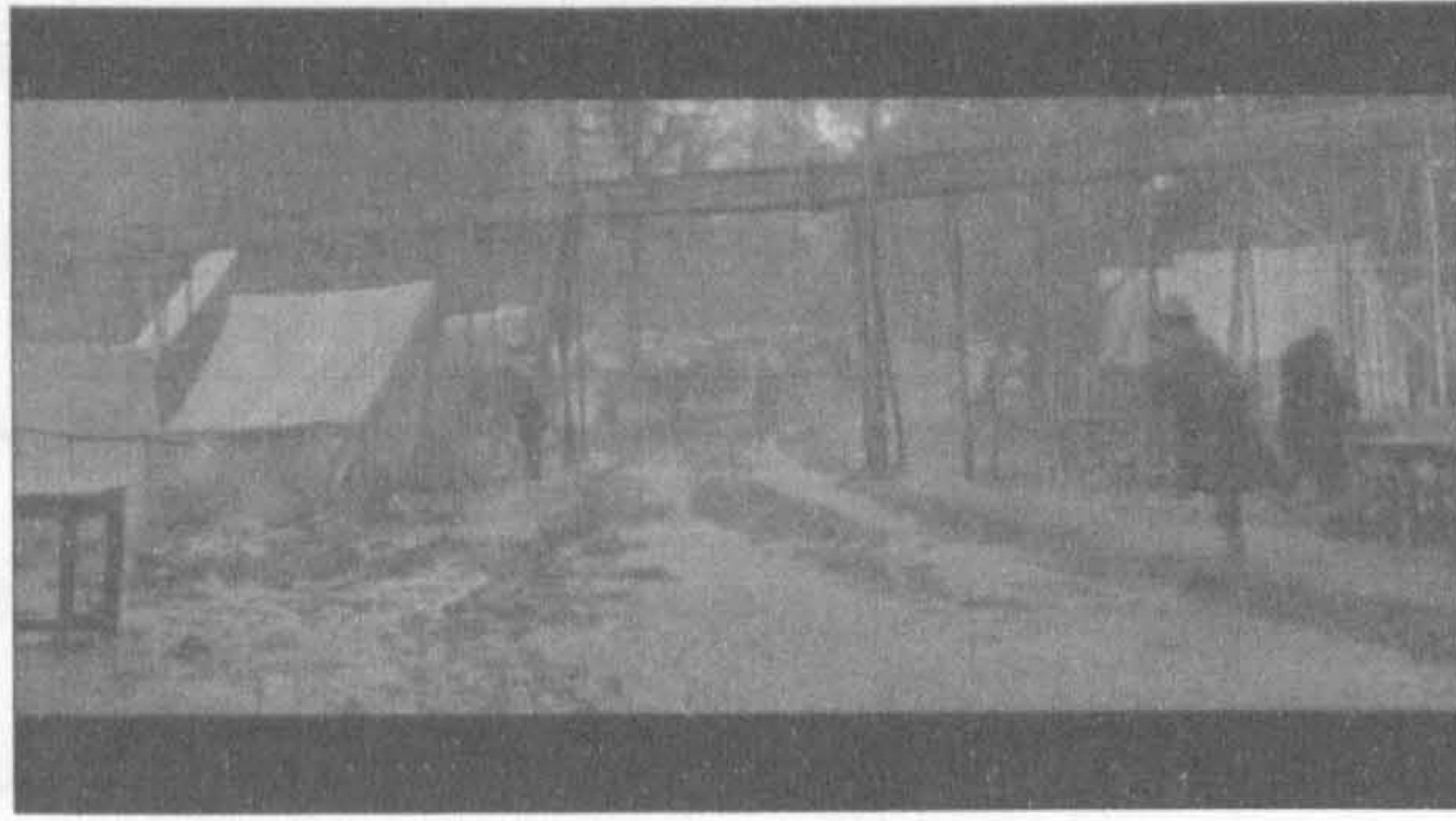
Why this absence? Why more farmers in a period where farmers were in the minority? While unable to offer a real explanation, Kowalewski sketches out possible answers through another set of questions (1997: xi):

Is it because the Gold Rush does not have a familiar dramatic structure (a discernible beginning, but no clear finish)? Is it because it lacked focal points of interest such as climatic battles or dramatic confrontations between homesteaders and ranchers? Is it because the rush to California was motivated by a seemingly base motive, the desire to get rich quick? Is it that mining is an unglamorous occupation incapable of capturing the imagination?

All these questions can probably help in understanding better Hollywood's lack of enthusiasm for the Gold Rush. There were, on the other hand, a few European films or film adaptations of European novels such as the ones mentioned above but also *Die Herrgottsgrenadiere* (1932) and *Gold in New Frisco* (1939). With respect to the limited visibility of gold-mining stories in US cinema, several factors come into play as explanation. First, associated with the idea of making a "fast buck", there is the notion of money as dirt or "filthy lucre". This is opposed to the "good", "honest" and "hard-working" way of making one's living, like cattle herding, a form of livelihood in fact most often represented in the Western. Also, almost ninety-five percent of classical Hollywood films involve a romantic element as a significant feature of the plot (Bordwell, Staiger and Thomson 1985). These factors go a long way towards explaining why gold-mining scenarios proved unattractive to Hollywood studios, despite important exceptions like *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

The miner or the cowboy? It is difficult to say whether or not the miner presented Hollywood with an 'unglamorous' occupation and image. Certainly it was a very monotonous one: daily activities varied little over time and seldom mounted to the dramatic climax necessary to the classical Hollywood model. On a visual level the cowboy, in comparison, probably presented a more attractive image. In this sense it was more efficient to unfold the myth of the West as the "conquest" of the West through the lives of cowboy loners or with their families, crossing boundless landscapes by horseback or covered wagon or driving cattle across endless prairie, rather than to show images of mining camps and men huddled over and spread out panning for gold along stream beds and small rivers.

In general the living conditions for the prospectors were very difficult. The food was monotonous and the mining camps themselves were rife with disease like cholera. Then there was the harsh everyday reality of bad weather, blisters, sore muscles, sunburn, fleas, exorbitant prices, and the hard, unremitting, repetitive labour. The static character of the scene, the monotony, and the absence of women all seem cinematically unattractive. These aspects of miner's everyday life are shown, for example, in the shots in *Paint Your Wagon* of No-Name City flooded by the rain, or the shots of miners monotonously panning for gold.



Paint Your Wagon: No-Name city under torrential rain.

In *Paint Your Wagon*, as in most films on gold mining, filmmakers present a fantasised image of miners, alone and in small groups, equipped with little more than picks, shovels, pans, and sluice-rockers, similar in this way to nineteenth-century artists. According to Driesbach, artists of that period ‘were producing romanticized paintings that showed earlier—rather than current—Gold Rush practices’ (1998: 4). The same can be said of films in that they depict essentially a “legend” as typified mostly in the first wave of miners and their harsh life. The bleak image of loneliness and the absence of any dramatic rise or fall in action in these stories could hold little attraction for big studio producers or the public. Interest would rise when a story’s dramatic peak centred on the conflict between the individual and his traditional way of mining gold and the big company with its army of employees mining the earth with costly large-scale techniques and equipment.

The conflict between small-scale and larger-scale mining is at the centre, both visually and in the story, of a post-Western like *Pale Rider*. Carbon Canyon’s settlers’ community struggles against the bigger firm to

remain on its claim and continue its search for gold on a small scale and not through large-scale hydraulic and ecologically devastating modern methods. Small-scale mining is set in an almost bucolic and certainly peaceful environment; while the mining operations of the La Hood Company are shown as particularly destructive of nature and display much violence in the tentative appropriation of small miners' claims.

Already, in the first scene of the film, crosscutting alternates the quiet and hard-working dimension of Carbon Canyon's miners and their tin-pans with La Hood's men savage attack on the settlement. This attack involves the systematic destruction of housing and the killing of cattle and pets together with the threat of death for those who would refuse to leave Carbon Canyon forthwith. The level of destruction is kept in proportion to the size of the La Hood mining operation, and stands in contrast to the modest, more respectful ideal, of individual miners as depicted not just in *Pale Rider* but also in other films. These new, more efficient ways of mining leave no room for the isolated prospector and his tin-pan. This perhaps explains, incidentally, why *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, set in 1925, had to take place in an "untouched" Mexico, far from the industrial North American large-scale mining operations.



Paint Your Wagon: extreme long-shot—
miners panning along the river.



Paint Your Wagon: romanticised image of a miner.



Pale Rider: the miner and his tin pan.



Pale Rider: long shot—pastoral view of small-scale mining.



Pale Rider: large-scale hydraulic mining and environmental destruction.

As Buscombe acknowledges in the 'mining' entry of his *BFI Companion to the Western* (1988: 189), this quasi-invisibility is surprising:

...not only because gold was one of the main spurs to westward expansion, but also because the mining camp would appear to offer plenty of colour and drama to the film-maker. The gambling dens and saloons, the dance halls and brothels of Virginia City or Leadville certainly rivalled anything that Dodge City or Abilene had to offer. Yet for every Western set in a mining camp there are scores about cattle towns.

Although *Paint Your Wagon* is precisely about the 'colour and drama' offered by the mining camp, most films and most testimonies tend to emphasize the isolation of small groups of miners, often living far away from bigger settlements as Dobbs, Curtin and Howard in the mountain of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* or the small community of Carbon Canyon in *Pale Rider*. And, on the other hand, there is only so much that films can use in the 'colour and drama' of the 'gambling dens and saloons, the dance-halls and brothels' without constructing some romance or drama that would in some other way lift the story up from the bleak surround of the miner's life.

While *Paint Your Wagon*, with its focus on a California gold-mining settlement, is almost an exception among Westerns in its subject matter, it nevertheless does introduce a romance between Elizabeth (Jean Seberg) and her two husbands Ben Rumson (Lee Marvin) and Pardner (Clint Eastwood), as well as elements belonging to the genre of the musical that transform the discovery of gold, in effect, into a long fable. These dynamics propel the film beyond the monotonous scene of gold mining. The film also manages to show a settlement's process of development into an organised city. *Paint your Wagon*, however, despite these dynamic factors, despite its outstanding cast and the size of its budget, twenty million dollars (Dick 2001: 110), is a heavy and monotonous film and was a total failure at the box-office that almost sank Paramount. In this it resembles the story of another film more than thirty years earlier. In 1936 *Sutter's Gold* was one of Universal's most expensive films with a budget of

\$730.571 (Dick 1997: 100) at a time when the typical Universal production was costing about one hundred thousand dollars, and it was also reportedly one of the studio's biggest box-office disasters. This in itself perhaps provides another reason why Hollywood producers historically shied away from the gold-mining scenario.

Moreover—and this also goes back to the general negative and immoral connotations usually attached to money in films—‘mining appears to be incompatible with the dominant ideal of the Western, that civilization advances through settlement of the land’ (Buscombe 1988: 190). The mining camp is in its very nature transient, no gold strike can last forever, and ‘the mining town is also in the mythology of the Western inherently hostile to the family, on which civilization equally depends’ (190). Wives and therefore children were absent from mining camps; and, except for films like *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* which is not exclusively a Western, there seem to be almost no films about men on the hunt for gold without the development of some attendant romance. Furthermore, there is a certain ‘incompatibility between mining and the Western’s vision of an ideal community’ (190), reinforced by the fact that the mining frontier is not the rural or small-town community ‘which is the Western’s ideal’ (190). Except in a film like *Pale Rider*, the mining frontier, on the contrary, springs up quickly, teeming with wild, rude one-horse towns, like No-Name City in *Paint Your Wagon* with its more than fifty bars, gambling dens and brothels, hardly the Hollywood Western’s ideal community.

This being said, in early cinema and up to the mid-1930s, there were several films of varying importance about the Gold Rush that were set in mining camps (*Broncho Billy and the Claim Jumpers* 1915, *Panning in Dakota* 1889, *The Gold Rush*) or that simply featured gold mining at some point (*Greed*). These popular films were often adaptations of novels or other narratives, as for example in the case of Bret Harte's stories. His tales about California gold camps were published in *Overland Monthly* (San Francisco) and later enjoyed many film adaptations: *The Luck of Roaring Camp* was made into a film in 1909 and remade in 1917 and 1937; *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* was adapted in 1919 and remade in 1937 and 1952; *Tennessee's Partner* was adapted in 1916, remade as *The Flaming Forties* in 1924, and then again in 1954. These stories were not yet insisting on the 'imbalance' (Buscombe 1988: 189) between prospecting and greed on the one side and farming, honesty and family life on the other. They were simply stories about mining, hard work and the ethics of life among miners.

The 1920s, however, especially after *The Covered Wagon* (1923), witness the rise of the cowboy and of a corresponding "cowboy ideology" influenced by religion—all linked to the development of the myth of the West. *The Covered Wagon* heavily emphasises the divide between those who, despite the news of gold, stick to their original goal of going west for farming as opposed to those who are struck with gold-fever and the lure of quick riches. Like the separation between "good" and "evil", an overly symbolic shot shows the train dividing into two and taking separate routes,

distinct tracks, with the would-be prospectors abandoning their past and leaving their former lives—and ideals—behind.

From this time, then, a certain tension emerged in the Western and other narrative films between the “good” and “stable” life of agriculture or ranching and the “bad” and “risky” life of gold-fever and mining. *The Covered Wagon* introduced characters torn between a choice, often presented as inevitable, between the hunt for riches in mining and the settled life on ranch or farm. This life choice also attempts at setting a standard for the “good” American male who has become so through a conscious choice for the long-term enterprise of joining a community and raising a family, as opposed to the short-term lonely enterprise of money making through the pursuit of quick riches.

An opposition was then clearly established between being a “good”, stable and reliable man, a farmer or rancher for instance, and being an adventurer, a prospector, an unstable, unreliable and self-centred nomad on the make. In this view the farmer makes the earth produce the crops he grows, whereas the miner does not make the earth produce the gold he extracts. Gold is not the product of his hands like crops, but something found, something taken from the earth. In the films of this period, the prospector or the choice between farming and prospecting were in plain view or at least mentioned, and were not totally ignored as in many subsequent Westerns. After the 1920s, the miner, ‘though not totally excluded from the repertoire of the Western, became a far less popular hero’ (Buscombe 1988: 189).

This view is recurrent in later Westerns, where the same judgmental storylines as in *The Covered Wagon* can be found, showing mining as a suspicious activity by contrast with family farming (Simmon 2003: 133), in films like *Gold is Where You Find It* (1938), *Bend of the River* (1951), *The River of No Return* (1954) and *The Far Country* (1954). In *Gold is Where You Find It*, California miners mock the farmers from the Sacramento valley ‘that they flood with tailings stripped by their hydraulic operations’ (Simmon 2003: 134) with lines such as “Oh, farming was alright in its day”. In *Bend of the River*, the villain, Emerson Cole (Arthur Kennedy), agrees to sell to gold miners the food he had promised settlers who are planning to grow apples in Missouri’s wilderness. He is ready to sacrifice the good will of the farmers to his greed for money that means instant riches for him.

Farming and cattle-raising, on the contrary, offer something different, something more solid and of long-lasting promise, the promise of family and firm roots in a new land. The farmers in *Shane* try to demonstrate this against the seemingly overwhelming odds of the big cattle barons. Matt Calder (Robert Mitchum), in *The River of No Return*, embodies this stability; while the gambler Harry Weston (Rory Calhoun) and the mining camp appear impermanent and carry the promise of disappearance. In general, mining camps and towns are seen as transitory, built not to last, with no solid roads or houses, as for instance the remote settlement in *Ride the High Country* or No-Name City in *Paint Your Wagon*. In a spectacular scene, as if to emphasise its ephemeral character,

the entire settlement of No-Name City vanishes, engulfed by the earth, the same earth that has given the city-settlers gold which in turn has led to widespread corruption, gambling and prostitution, given rise to anarchy, and created havoc in the community.



Paint Your Wagon: No-Name City house collapsing into earth.

Like the mining camp itself, “bad” characters tend to disappear and die. In *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, Curtin’s (Tim Holt) agrarian dream is seen as the wise, solid and honest choice by comparison with Dobbs’ (Humphrey Bogart) dreams of the ephemeral pleasures of high-spending, baths and prostitutes. But Dobbs, the “bad” character and also the hero of the film, dies, as does Ben Tatum (Walter Brennan) in *The Far Country*, who joins Jeff Webster (James Stewart), the ‘unsettled wanderer’ (Wright 1975: 51), to dig for gold after the two decide not to head straight for Utah to buy a ranch, but to try their luck at gold mining.

In some films, however, farming and prospecting are not presented as mutually exclusive throughout. In *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, for example, as Dobbs becomes set as the “bad” miner, Curtin emerges as the

“good” character. This quality is emphasised when he eventually decides to go back to his childhood dreams, and abandons Mexico with its promise of a gold strike in order to join up again with the Midwest peach harvest. In *Paint Your Wagon*, Pardner, the farmer-converted-miner, becomes a prospector (although we never see him panning gold) and, as the end of the film suggests, a farmer again after No-Name City perishes and is about to be reconstructed by Christian settlers recently arrived from the East and set on building a solid and stable community based on farming and cattle herding. In other films there is little more than bare mention of the protagonists’ past lives of mining, protagonists who since then have gone back to a “straight” life, as does Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda) in *My Darling Clementine* (1946) or MacKenna (Gregory Peck) in *MacKenna’s Gold*.

Films on gold mining and the Gold Rush, then, emerge in the North American pioneering context: the discovery of gold on Sutter’s land and the emergence of a new extractive industry gave rise to a massive emigration to the West seen as a new land with its possibility of quick riches. Despite being set in the same period as that depicted in Westerns and the magnitude of the event, the Gold Rush turned into a rich source of literature but relatively few films.

Films on the conquest of the West, especially after *The Covered Wagon*, feature farmers and cowboys rather than miners. The opposition between gold, seen as something wrested from the earth, and crops that grow out of the earth through agriculture, has led to the connotation of the

miner as “bad”, compared to the “good” farmer who exploits the earth in a more organic way.

Despite their limited number, existing films about the Gold Rush or gold mining offer a varying picture in their representation of gold as something concrete and palpable. Some of these films focus, often in a romanticised way, on isolated prospectors, their hard life and working conditions (*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Gold Rush*); others on isolated mining communities (*Ride the High Country*, *Pale Rider*, *Paint Your Wagon*); others still on the more communitarian aspects of the Gold Rush era with its wild towns and gambling joints (*Barbary Coast*). Several films dating back to the 1920s and 1930s concern the historical course of events having to do with the discovery of gold (*Tide of Empire*, *Sutter's Gold*, *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien*).

2. Gold: A Material and Palpable Substance

A careful consideration of gold mining raises several motifs by association. First, there is the very materiality of gold as a substance wrested from the soil. There is also the attendant notion of luck because gold first of all lies hidden and must be discovered. To prospect for gold means by definition to take a chance, it is the contrary of acting in a conservative way. This last notion raises the motif of hard and physical labour—nothing is lifted with

ease from the soil. It is necessary, then, to examine in greater detail the ways the films selected for this chapter present the materiality of gold, what that means, and how it is associated with luck, hard physical labour, and, also, scarcity. In films on gold mining, and especially in the films selected here, gold is often made present, real and palpable on the screen through numerous close-ups of gold coins, gold dust or gold nuggets.

Materiality of Gold

Gold is a physical and concrete substance, a heavy element that signifies money and, in this sense, an “incarnation” or “embodiment” of money. In its heavy concreteness, gold refers to materiality and palpability in a way rather removed from the impalpable forms of money that have their place for example in the transactions of high finance. It is *real* and *concrete* as opposed to etherealized or virtual money.

These three qualities of gold, its materiality, its weighty palpability, its concrete reality, stand out by the fact that here gold is the direct result of mining, of the heavy, repetitive and eminently physical work that prospectors must carry on for days and weeks and months. This makes the cinematic choices in the representation of gold and of gold mining in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* crucial to this study. The film tells a desperate story of gold mining, and its plot is a raw and uncompromising emphasis on the lust for gold. Despite being set in Mexico some seventy

years after the Gold Rush, it does link with gold rush history through the gold-mining stories Howard, an old-time prospector, relates to his audience in the Oso Negro hostel in Tampico. Howard articulates clearly the various places he looked for gold around the world (a kind of synopsis of nineteenth century gold rush history) before ending up, down and out, in a Tampico flophouse. As regards its representation of gold, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* shares similar traits with other films about gold mining set in the US, highlighting its materiality, its weighty palpability, and its concrete reality as well as its symbolic value and its potentially immoral dimensions.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre won applause from critics and public alike upon its release. It was further distinguished for the unusual centrality of its focus on the desperate search for gold as money (Crowther 1948: 11):

Greed, a despicable passion out of which other base ferments may spawn, is seldom treated in the movies with the frank and ironic contempt that is vividly manifested toward it in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

Gold is a salient visual motif throughout the film and figures significantly in the characterisation of the protagonists from the moment they team up to prospect together. There are three main sequences in this action: Tampico, where Dobbs, Curtin and Howard join forces to embark

on their quest for gold in the Sierra Madre; the climb of the “mother” mountain and the gold mining operation itself; the return from the mountain and all subsequent events, including Dobbs’ death and the ironic loss of the gold. Gold as the product of mining is present in the first part of the film already in Howard’s talk about gold and the search for gold, and then in Dobbs’ and Curtin’s conversation about gold which later leads to their plan to search for it. Only in the search does the gold become material, palpable, and real. Here, however, while gold is only present on the characters’ lips, the representation of other forms of money are brought to the fore and set the tone of the film.

From its first image, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* presents a kind of money, or the possibility of money, on screen. Before any character is introduced, a close-up of a poster listing winning lottery numbers is shown. The camera then pans to the left to a pair of hands holding a ticket. It is only after this shot and a cut that the hands are linked to Dobbs as he is introduced reading the winning numbers on the poster. His face is one of disappointment as he throws his ticket away, and in this gesture he demonstrates a fading hope for luck and quick riches. In this way at the outset, the film’s focus on money and references to money are central. It is central perhaps, but not necessarily concrete: money could not be more impalpable, more immaterially portrayed than as a lottery ticket or a poster merely displaying winning numbers. Money referred to here is abstract and almost unreal, while the ticket’s potential to bring riches only concerns a few.



The Treasure of the Sierra Madre: close-up—lottery poster.

The scene points to money as something lacking. This leads Dobbs, a desperate character from the beginning, to stake what money he does have on a lottery ticket as a kind of ultimate hope. This immediately introduces the notion of money as something quick, easy, but carrying a high risk of loss. From the start, too, the film ties money closely to the plot and forges tight links between Dobbs and money. The link is even more explicit in the original screenplay in which the first scene was conceived as a single shot panning from the lottery board to Dobbs as down-and-out (Naremore 1979: 47):

CLOSE-UP LOTTERY LIST

Showing the winning numbers drawn in the MEXICAN NATIONAL LOTTERY. AUGUST 5, 1924. CAMERA PULLS BACK to include Dobbs. He is slowly tearing a lottery ticket into bits. CAMERA DOLLIES AHEAD of him as he turns away from the list. The tribes of bootblacks that people the streets do

not pester Dobbs. He is too obviously on his uppers. His clothes are ragged and dirty and his shoes are broken. He hasn't had a haircut in months, and there is several days' growth of beard on his face.

Again, from its opening sequence, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* establishes a concrete and direct relation between money—or the absence of it—through the use of close-ups (of the lottery poster and later of coins) and the photographic emphasis on Dobbs' visible and concrete poverty, his worn shoes, his bedraggled clothes, his unkempt appearance and the miserable bundle under his arm.

The first scene of the film is the first of a series that show money under its different guises and with a progression first from the lottery poster to coins and banknotes, then from lottery winnings to actually striking gold. While in the beginning money is used for basic needs, emphasised for example in the dissolve of Dobbs with a coin in hand and of food, as the film progresses and as money-gold becomes wealth, it is no longer used for food or cigarettes but only to justify getting more of it. Money is indeed as much a major motif in the film as it is a motive for the characters' action. It appears on the screen repeatedly and it functions as a motivational factor, as something that moves or induces them to act in a certain way. Dobbs and the other major characters are shaped and determined by their all-too-concrete need for money. Their hunt for money reaches its logical peak in

the prospecting and discovery of gold, in large quantities and in its rawest form. At this point need merges into the lust for treasure, the gold of the Sierra Madre. It is clear in this way that “treasure”, in the film’s title, refers to gold more as an object of quest than as a solid possession promising the protagonists a better life at some point in the future.

Dobbs counting his money.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre: Dobbs and Money



Close-up—Dobbs’ hands holding lottery ticket.



Dissolve of Dobbs’ hand with coin and of food.



Dobbs counting banknotes.



Close-up—Dobbs' hand touching gold dust.



Dobbs in foreground with Howard in background
weighing gold dust.

Mining, Materiality and Value

Gold, as a mineral, is a heavy metal, an object to be weighed. Its materiality derives primarily from its being a solid substance found through mining in the earth and in rivers. Gold as the product of mining and used as money is different, then, from artificial, fabricated forms of money.

While gold as a raw material somehow carries in itself its own worth, society nevertheless specifies its commercial significance more closely and assigns it a measurable and monetary value. Gold does not really have much direct use-value like wheat or sugar (except perhaps as used to fill teeth or, in a more indirect way, for computer parts, communications equipment, spacecraft, jet aircraft engines, and in various chemical solutions). It nevertheless has come historically to be used in jewellery and to emphasize in its very uselessness power and wealth, and to inspire respect, awe, and fear in such places as churches, monuments and other public buildings. As Goux argues (1997: 171), gold has, 'traditionally, this feature of the material commodity' in that 'it carries the pledge of its value in itself, in its weight and substance'. In order to bear an exchange-value, gold dust, unlike banknotes, coins and cheques, does not need a fixed value minted or printed on it with the seal of the ruling authority. The value of gold as a means of exchange lies precisely in its substance and weight. This implies that gold, as a material substance extracted from the earth and treated as a commodity, is very different from

the 'more abstract and complex nature' (Goux 1997: 171) of speculative and immaterial forms of money, such as paper, cheques or electronic money.

In the films under discussion, gold as nuggets or dust is measured according to its exchange-value in dollars, in a system in which the weight of gold is the only recognized rule in the transaction. Here, gold as a mining product mostly in the form of dust has not yet been converted to any currency but is still thought of and referred to in terms of dollars and used in place of dollars. In *Barbary Coast*, for example, set in 1850s San Francisco and largely in Luis Chamalis' gambling house, prospectors on their way back from the mine fields spend and often lose all their hard-earned findings. In the gambling house, prospectors carry little bags of gold dust each corresponding to monetary units for use as a medium of exchange in gambling and buying drinks. Bags are weighed and converted mentally to their worth in dollars and a scale stands prominently on the bar although it is not used as such during the film. In *Paint Your Wagon*, miners wear their gold dust bags at their waist, as so many units of measure of money.



Barbary Coast: Swan at gaming table with miners and their bags of gold dust.



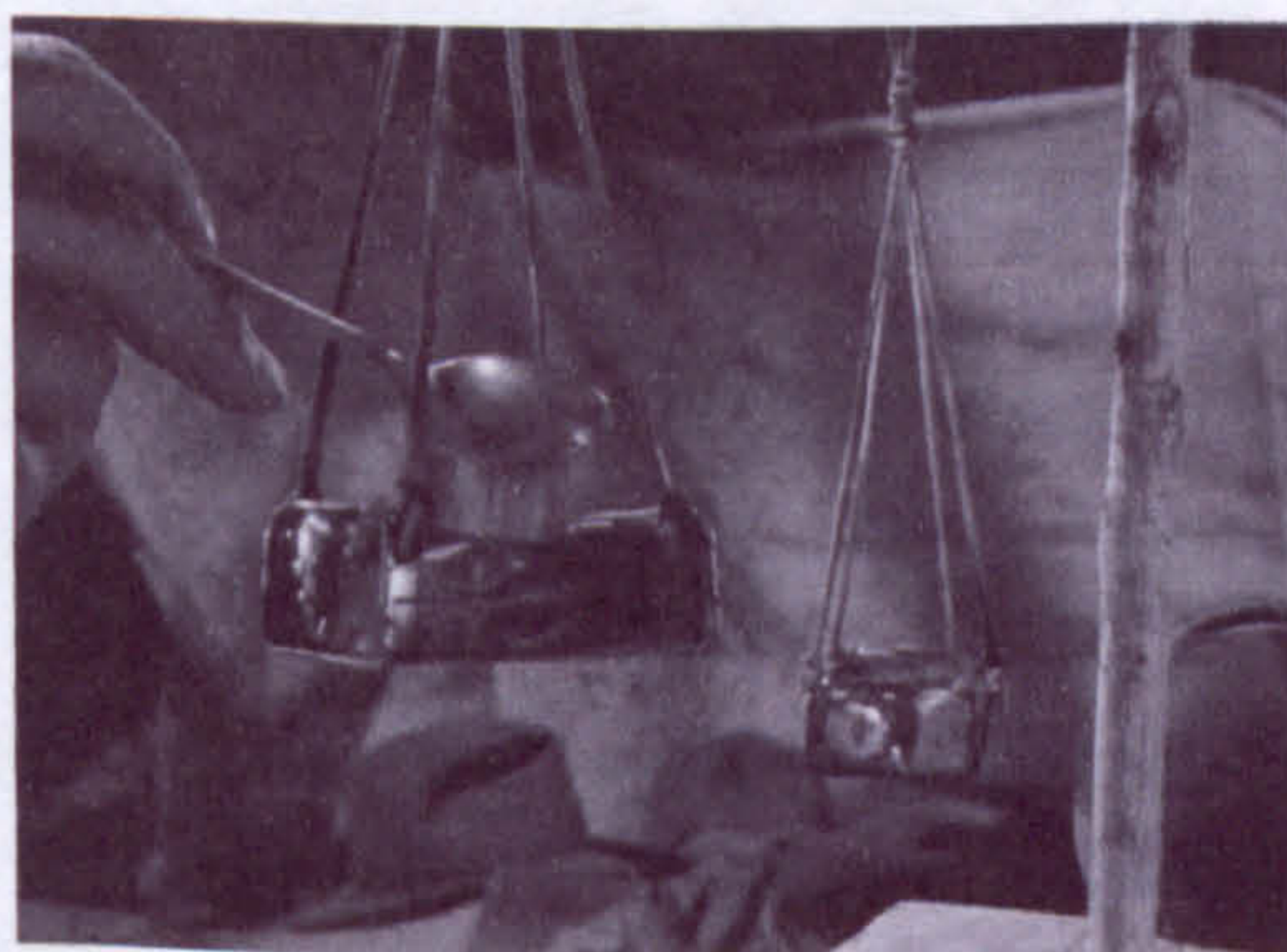
Paint Your Wagon: gold dust bags hung from belt.

In this context, the scale is a crucial object present in the films and often shot in close-up. It is present wherever there is mining and where gold functions as a medium of exchange and needs to be weighed. In *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, Howard weighs each day's findings in gold dust and divides it between the three partners. The scene of the weighing process is filmed in close-up, emphasizing the materiality and weight of the gold dust. In *Paint your Wagon*, scales are everywhere and are a central feature of human relations: on the gambling table, in the general store, in miners' houses and in the mines themselves. Ben, towards the beginning of the film, weighs gold dust on his scale and divides it equally between

himself and Pardner, insisting that equal gold means equal partnership. Later in the film, gold dust is weighed and used again when Pardner pays Ben's bar debts in the general store and gambling debts at the poker table. The scale is also used to split the miners' profits in the second half of the film. And in the mining town of *Ride the High Country*, the bank agent uses a scale to weigh and determine each prospector's findings in terms of dollars in the process of depositing their gold in the bank. Here gold is "socialised" as a form of currency.



Barbary Coast: scale on bar.



The Treasure of the Sierra Madre: close-up—
scale and weighing process.



Paint Your Wagon: Ben uses scale to divide gold with Pardner.



Paint Your Wagon: miners divide profits with scale.

Gold dust for miners is measurable and corresponds to a precise amount of money. The exchange rate in films on gold mining is the same for everyone throughout the film. It is not 'the permanent object of the Stock Market's game of supply and demand' (Goux 1997: 171), that is, an object of speculation. It is probably, at least partly, this fixity of value, these strict rules of exchange that give gold in films a universal, universally accepted, and almost intrinsic, albeit illusory, value. Nowadays, of course, the value of gold fluctuates from one quotation to the next. The dollar-rate of an ounce of gold at the Commodity Market in Chicago or New York or

London varies. In gold-mining films, though, the protagonists' world has few, if any, banks and certainly no Stock or Commodity Markets at all. Therefore, in the absence of more abstract entities in the regulation of supply and demand, there is a 'straightforward relationship of evaluation and representation between goods and currency' (Goux 1997: 171), between gold dust and dollars and between gold dust and goods.

Except for the mental conversion of gold dust into its value in dollars, there is no notion of money as an abstract entity or as an unstable measure of value. Prospectors dig the soil and pan the rivers day after day to find their precious metal. The gold they find is the direct product of their mining but does not come to them as payment for something they have produced. Gold is not a salary in this sense, but it is more like a farmer's harvest, the result of hard, repetitive labour and skill.

It often comes as a surprise to prospectors how hard, repetitive, and monotonous the work of gold mining actually is, quite unlike what they initially imagined. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, for example, establishes a clear contrast between Dobbs' and Curtin's Tampico dreams of gold and the actual Sierra Madre prospecting, from the climbing of the mountain to the preparation of the mine to the mining itself with the numerous scenes, in the central part of the film, showing hard labour, intense physical effort and exhaustion, quite similar to Traven's description in the eponymous novel (1974: 62):

The two greenhorns had never thought gold-digging was such hard work; and this was rubbed into them four times every hour. Digging and digging from sunrise to sunset in the sweltering heat; then up with the dirt into the trough; then rock and puddle and sift. And all to do over again three and four and five times—back and back with it into the cradle, because it did not come out clean.

So it went on day after day without a break. Their backs were so stiff they could neither stand nor lie nor sit. Their hands were like horny claws. They could not bend their fingers properly. They did not shave, nor cut their hair. They were too tired and they couldn't be bothered...

Besides the hard monotonous work of 'digging and digging', luck and skill are also necessary in the all-too-physical quest for gold and contribute, as we have seen, to its value. In *Paint Your Wagon*, Ben finds gold by chance while burying Pardner's brother. In *The Naked Spur* (1953), Jesse (Millard Mitchell), the old prospector, has spent a lifetime in search of gold, with little result. In assisting Howard (James Stewart) to bring the murderer Ben (Robert Ryan) back to Kansas, Jesse persists in his hopes for a rich vein throughout the film, somehow, somewhere, and by sheer luck. This underlines the worth of gold as resting in its scarcity and the luck necessary to find it. In *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, Howard, even

before he meets up with Dobbs and Curtin, explains to a small group of down-and-out Americans at the Oso Negro, why gold is worth so much (Narremore 1979: 61). He asks the question “Why’s gold worth some twenty bucks per ounce?” A man replies, after giving it a thought: “Because it’s scarce....” The answer, expected by Howard, leads him to explain in further detail the reason for the gold’s high valuation:

A thousand men, say, go searching for gold. After six months one of ’em is lucky—one out of the thousand. His find represents not only his own labor but that of the nine hundred ninety-nine other to boot. Six thousand months or fifty (sic) years of scrabbling over mountains, going hungry and thirsty. An ounce of gold, mister, is worth what it is because of the human labor that went into the finding and the getting of it.

Beyond luck and extremely demanding physical labour, finding gold also takes skill and, as part of its scarcity, contributes to its value. Real gold is invisible to the untrained eye, not recognisable from the sand it resembles. It does not shine in the earth as most unskilled prospectors imagine in their dreams or as told in legends like that of the hidden gold canyon in *MacKenna’s Gold* where gold is just there, ready to be picked. Gold does not stand out in the soil as solid and glittering chunks or in obvious veins as Dobbs and Curtin think on their way to the Sierra Madre when they happen on a rich vein only to find in Howard’s derisive laughter

that they have been deceived by “fool’s gold”. To strike a vein actually means to work the soil, to dig and mine for gold. And this is what films on gold mining are about.



The Treasure of the Sierra Madre: glittering “fool’s gold”.

In addition to being material and concrete, gold dust in film, unlike reality, is lit and shot in order to make it shine and glitter, emphasising the almost magical reality of gold. This is true of all the films under consideration, but it is particularly salient in *Paint Your Wagon* and *MacKenna’s Gold*, as discussed later in the chapter.

While lamenting in the second part of *Paint Your Wagon* that No-Name city’s gold vein has run out, Ben and his friends realize that a fortune in gold dust gets lost everyday through the floorboards of saloons. They decide to dig tunnels under the street from one of their houses to the gambling dens. Once the first tunnel is dug, their encounter with gold is the opposite to their experience of the discovery of gold in gold mining. Here gold does not come with great labour from the soil. Except for the construction of the tunnel itself, finding gold requires little work at all. The

shimmering gold dust showers lightly, pure and refined, from above, all shiny and unexpected to miners used to wresting crude gold from the earth beneath their feet.

The scene featuring a shower of gold is visually eloquent. The first shot shows gold powder showering down in the foreground from the saloon above and, in the background, the illuminated faces of the protagonists. The lighting is directed towards both the gold and the protagonists' faces. This way of emphasizing the profilmic object-gold in effect overdetermines the meaning and value of the gold. It also insists on its materiality and palpability and on its mystery, its quality not only as a heavy object but also as one that shines and glitters. Gold is not just filmed as a simple medium, tool, or instrument of exchange, as it would be, for example, in an ordinary commercial transaction. Here it is shown as an object of great worth and filled with special and almost transcendental qualities, all reflected in its shimmering power to glitter through the floorboards above. In *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and in *Paint Your Wagon*, in *MacKenna's Gold* and in *Pale Rider*, there is an insistence—as in the close-ups or isolated shots of gold as powder, as nuggets or in bags—on the materiality and centrality of gold in the films over other diegetic objects in any given scene.



The Treasure of the Sierra Madre: Dobbs' gold dust bags discovered under stone.



The Treasure of the Sierra Madre: gold bags and gold dust that bandits mistake for sand.



Paint Your Wagon: close-up—gold lost through saloon floorboards.



Paint Your Wagon: close-up—gold discovered in Pardner's brother grave.



Paint Your Wagon: gold dust showering down.



Pale Rider: Conway finds huge gold nugget.

Filmed images of gold dust play with the exaggerated visibility of a palpable raw material. But more is taking place. To see gold dust in this emphasized way, is also to see a singular combination of the properties and functions of money summed up and united in this unique object. Gold—

like silver—performs several different functions simultaneously. Thus, as Goux remarks (1988: 19):

The preeminence of nominal money (simple sign, ordinary token without intrinsic value) brings about the complete dissociation of the *three functions* formerly filled by the same monetary body. We use the word “money” to refer to three distinct things: a) a standard which allows the measure of value of merchandise by reducing it to the same unit; b) a medium of exchange universally accepted which allows purchase and sale; c) finally, a thing endowed with considerable, ostensibly permanent value one can hoard. It so happens that the system of gold-money constitutes, from this point of view, a special case: the uniting of these three functions in a single body. The gold piece is at one and the same time an ideal standard of economic value, a symbolic instrument of circulation, and finally real value which can be placed away in reserve.

Although Goux is referring to a more sophisticated form of gold, already transformed into coins, what he says can be applied to gold dust as it is portrayed in films. Gold dust is ‘an ideal standard of economic value’, it can be measured, divided and exchanged, as the films emphasize in the numerous scenes of weighing, paying and evaluating its worth. It is a ‘symbolic instrument of circulation’, an ideal universal standard that comes

both from its deep roots in the history of the Western world and from the hard work with no rest, the long periods of isolation, the bad living conditions, not to mention the luck that are involved in finding it. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is a fine example of all of these elements in showing the harshness of the work and the physical changes in the prospectors' bodies, in portraying the monotonous routine of their daily work, balanced by close-ups of gold findings in the water and of the gold dust being divided, and finally in emphasizing the symbolic value of gold.

Gold represents a 'real value which can be placed away in reserve'. Gold dust (like coins and ingots) does not deteriorate with time like banknotes or cheques. It can be safely hoarded and trusted to retain its value over a long period of time, unlike many other commodities and unlike national currencies that are always subject to change according to the issuing authority at any given moment in history. The more spectacular films on gold mining do not show much hoarding as such, since they are more concerned with finding gold and using it immediately (*Paint your Wagon*) or with finding large quantities of it and then losing it all (*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*). There are signs of hoarding in some other films, such as *Ride the High Country*, a film that takes place at a time when banks already exist and they send out agents into the settlements to collect the miners' savings.

3. Gold, Money and Illusions of Treasure

Gold Mining on Screen: The Frontier as Pre-Capitalist Territory

Palpable on the one hand, mined gold in these films can also be understood as arising out of a kind of pre-monetary social and economic system, in this sense a form of pre-capitalism. The system is pre-monetary because gold has not yet been transformed into a national currency, but is used for payment in its own form. The system is pre-capitalist in the sense that it is pre-organisational, pre-industrial: men go off to the West as rugged individuals to get gold for themselves. Neither employer nor employee, they do not receive gold as some form of salary. Companies and corporations are simply out of the picture. Prospecting and gold mining in the films reflect this order of things. These men do not work as hierarchical labour units, but as individuals staking their own claims and making their own finds. Gold mining in the films under consideration is precisely about men working for themselves. The films implicitly defend this rugged individualistic mode of labour which they sometimes contrast with more industrialised forms of mining. And when these do appear, as in *Pale Rider*, they are usually viewed as potentially threatening to the honest work of the small miner and his settlement—the large gold mining company, is portrayed as bloody, greedy, exploitative, and morally bad.

Pale Rider is an example in point. The film explores the tensions between individual miners working for themselves and their family in Carbon Canyon, and a company owned by a former “tin-pan” miner himself, Coy La Hood (Richard A. Dysart), a company working organisationally for its own higher profits and growth, regardless of any other consideration. *Pale Rider* is a kind of exception, however, since it was made in 1985, whereas most of the films examined here and with a particular focus on small-scale mining, were made earlier. These films neglect historical accuracy in favour of the broader moral fable denouncing money, greed and rampant capitalism.

The history of nineteenth century gold mining shows that ‘mining quickly evolved from panning to more invasive, capital-intensive, and environmentally costly technologies reflecting an industrial age’ (Isenberg 2001: 63). From this one might expect more films focusing on industrialised mining rather than on individuals and their tin-pans. But this is not the case. Most films, from *Paint Your Wagon* to *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and *The Gold Rush*, are about the encounter of isolated men and gold, not about the exploitation of gold by corporations⁹. Interestingly, in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, the mention alone of big US mining corporations convinces Howard that the three partners must definitely prospect for gold in Mexico. Through Howard, the trio chooses to avoid the

⁹ Recently, *Silver City* (2004) featured a silver mine as background for a story of politics, corruption, greed and murder. The silver mine, run by small companies and individual miners, has been bought out by a large corporation some years earlier. The takeover is seen as having compromised the ethical values inherent in the small mining operation.

capitalistic US mining system and its inevitable encroachment on their future claim.

Films on gold mining reflect a kind of pre-monetary system also because mining produces a substance that enjoys immediate exchange-value at a fixed and stable dollar rate seemingly free from banks and State regulations. This pre-monetary notion in film actually fits in well with the larger myth of the frontier which envisions near-empty space lying ready for settlers to fill up for their own exploitation—open range where laws and boundaries are not yet fixed and in which a system prevails that corresponds to Turner's notion of the frontier in its 'relation to westward expansion', as 'the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilisation' (1996: 3). The myth of the great frontier as expansion of civilisation actually did prevail for a long time in American historiography, and it is a particularly useful notion for understanding films on gold mining in the West. In this view, the exploitation of gold was part of the myth of the frontier because gold belonged to the yet unexplored land. A land conceived as open to free exploitation meant gold conceived as open to free exploitation.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre is about a search for gold across the US border in a land that can still be conceived as frontier, as virgin territory still open to exploration and individual exploitation. On the other side of the border, the Mexican side, the mountains are stark, barren and bear little trace of human life, a veritable wilderness. The characters of the film are "fleeing" to this wilderness and therefore spend little time in

Tampico or any of the villages on their way to the Sierra Madre and the gold. The film focuses largely on the time spent in the remote mountains, far from the laws and norms of civilisation. Here Howard, Dobbs and Curtin drag out the livelong day face to face, where the only “law” is the one they decide upon for themselves, “free” from the dictates of any State or constitution.

The image of an under-populated and empty frontier filled with unused resources makes a spectacular appearance in *MacKenna's Gold* which projects gold on the screen in quantities so great that to measure them is unthinkable. The very existence of the Canyon del Oro is rather fantastic and presupposes the lawless and unorganised conditions of the open frontier where banks are non-existent and where everything one does possess is one's *pecunia*, the material wealth in one's hands at any given moment. The Canyon del Oro, an entire landscape of gold dust and nuggets, stands in the middle of the desert, a singular image of the open frontier presented purely as gold and representing gold quite apart from its containment in the bank vaults of civilisation.

Scales and the weighing of gold do not appear in *MacKenna's Gold*. They have no place in the face of the unusual vein that is the miraculous Canyon del Oro which, in its vastness, presents a hoard of gold so overwhelming and yet so immediate that it requires no mining at all. The canyon here also refers to the quasi-mythical idea of the conquest of wilderness by civilisation, where gold figures as a link between the wild and the civilized.

For the settlers gold is there ready to be harvested; for the “Indians”, it is a sacred domain pertaining to the gods. In the Indians’ view, the worth of gold does not reside in its power for buying and selling, for hoarding or for making an individual rich. It must remain untouched, apart, something sacred, because it represents another kind of wealth altogether, spiritual wealth in the sense of the very life of the tribe. This is a conception quite diverse from gold as a means of exchange or as a possession which characterizes the capitalistic civilisation embodied by the settlers, for whom gold’s only worth is its high exchange-value in dollars. This view conflicts with that of the Indians and necessarily sets up a tension between Indians and settlers.

For the gold to realise its value, the settlers must take it away because, as it stands in the canyon, it is in an extra-monetary realm. Dollars are to be had only in ‘civilisation’, the settlers’ world. Here, however, the dollar is present only as the reference of value, but is not physically present as such. While gold is ironically more real than the dollar—money issued by the State—at the same time the settlers find themselves caught in a bind because the gold still belongs to the wilderness characterised by the frontier territory in which they stand.

The Illusion of Gold, its Fragility and its Supernatural Power

In its mining, gold usually appears as nuggets or dust. In *Pale Rider*, a prospector, Conway (Chuck Lafont), strikes it rich as he almost miraculously comes across a huge nugget which becomes his prize possession. Shortly thereafter, Conway drunkenly brandishes his gold nugget before Coy LaHood, the angry mining company owner, and Stockburn (John Russell), his hired gun and marshal together with his six deputies. He is astonished when Stockburn at one point pulls his gun, fires and shatters the nugget into two pieces. This dramatic scene at once emphasizes gold's concrete reality and its amazing fragility. Gold dust is even more fragile and impermanent since it is subject to chance disappearance: simply returning to its source, the earth, blown away by the wind (*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*), washed away in the water, or buried under the surface of the earth in the collapse of the Canyon del Oro (*MacKenna's Gold*). Gold is also subject to loss or disappearance at any time through gambling (*Barbary Coast*), through its easy absorption in drink (*Paint Your Wagon*), and through its outright theft (*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*). Finally it can seep through the cracks of a saloon's wooden floor in *Paint Your Wagon*. In these appearances and disappearances, we witness gold as illusion and as a slippery possession at best.



The Treasure of the Sierra Madre: gold dust bag blowing in the wind.



Pale Rider: Conway holding his nugget.



Pale Rider: Conway's nugget shattered into pieces by Stockburn's shot.

The point, it seems, of most films featuring gold miners, is that they *lose* their fortune at some given moment. Gold is weighty and substantial but, paradoxically, as dust or nugget, its power and value can be nullified.

This paradox is striking in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre's* last sequence and in the nugget sequence of *Pale Rider*. Gold is palpable and seems indestructible but in the end it can be reduced to mere dust or bits of stone, to a valueless substance, like money in general which, outside any given social system, is worth nothing more than the substance it is made of.

There is yet a further way in which gold can be, or can appear to be, illusory and distance itself from its materiality and weight. This comes about when gold loses its "realistic" aspect for the beholder and becomes an almost surreal object endowed with a kind of supernatural force, as in *MacKenna's Gold*. Several film techniques account for this effect: the use of close-ups, still images, slow motion, flashing images, exaggerated colour schemes and lighting, and the careful orchestration of musical backgrounds.

In *MacKenna's Gold*, when the gold seekers finally discover the Canyon del Oro, the dreamt of substance has a hypnotic effect. The gigantic proportions of the scene in its natural setting, combined with the splendour of the gold surround, creates a seemingly immediate experience of the hypnotic and magical force of gold. The precious metal is literally everywhere, and in a dynamic series of flashing stills of the characters entranced by what they see before their eyes, what they feel by the touch of their hands and the impressions experienced by their bodies, the all-enveloping power of gold is made manifest on screen. The gold itself appears as something sheer and glittering, exaggeratedly

coloured, quite artificial as contrasted with gold as it is mined, but nevertheless still enthralling in its visual impact. Colorado (Omar Sharif), for example, is mesmerised by the stupendous nugget he holds before his eyes; Inga (Camilla Sparv) in a trance-like dance, is enveloped in gold dust as she immerses herself in water and re-emerges, her clothes coated with gold; MacKenna stands in awe before the walls of the canyon he heretofore found totally inconceivable and impossible to believe in. But here it is, like a kind of fetish, shining in its majestic reality, over-lit and over-coloured, yet somehow symbolizing everyone's possibility of happiness and fulfilment.

MacKenna's Gold: Canyon del Oro



Arrival at the Canyon del Oro.



Flashing series of stills —MacKenna standing in awe before the golden walls of the canyon.



Flashing series of stills—Colorado enthralled by gold nugget.



Flashing series of stills—Inga emerges from water covered in gold dust.



Spectacular collapse of the Canyon del Oro.

The Darker Side of Gold

Gold can be both a tool of exchange and a part of one's belongings or one's hoard. This latter understanding carries the emotional weight of gold as one's personal possession, *pecunia*. Gold is not neutral but gives rise to a variety of feelings. For a prospector, finding gold means finding more money than one could earn in a lifetime and experiencing all the feelings that this would engage. The sudden discovery of so much "palpable" in-hand riches can easily become the object of dream and fantasy. In this way, gold seems to be possessed with a kind of "supernatural" or "otherworldly" power in its emotive force. Gold, in its ability to exert this compulsive influence over human beings, to possess them as it were, becomes in many films a kind of sinister force central to the storyline and a determining factor in the way it is represented on screen—often glittering and in close-up.

It is an easy step in this way for gold to be weighted with an ethical message about excessive desire for riches, gold lust and its moral consequences. This element is present especially in adaptations from European novels set in the Gold Rush context. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is a good example here since it contains all the elements for a moral critique of US capitalism. Its author, B. Traven was influenced (Engell 1989: 245) by Stirner's nineteenth century notion of 'individualistic anarchism' as developed in his book *The Ego and His Own* (1844). Traven's novel (1925), incidentally, is a more severe critique of capitalism and its peculiar set of values than is the film.

As the title suggests, in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* gold keeps its status not only as treasure but as hidden treasure. This means, unbeknownst to the characters in the film, that gold as treasure cannot be divided and can therefore not be used. The treasure in its weight and materiality must remain whole and untouched, even if in the course of the film it is weighed, measured and divided. As in other films by John Huston (*Key Largo* 1948 and *The Maltese Falcon*), one of the main themes in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is 'the quest after a no-longer-holy grail, in a world ruled less by Fate than by a peculiarly wry order of dumb luck' (Jameson 1994: 37). If the protagonists discuss their dreams of a happy future as the result of having become gold-rich, they never really realise them. At the end of the film, when real access to gold as treasure, as accumulated and still untouched capital, seems fulfilled, the hoarded gold is literally carried off by the wind. All that is left of the treasure is its

merest physical traces in the small shredded bags strewn about the arid landscape, one of them miserably clinging, in the last shot of the film, to a cactus, emphasising the paradox of gold.



The Treasure of the Sierra Madre: last shot of film—
empty gold bag on a cactus.

Ultimately, lust for gold often leads to madness, mayhem and death. This harkens back to the sinister aspect of money, especially as represented on the screen, as leading to death. The theme here might be captured as “the wages of money are death” and it plays itself out again and again in the case of characters caught up in greed and the lust for gold. This greed for gold initially emerges in a creeping paranoia that affects, in subtle but clearly physical ways, all three partners, ultimately focusing on Dobbs who will be destroyed by it.

The film insists on his physical and mental deterioration when, crazed by gold lust and given the opportunity, he betrays his partners, attempts to murder Curtin and makes off with his gold only to be robbed and murdered himself by Gold Hat (Alfonso Bedoya), a Mexican *bandido*

who is also after the treasure and in fact dies because of it. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is a good example of a film which, while defending small-scale prospecting, issues heavy condemnation upon greed, the betrayal of working partners, and the theft, for purely egoistic reasons, of partnership earnings. This dramatic condemnation carries with it an implicit criticism of capitalism with its never-ending desire for more riches and its excessive consumerism.

In contrast to Dobbs, both Curtin and Howard are able to maintain their moral integrity in the sinister face of gold. But Howard is the wiser of the two, maintaining not only his moral integrity throughout the film, but also his personal independence and freedom from the clutches of gold as a sinister force. More experienced in the evil ways of gold, he offers himself, Dobbs and Curtin an alternative to greed and betrayal. The tragedy of the film is the dark turn Dobbs takes. This tragedy finds its illuminating contrast in Howard's decision to heal a nearly drowned child, to make friends with the native community and eventually join them in his old age as their healer and guide.

Likewise, the film presages a choice for higher values in Curtin's decision to return to the peach orchards of his dreams. He also agrees with Howard to visit the widow of Cody (Bruce Bennett), the man who, along with his partners, he almost murdered to protect the treasure. As portrayed here, gold kills the characters caught up in its lust in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, but also in *MacKenna's Gold*, *Pale Rider*, and *Barbary Coast*.

Conclusion

The films under consideration in this chapter, set during the Gold Rush or in connection with it, closely focus on gold and use it centrally in plot development. Gold, whether in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *Pale Rider*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *Barbary Coast* or *MacKenna's Gold*, is emphasized as a material and palpable substance, extracted from the soil through hard work, whether shown as dust, nuggets, in bags or as walls in a canyon. It represents both a symbol of value in its weight and substance, and a monetary unit as a tool of exchange. It corresponds to both *pecunia* and *moneta*: a possession of one's own, something invested with feelings, and a more neutral form of money, as circulating and used for exchange.

Films depicting the nineteenth century West with miners as their main characters are far less numerous than films featuring cowboys and farmers as heroes. They ignore in this way the importance of North American Gold-Rush history. This is especially true after *The Covered Wagon* which set up a basic opposition between "good" farmers and "bad" miners. Furthermore, as if to represent gold mining as bad in itself, at least two major studio films, *Sutter's Gold* and *Paint your Wagon*, suffered catastrophic results at the box office.

Although the present corpus is composed of films that do not all fit the Western genre, they nevertheless, by being set in the West during the frontier period and by focusing on gold and gold mining, reproduce

patterns typical of the Western genre. The choice of gold even allows for a certain exaggeration of these patterns. Gold here is more than a mere substance bearing a high exchange-value. As in Wright's set of 'basic oppositions' between characters in classical Westerns (1975: 49), there is a set of oppositions at work in films on gold and gold mining. Among Wright's four main sets of oppositions, at least two, the 'good and bad' as well as 'the opposition between wilderness and civilization', can be understood and extrapolated more specifically with respect to the gold mining films where these oppositions are central. In considering the representation of gold and not that of the miner, there is an opposition between "good" and "bad" gold, in other words "good" and "bad" money. Gold used to set up a ranch or to start a family is "good", gold used for its own sake in a capitalist society is "bad" and, in that case, will lead to a miner's ruin. Gold creates "bad" feelings, desires and such behaviours as jealousy, greed, and unbridled individualism, all of which often lead to betrayal, theft, murder and ignominious death. "Bad" money only leads to one's own death and is usually set to disappear spectacularly in the end.

As for the opposition between 'wilderness and civilization', gold figures in the middle, as a link between 'wilderness and civilization'. Gold has value in society, and, in a way only has value in society. Nevertheless it is found in the 'wilderness' of the West and is used there in its "raw" form, seemingly untouched by civilization. Frontier gold has not yet been transformed into currency and works in a kind of pre-monetary system. 'Civilization' means 'a concern with the money, tools, and products of

American culture' (57). Banknotes and coins are the product of that 'civilization' while gold dust emerges from the 'wilderness', from 'the land and wildlife', a wilderness in which the Indians of *MacKenna's Gold* or of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, for example, esteem gold for its spiritual wealth and not for its monetary value or exchange-value. Gold dust, like the hero of the Western and like so many miners, 'belongs to the West and has no association with the East, with education and culture' (57). Gold originates in 'the pure and noble wilderness' with its incumbent danger, while currency, as banknotes and coins, is the product of 'the contaminating civilization of the East' (57). Gold is a monetary tool that is, in this sense, totally different from banknotes, made of paper or from the even more immaterial forms of money such as cheques or credit cards.

CHAPTER THREE: PAPER MONEY IN NEO-REALIST FILMS

Introduction

In films on the American West, gold is the standard for money. Gold's main characteristics are its concrete palpability and its quasi-intrinsic value embodied in its very weight and substance. Gold, the magical object of never-ending quest is the most material form of money. It is also, though, only one of the forms that money can take. In neo-realist films, money is no longer the pre-monetary gold of the West, wrested from the earth and valuable without the State as intermediary.

Here money takes mostly the form of cash as banknotes and is used in the context of ordinary transactions: for food, rent and other immediate purchases. The frontier of the West has been replaced by a political, geographical and social entity existing within the borders of a defined country. Italy is in political and economic turmoil after years of war and fascism, and neo-realist films attempt to reflect certain aspects of this situation. Fragile paper notes, national symbols of value, have replaced gold. The aim of this chapter is to study the representation of this form of money in neo-realist films.

In the early 1940s, Italian cinema was the most productive film industry in Europe. Neo-realism arose in this period and from 1944 to 1954

enjoyed its heyday with about ninety titles satisfying one or more of its characteristic elements or features. The films were not produced according to 'a governing manifesto' (Bondanella 2001: 34) and there was no 'agreed method of filmmaking practice' (Hallam with Marshment 2000: 41). Neo-realism was closer to 'a formula or a poetic proposal' (Brunetta 1986: 157) and the spirit for filmmakers was indeed to be closer to their subject, to 'open their eyes, explore the visible, and insist on the value of life' (Brunetta 1995: 343).

Films referred to as being neo-realist are 'in themselves heterogeneous' (Forgacs 1989: 51). Despite representing roughly only 10% of total Italian production and in a market already largely dominated by Hollywood (Bondanella 2001: 35-36), their influence and the discussion they provoked has continued up to our own time in the ongoing film literature and subsequent filmmaking. Neo-realism has been widely studied: as a historical and aesthetic phenomenon, in its economic context, in its relation to reality, as a political and social statement, and 'from the point of view of ethics and aesthetics' (Leprohon 1972: 85). The representation of money as such, however, has not been a focus of in-depth investigation.

Claiming to make films in a new way, against the artificiality they denounced as characteristic of a number of entertainment productions, neo-realist filmmakers aimed at a new relation to reality (Gilli 1995; Leprohon 1972: 86). As an overall framework, this so-called new reality on the screen was developed around at least two main axes important for the

representation of money: a country destroyed and the disruption of the Italian people in their way of life during and right after the war. The idea was that 'the artist ought to begin not from art but from life itself'¹ (Amengual 1994: 54). Characters were supposed to embody, in so far as possible, ordinary people, usually working-class—migrant workers, fishermen, construction workers, housewives, discharged military, and job seekers generally. Filmed in the struggle of everyday life, often on location and outdoors, they projected an image of Italy that seemed closer to reality than the supposedly unrealistic image heretofore presented by white-telephone comedies, epics or melodramas. It was, according to Bazin, a 'useful and intelligent reaction against the Italian aesthetic of the superspectacle and, for that matter, more generally, against the technical aestheticism from which cinema suffered all over the world' (1971: 47).

In an interview with Verdone for the magazine *Bianco e Nero* in 1952, Rossellini explains that in the post-war period, 'what mattered to us was the investigation of reality, forming a relationship with reality' (Rossellini 1973: 71). A realist film must have 'the world as its living object, not the telling of a story' (71). As a consequence (Zavattini 1978: 72):

The neo-realist movement recognized that cinema should take as its subject the daily existence and condition of the Italian people ... and thereby force itself to analyze it for whatever human, historical, determining and definite factors it encompasses.

¹ 'L'artiste doit partir non de l'art mais de la vie.'

In this context it is interesting to see whether money is featured in these films and, when it is, how it is featured and what role it plays.

Unlike the gold as *pecunia* featured in gold-mining films, money here mostly refers to *moneta*, to a tool of exchange. It is at least partly because money is lacking for many of the protagonists that the only money shown is that used for the more ordinary needs of life rather than for larger, and here, less necessary transactions. When vast sums are alluded to, it is often to set a contrast with the smaller sums of everyday exchange.

As in the rest of the thesis, the grouping of films for this chapter results from a larger viewing. Consequently, this study concentrates on a cross section of films that ranges from those that are considered canonical to those that are more popular or less well known, and also makes reference to titles drawn from the initial viewing. Money plays an important role in these films both visually (even when it is only shown in short scenes) and story-wise. The corpus includes *Roma città aperta* (*Rome Open City* 1945), *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves* 1948), *Umberto D.* (1952), but also *La terra trema* (*The Earth Trembles* 1948), *Senza pietà* (*Without Pity* 1948), *Il cammino della speranza* (*The Road to Hope*, 1950), *Caccia tragica* (*The Tragic Hunt* 1948), *La città si difende* (*The City Defends Herself* 1951) and *Roma città libera* (*Rome Free City* 1946).

The chapter is divided into two parts: first, the representation of money as an object of everyday reality in the context of realism through its role in the story and the way it is shown in its materiality; and second, the

representation of money as Italian lire in its connection to the nation and its institutions following the war and Fascism.

1. Money, Materiality and Realism

Context

Brunetta refers to neo-realist films as having created a sort of public diary in which imaginary events coexist with actual ones (1995: 344). This public diary represents a social reality corresponding to the new reality of a destroyed, defeated and humiliated Italy. Neo-realism's thematic approach and form were seen as an experience in social cinema (Borde and Bouissy 1960). This experience comes in some way from filming objects of reality, that is, of objects that recall reality and, depending on how they are filmed, can sometimes produce an effect of reality on the screen. Here, films 'sought to give the spectator as perfect an illusion of reality as possible within the limits of the logical demands of cinematographic narrative and of the current limits of technique' (Bazin 1971: 26). Realism in Bazin's view corresponds to 'all narrative means tending to bring an added measure of reality to the screen' (1971: 27). Furthermore, 'stories will be realist or not according to their adoption of conventions' (Nichols 1996: 267).

The 'illusion' of reality was to be expressed according to more 'realistic' ways of filming and telling stories that would allow one to

recognize in any representation 'the object on the screen' (Bazin 1971: 27) in the context of everyday life. This illusion of reality is achieved through 'a complex of abstraction (black and white, plane surface), of conventions (the rules of montage, for example), and of authentic reality' (27). The quotidian reality that neo-realism refers to is immediate, banal, and features characters 'in a popular, even sordid, environment' (Leprohon 1972: 88). Their lives are set within the usual activities in big cities, and in this context 'the actors will take care never to dissociate their performance from the décor' (Bazin 1971: 38). In *Ladri di biciclette*, for example, Ricci's (Lamberto Maggiorani) struggles to find his stolen bicycle are set against the background of daily life in Rome, with its bin lorries, street cleaners, flea market and tramways. In this view, the filmmakers need to 'know how to portray an action without separating it from its material context and without loss of that uniquely human quality of which it is an integral part' (38).

When they refer to the past, it is in connection with World War II, Fascism and the partisan struggle against the German occupation. They convey issues specific to a period of time when Italy was lying in ruins and Italian society was characterised by economic chaos, unemployment, welfare, grinding poverty and squalid misery. Black-market operations, theft, prostitution (Sorlin 1991: 123), widespread corruption (Sitney 1995: 82), a diminished sense of masculinity, alienation and loneliness, all converged towards a search for new models of reconstruction and a renewed sense of national identity. What Leprohon says of the black-

market, theft or prostitution, could also be applied to money: images of these aspects of post-war Italy appear as 'the display of the festering sores of filmmakers to the world at large' (1972: 101).

Images of paper money are particularly explicit in the treatment of everyday reality, both in the way it is filmed and in what it represents. From the recurrent shots of messy banknotes in *Umberto D.*, to the bag of stolen money in *Caccia Tragica*, and the books whose pages are in reality one-thousand lira banknotes in *Roma città aperta*, paper money appears repeatedly in scenes that are important to the story as a whole, in the characters' lives. Money shown refers each time to the specific money of the film (an index) and to money in general (a sign). Money therefore has the properties of an object 'of the outer world' (Sorlin 1996b: 265) and has a meaning and function in the context of each film, both visually and story-wise.

Additionally, towards the end of the war, Italian film studios were in ruins and filmmakers often had to shoot in the streets with outdated film stock and equipment. This introduced a sense of poverty in the aesthetic of the films themselves. The representation of money is important to this 'aesthetic of poverty' (Prédal 1994: 13) that arose from production imperatives. Money in the films, like the money necessary to make the films themselves, is hard earned and when it is shown it does not signify wealth, but rather the inability of simple banknotes to lift one out of poverty. With *Roma città aperta*, for example (Leprohon 1972, 93):

Because Rossellini had no studio, no sets, no lights, no sound tracks, the Italians were to go on shooting in the streets, rejecting fine lighting effects and pretty photography, ... poverty was to be their luxury and their grandeur.

However, unlike many of the characters the films focus on who are really poor, the films only had to “look” poor since their budgets were not that low. The representation of money in this context is perhaps part of this emphasis on the aesthetic of poverty. The recurrent shots of banknotes in *Umberto D.*, for example, can be read as a visual insistence on poverty. The one-hundred lira banknotes, counted over and over, are numerous and yet they are so many pieces of valueless paper. This accumulation emphasises not only the difficulties of life for common people, but also a more general questioning of the value of cash money itself. The accumulation of banknotes is almost unrealistic and suggests an insistence, for aesthetic purposes, on poverty while at the same time using money as an object of little value.



Umberto D.: Umberto hands Maria banknotes.



Umberto D.: Umberto with messy pile of banknotes in hand.



Umberto D.: Umberto counts banknotes in bed.



Umberto D.: Umberto hands Maria crumpled banknotes.



Umberto D.: Umberto with banknotes in hand for dog shelter.

In neo-realism, money can be connected, within a larger social framework, to ‘family and domesticity’ (Landy 2000: 126), to individual or family destinies. In this case, cash money concerns money earned to live on or money from a pension (pensioners in *Umberto D.* demonstrating for a raise in their allowance). It is also money necessary to emigrate from Italy to France for economic reasons in *Il cammino della speranza* or *Fuga in Francia* (*Flight into France* 1948), or to the bigger city, Naples, in *Due soldi di speranza* (*Two Pennies of Hope* 1952). Then there is money for the broader public sphere, money that will benefit the community or the nation, as with the collective work of the *mondine* in *Riso amaro* (*Bitter Rice* 1948), the plan to start a farming cooperative in *Caccia tragica* or the money used to help the Resistance against the Nazis in *Roma città aperta*.

Most of the films under consideration here, beyond the distinction between public and private sphere, insist on unemployment in addition to the difficulty of getting a job that would provide enough money for food and rent. In *Roma città libera*, the female lead (Valentina Cortese) is being pushed into prostitution because her ten-hour-a-day typing job does not

bring in enough money to pay the rent, let alone eat properly. Furthermore, her name and those of most of the other characters in the film remain unknown, as if to emphasise them as types rather than as individuals in their singularity: the single working woman or man, the unemployed man, the thief, the prostitute, the policeman. These types, taken to an extreme here in their anonymity, are recurrent in neo-realist films and except for the policeman, they are at least partly characterised in their focus on money, or on the lack of it. These isolated stories, moreover, form a gesture towards bigger problems about employment, migration or pensions.

Money as Motif

Sometimes money and its materiality are introduced as early as the beginning of the film: a scene showing it or presenting a situation where money is problematic sets in motion the film's storyline. In this case the opening sequence introduces, usually in long shots, the general atmosphere of the film and also signals the need for money that will partly guide the plot.

The first sequence of *Umberto D.*, for example, immediately raises money issues with the pensioners' demonstration for higher allowances. Starting with the music and a long shot, from a high angle, of a street in Rome, the scene progressively focuses on a rather unorganized group of demonstrators marching toward the camera chanting very distinctly "Aumento" ("Raise"), a clear reference to money. A subsequent, closer

shot from below shows the demonstrators' hand-written banners: "Abbiamo lavorato tutta la vita" ("We have worked all our life") and "Giustizia per i pensionati" ("Justice for the pensioners"). These banners set money up as central to the film. This sequence also introduces the main character, Umberto, as one of the pensioners and therefore links him ineluctably to the film's money concerns.



Umberto D.: opening sequence—the pensioners' demonstration.

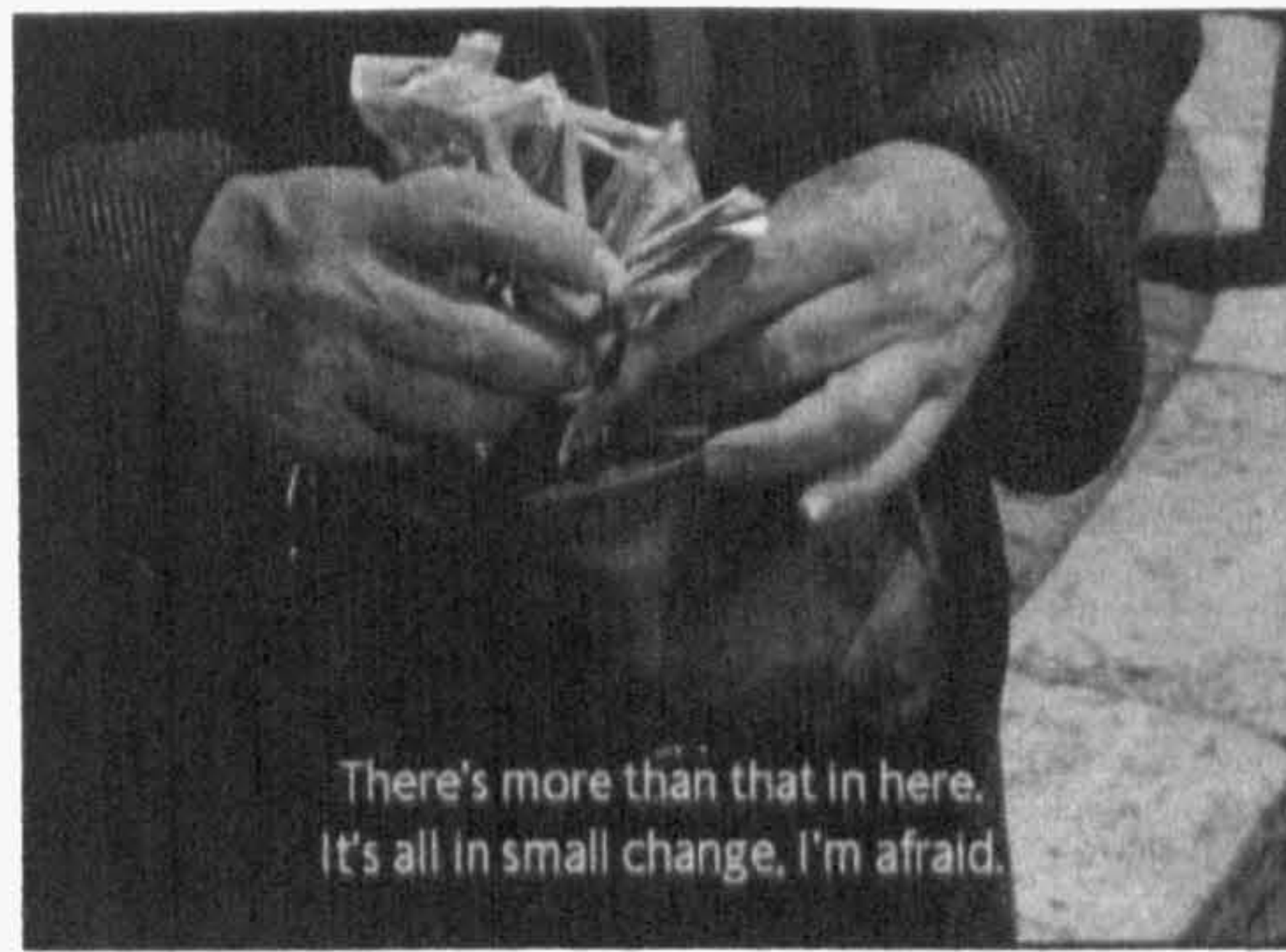
This opening, like that in *Ladri di biciclette*, with a group of unemployed men waiting in hopeful but improbable expectation of a job, records an everyday mundane situation where money is painfully at stake. Done in the naturalist style of observation that Rossellini also claimed for his films (1973: 72), the long shots witness and establish the general atmosphere of despair and misery characteristic of the post-war period.

In *Sotto il sole di Roma* (*Under the Sun of Rome* 1948) a voiceover, in documentary style, announces from the start that the story takes place in Italy towards the end of the war where working and living conditions are difficult: work is virtually impossible to obtain and therefore money is something none of the characters possesses. The absence of money is

emphasised from the beginning of the film and works as a condition necessary to the development of the story. In this film the only money-related feature we see is the card in a window display that carries the set price of seventy lire for a pair of new shoes.

Clearly money plays a primary role in the setting-up of these films, a role that persists throughout the films and highlights money as a significant object specifically chosen to represent ordinary daily life in different Italian settings.

The way money is transported and carried about is important and emphasizes, in these moments, money as a motif, in its materiality: as carried in bags, suitcases, and even books. In *Roma città aperta*, for example, Don Pietro (Aldo Fabrizi) carries around the Resistance money, one million lire, as three thick bound books. In *La città si difende*, a large overstuffed suitcase supplies transit for the stolen banknotes in a carefully planned racetrack robbery. Here the fact that the money will not all fit into the suitcase adds significantly to the impression of its materiality. In *Senza pietà* five-million worth of lira banknotes used in a transaction between two smugglers is wrapped in a bundle of old newspaper, while in *Caccia tragica* cash destined for setting up an agricultural cooperative is carried in a neutral leather valise. Umberto, in *Umberto D.*, sells his watch to a man who reveals his clearly hard-earned one-hundred lira banknotes crumpled up in a handbag carried close to his person, an aspect emphasized in the close shot of the bag, hands and banknotes.



Umberto D.: close shot—one-hundred lira notes in handbag.



Caccia tragica: stolen valise full of money.

Besides money as transported, money as introduced from the beginning of the film, or money figuring as motivation and motif, there are other means for making money concrete in the everyday context of neo-realist films. While film openings set up the general atmosphere of misery, unemployment and despair with money as a motif, money is insisted upon in its cash form. It appears in short scenes that are nevertheless important moments in the stories the films tell.

It is money that has been specifically chosen as an object of everyday reality, both as a sign and as an index. Money plays as motif in several films, in the way it sets up the stories, in its materiality and in its

use as part of a larger 'aesthetic of poverty', as so many bundles of banknotes.

Cash and other Forms of Money

Cash money in its palpability is the almost exclusive form in which money appears on screen. Despite a few shots of coins, however, it is mostly banknotes that are shown. Bank accounts or cheques rarely appear and when they do it is to create a contrast with cash. Cheques, however, are a less immediate form of money than cash, adding an extra layer of representation to money. Here they concern only very large sums and in this way they accredit their user by asserting a certain financial ease exemplified through the use of a bank account. It is the wealthy and, in general, the corrupt, who use cheques. Cheques project with immediacy the class status of the user as wholly diverse from that of protagonists whose dealings with money take place exclusively in cash.

Cheques also represent sums that are totally beyond the average man's frame of reference: Lidia's (Anna Magnani) purse, in the beginning of *Il bandito* (1946) contains a five-million lira cheque. She also has an expensive car, is dressed luxuriously, and, it soon appears, obtains her money from organized crime. In *Senza pietà*, a corrupt and heartless bandit and pimp, Giacomo (Folco Lulli), receives a cheque on the corner of a lunch table from another crook, as if the use of any institutional

intermediary, the bank, could only signal illegal activities. Cheques, as an acknowledgment that both issuer and recipient have provided a bank with proof of their solvency and trustworthiness, are generally only used by people of low moral character, people who have been corrupted, as have national and financial institutions, through the experience of the Fascist regime and war.

The representation of cash, on the other hand, refers to a period in time in which most daily transactions were carried on in banknotes and coins, and points simultaneously to the uselessness or even inexistence of banking for many of the protagonists in the post-war Italian context. The display of cash also emphasises money in its exchange-value as currency used in the characters' day-to-day life: cash money pays the rent, pays for food, pays the price of a pawned bicycle or pays off a smuggler.

Umberto in *Umberto D.*, for example, pays his rent in cash and throughout the film tries to pull together enough one-hundred and one-thousand lira banknotes to keep his room by clearing his five-thousand lira debt with his landlady (Lina Gennari). In *Il cammino della speranza* the would-be emigrants pay the smuggler twenty thousand lire in cash. In *Roma città libera* money shown pays for drinks, food and coffee, and in *La Terra Trema* one-thousand lira banknotes are shown prominently in the payment for the indispensable salt used to preserve fish.

The choice of money to represent ordinary reality across these films is significant, and in this way money almost becomes a convention as an object of reality, adding to the nature of money itself which is already a

convention. Furthermore, as before, money is both a sign and an index referring both to the properties and functions of money as a measure of value.

Savings, when they exist at all, usually consist of objects, such as furniture around the house that can be readily pawned or sold in exchange for cash. The characters of *Il cammino della speranza*, once they decide to make the passage from Sicily north to France, have their furniture removed from their poor houses in order to obtain the twenty thousand lire necessary for the illegal passage across the border. The removal of the furniture, filmed in long shot and deep focus, contrasts with the reverse-angle sequence during which money is given to the smuggler, who sits at a table and faces the migrants-to-be. Banknotes are mainly visible with the camera behind the smuggler receiving the money, rather than from the emigrants' side and point of view. In *Ladri di biciclette*, Maria (Lianella Carell) pawns the family's bed sheets, high use-value objects, to redeem Antonio's bicycle, probably indicating all other valuables have already been sold. The sheets represent their last savings. In *La terra trema*, the family's savings, their *pecunia*, their "own" wealth, also consist of items of high use-value: the family house, its furniture and the fishing boat.

Within the corpus of this chapter, *La terra trema* alone references banking operations. These operations concern the Valastros and their account with the Banco Fidani in Catania. It is only when the family needs cash that they mortgage everything and in this, use the services of a bank. The bank account, embodied in the bankbook, holds the equivalent of the

family's *pecunia*. What is in it (a sum that is not stated) corresponds to what the Valastros are able to obtain as the exchange-value for their house, furniture and probably also their boat and fishing equipment. This well-kept book is only shown once, a fact that accords well with a village that has no bank, where all transactions, including those between fishermen and wholesalers, are carried out in cash and therefore circumvent the operations of financial institutions.

When 'Ntoni, the eldest son, comes back from Catania, after having obtained a sum of money that should allow the family to buy salt and run their own independent fishing concern instead of having to sell their precious fish to wholesalers at rock bottom prices, he puts the book—probably the first bankbook the Valastros ever owned—in a drawer, laying it carefully under a cloth, thus emphasizing the object's great value, at a point when their hopes for a prosperous business are high. This action also shows that the book is not a simple object of their everyday life, but something special to be kept secure until it becomes possible again to make the trip to the bank in Catania to begin paying back the debt.

The book, too, is not that of an individual but belongs to the family. It symbolises, through the cash money obtained, the family's capital, the equivalent of its possessions passed from generation to generation. The bank will be prompt in seizing these belongings as soon as they realise that the Valastros are not making payments on their debt. The second half of the film reveals dashed dreams with the bank account gone and with it the hopes of financial independence vanished. The bankers make their way to

the village to prepare for the seizure of the Valastros' house, disregarding the furniture which holds no value for them—the fishing boat and equipment having been ruined by a storm at sea. With the bank account gone, the family struggles on to begin to earn cash money again, cash that will only appear once more when Giovanni, a younger brother, manages to get work picking fruit.

Images of banks or savings accounts are rare. This does not mean that bank accounts are not a part of everyday life, but that they are not so much a part, perhaps, for characters hardly able to scrape together enough to eat. This banking aspect of financial interaction probably held little interest for the filmmakers who were concerned in portraying economic victims and their more direct relationship to money through cash in hand. In this context, bank accounts only appear as a superfluous mediator between money and what money can procure.

When money is not shown, it is much talked about. It then takes the form of words only. *Miracolo a Milano* (1951) which is more fable than social drama, is a climactic example of this: not actually showing money, the film plays on the *idea* of money through a kind of exaggeration. In an exuberant parody set after the manner of an informal contest, numbers, projected as sums of money, are voiced out in ever increasing amounts, as if money itself held no more value than the utterance of the numbers expressing it. This film plays on the usual and the expected in neo-realist stories by inventing new ways of talking about money and of actually raising it. Specific shots of banknotes are replaced by close-ups of the faces

and lips of the people voicing out ever more extravagant sums. Here it becomes clear that (Leprohon 1972: 128):

If the only way out for Ricci in *Ladri di biciclette* was to carry on the fight with renewed courage and confidence, the *barboni* of Milan have no solution but to escape from a society in which money always has the last word into “a kingdom which is not of this world”.

The poor people of the Milanese slums escape their tragic destiny through a fanciful game of money wordplay in which money as such does not appear on screen. In an escape-through-utopia, the characters in effect create through words a fantasy world in which people are no longer subject to class divisions according to their economic status, but enjoy wealth with its sense of entitlement according to how able they prove themselves in voicing impressive sums not actually possessed. Their imagination, expressed here through the sound of numbers, functions as the principle of their economic liberation.

Money and Realism

Within a discussion of realism, the idea of the representation of an object of everyday human experience is not specific to that time but, in this given context, its representation carries its own special meaning. Money here is a

tool of exchange, *moneta* rather than *pecunia*: there is only money to buy what is necessary to survive. Money here, like any other object, would supposedly be filmed in a naturalist way as “real” money in accord with realist filming conventions, where, if we use Bazin’s argument, close-ups of ‘so many useless things’ (1971: 38) are replaced by a more contextual way of filming with long shots. As he explains (1971: 38):

In *Paisà* [*Paisan* 1946] (and I repeat that I imply by this, in varying degrees, all Italian films) the close-up of the doorknob would be replaced, without any loss of that peculiar quality of which it is part, by the “image fact” of a door whose concrete characteristics would be equally visible.

Money, however, is often isolated, unlike the doorknob, in specific shots, either close-ups, at the centre, or in the foreground of a shot. A transaction can be filmed in long shot, as the scene where Umberto sells his watch for a bag of paper money in *Umberto D.*, while including at least one close shot of money itself. While being a perfect example of a ‘real object’ in its reference to the everyday in the medium or long shots of banal scenes of exchange, money is also filmed in close shot as an object which is emphasized in its importance, and as creating more than the mere illusion of reality, or carrying more meaning than any other object represented. It therefore captures the “documentary” quality of realism as well as a more melodramatic tone in the way the image of money plays on the emotions through the repetitive use of certain cinematic techniques: isolated shots,

point-of-view shots, and reverse-angle editing. In this view, counter to one of Bazin's arguments that neo-realism does not use close shots or use editing to create emotion but to respect 'reality' (Bazin 1971: 38), money is regularly shot in close-up as it is counted or changes hands, so to emphasise both its materiality and its scarcity.

This is the case, for example, in *Sciuscià* (*Shoeshine* 1946), *Ladri di biciclette* and *Umberto D.*. Each film features protagonists from a different generation and their relation to money and shows money in a very palpable way: the children in *Sciuscià* store their money in old sheets of newsprint and there are constant exchanges of money, often in close shot; in *Umberto D.* Umberto, throughout the film, is scraping together banknotes, and the shots of money exchanged, as well as untidy piles of one-hundred lira notes, are numerous. In *Ladri di biciclette*, a particularly interesting film for the way it shows cash, money enters as a kind of code referencing everyday reality and its struggle. Money here tends, when filmed in close shots and included in reverse-angle editing scenes, to draw viewers into the characters' emotions and not simply to observe them as from without.

Money appears in six scenes in the film. Three involve the daily life of the family directly: two in the pawnshop and one where Ricci checks how much money he has in his wallet to make sure there is enough to invite his son Bruno (Enzo Staiola) to eat out. Two scenes involve the payment of the fortune-teller (*santona*) first by Maria and then by Ricci, and another shows an exchange of banknotes between two thieves. These last three scenes are filmed in medium shot with no close-up of banknotes and no

reverse-angle editing. All the characters appear in the same frame (two and three-shot) and the viewer observes the action without the film inviting emotional involvement. On the other hand, money and faces are shown in close-up and in reverse-angle editing in the two scenes where the life and happiness of the family (first husband and wife; then father and son) are in question. These scenes thus contrast not only with the others mentioned, but also with the rest of the film as a whole. Through the use of certain techniques they invite the viewer into a more emotional appreciation of the value of money and its centrality in the characters' lives.

While the opening of *Ladri di biciclette* is mainly composed of long shots, a dissolve moves the action into the pawnshop, a sequence characterised by close shots and reverse-angle editing, which introduces money visually. In the first sequence (two-shot and deep focus), '[we] observe the emotions of the characters' whereas in the pawning sequence, 'we share their emotions': 'the reverse-angles and the shallow focus draw us into an identification with the characters' (Wagstaff 1992: 26).

Ricci has been offered a job but needs a bicycle for it. He has already pawned his own and, having long waited for this job and an opportunity to earn money, is in desperation. Maria finds a solution and pawns all the household sheets in exchange for the money to recover Ricci's bicycle. Once in the pawnshop, Maria and Ricci are shown alternately in a money exchange with the pawnbroker. The first involves the pawning of their sheets; the second, the recovery of the bicycle at

another counter. The pawning of the sheets comprises fifteen shots but lasts less than a minute. In the reverse-angle sequence, the placement of the camera clearly draws our attention to Maria and the couple's point of view, especially since there is no point-of-view shot from the pawnbroker's side. The viewer sees the same thing Maria sees as she sees it, whereas on the pawnbroker's side, the viewer only observes the action from behind his right shoulder and is thus not invited to identify with his point of view.

Two shots feature banknotes. A shot, in between the two, shows the pawnbroker's face from the couple's point of view but the framing of the image excludes his hands counting the money. With the banknotes out of the frame, the imagery, from the couple's perspective, seems to suggest a fuller vision of human life not centred exclusively on money, whereas from the perspective over the pawnbroker's shoulder the banknotes are central and act as mediator in the relationship. The couple's new hope for an open future is emphasized through this partial view of the pawnbroker's face not featured with money, the essential tool with which he works. The pawnbroker retains his full humanity as signalled in his agreement to a five-hundred lira increase on the initial seven thousand lire offered. In the first of the two high-angle shots featuring money, the camera is placed a few meters behind the pawnbroker as he removes banknotes from the cash drawer before him. The second shot with money, also from the pawnbroker's side and just behind his right shoulder, focuses on the seven one-thousand lira and five one-hundred lira banknotes being counted out and handed to Maria.

This use of reverse-angle editing and the point of view shots not only involves the viewer in Maria and Ricci's emotions, but also accentuates a certain division between inside and outside. The window, through which all transactions are carried out, separates the pawning space from the world outside. This space where vast quantities of pawned items are kept and money decisions are made stands in contrast to the tight line of people waiting to pawn their last precious belongings in order to scrape together a few miserable banknotes. Maria and Ricci, like all the other people waiting in line, are part of this other world, this world characterized by unemployment, poverty, and basic need. In this space, everybody is pawning use-value objects essential to everyday life.

The second scene involves emotionally charged images of money and is comparable in structure to the first one, but here money is actually handed over for the pawned bicycle: Ricci pays out six thousand one hundred lire to redeem the bicycle. As in the first at the pawnshop, this scene engages the viewer, this time however not through Maria's, but through Ricci's eyes with point of view shots from his perspective and reverse-angle editing. Once again the viewer is invited to share Ricci's emotions rather than just to observe them from without, seeing through the pawnbroker's window the thousands of pawned sheets and the dozens of bicycles, in shots that highlight a general poverty rather than an individual one.

The third scene features Ricci and Bruno. In this scene money appears centrally as part of a broader representation of it within the family

dynamic. Ricci is trying to find a way to make up with his son Bruno whom he has slapped in the face out of his personal sense of impotence and frustration at having lost his indispensable bicycle through inattention and its consequent theft. Ricci counts the money he has in his wallet to make sure he can afford to invite Bruno out for pizza. As before, by isolating money in close shot, reverse-angle editing and by placing sharply focused money in the foreground of a medium-shot, this scene engages the viewer emotionally. Ricci's hands counting the banknotes can be seen in the foreground; slightly to the right, Bruno, standing in the background, observing Ricci's hands, occupies the centre of the frame. By including father and son in the same frame as the money and by putting the camera at Bruno's height in at least one shot, money is put to the fore as a link between father and son, not as a means of exchange.

From a larger perspective, by featuring money visually and by involving at least two of the three family members, each of these three scenes creates—in the way money is shot and edited—an emotional involvement which the other three scenes with money do not convey. Far from a concept of “naturalism” where money would be depicted in a purely objective way without any idealisation, money here is shot to create an effect: it is isolated, shot on its own, and included in some circumstances in point-of-view shots and reverse-angle editing scenes.

Long shots in deep focus followed by close shots in sharp focus, as well as an insistence on the banknotes themselves, are actually recurrent images in other films as well. The long shots introduce money as part of

everyday life on screen, shown in a supposedly realist way, while at the same time, the close-ups make the money more than a mere detail in a wider representation of society. Money is given emotional quality as well as narrative power in the films, in its role in the story and in its predominant visual presence. The long shots of economic and social destruction and those of emotionally neutral transactions, closer to the documentary quality of neo-realist films, contrast with shots that isolate money and invite emotional involvement. Money's materiality and physical presence are accentuated through the use of these techniques, which emphasize paper money's importance in the depiction of everyday life, and in the stories as they unfold for characters whose need of money is essential. The representation of money, far from being of a uniform 'documentary realism' (Bazin 1971: 41), is closer to what Bazin denounces in other cinemas as being 'a kind of superdocumentary, or romanticized reportage' (1971: 47).

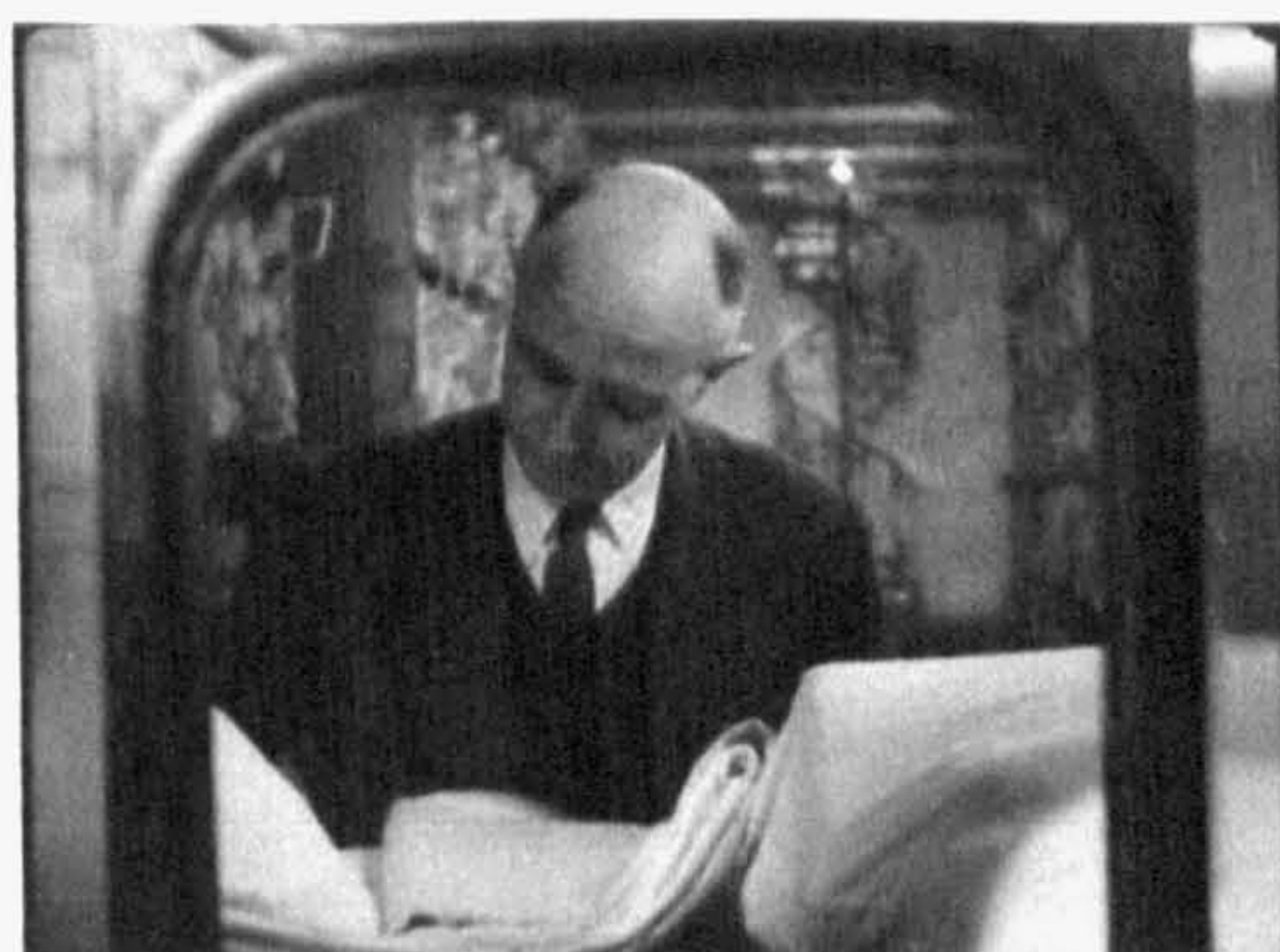
Ladri di biciclette: money scenes



Pawning sequence I: pawnbroker's side—he prepares banknotes for Maria and Ricci.



Pawning sequence I: pawnbroker's side, his right shoulder visible in frame.



Pawning sequence I: Maria and Ricci's point of view—the pawnbroker.



Pawning sequence I: point-of-view shot—
pawnbroker considering higher payment.



Pawning sequence II: Ricci's point of view
as he redeems his bicycle.



Pawning sequence II: Ricci's point of view—
observing shelves and shelves of pawned sheets.



Pawning sequence II: pawnbroker's side—
his hand and arm visible.



Third money scene: three-shot—
Maria slips money from her pocket for *santona*.



Fourth money scene: two-shot—
bicycle thief handing over banknote to crony.



Fifth money scene: Ricci counts banknotes in wallet;
Bruno looks on with camera at his level.



Sixth money scene: three-shot—
Bruno offers banknote to *santona*.

2. Money and the Nation

A sense of belonging, of community, is what Zavattini considers a central aspect of the Italian character and therefore of what Italian cinema should represent. In Italian cinema (Zavattini 1978: 69):

There can never be a lack of truth. Every hour of the day, every place, every person, can be portrayed if they are shown in a manner which reveals and emphasizes the collective elements which continually shape them.

There are different ways in which neo-realist films emphasize this sense of community and unify it around common images and symbols: the choice of location, for example, but also language, references to Italian culture from north to south, the depiction of everyday urban and rural life, and the representation of money in the form of a national currency. Money, especially here as printed banknotes and minted coins, is a strong symbol that conveys a sense of national homogeneity and unity as emphasised by its being shown in the context of contemporary daily life all over the country.

De Santis grounded his theory of the rebirth of Italian cinema on two main components: 'an authentic landscape that shows and bears the signs of its inhabitants, and characters who reveal their cultural background in their physique' (Vitti 1996: 51). In Italy, 'visual and verbal representations of landscape have a long tradition in the arts' (Landy

2000: 122). In the choice of location, for example, the 'sense of place' is fundamental (Landy 2000: 128): south or north; rural or urban landscape, 'real and imaginary places'. Images of 'the destruction as well as reconstruction of the Italian City and countryside' (Landy 2000: 123) play an important role in unifying a nation around common symbols (Landy 2000: 122 sq). In many film openings, the choice of location is emphasized by high-angle, long tracking and panoramic shots of the cities or countryside where the films are to take place. In *Umberto D.*, *Roma città aperta* or *La città si difende*, the long shots of urban landscapes give a sense of geographical location and reflect the social disparities, especially between north and south².

Language is another element in a shared or common geographical and cultural entity. In most neo-realist films the language is Italian; dialect, however, is used to exhibit the diversity of the country in spite of the unifying force of the national language. Amengual calls this the 'dialectal spirit' (1994: 58). One way this spirit was to be obtained was by a direct use of dialect in films such as *Sciusià* and *La terra trema*. The choice of Sicilian in *La terra trema* also materializes the economic reality that the film depicts: Visconti remarks through voice-over in the opening credits that in Sicily, Italian is not the language of the poor people. The choice of location and language in the films brings the diversity of Italian culture to the fore while depicting situations where money is often key.

² In 1951, the income per head in the South was only 63% of the national average. Emigration to cities in the North was therefore very high and it is a theme present in neo-realist films: 2.5 million southerners travelled north in the 1950s and 1960s (Robson 1992: 141).

Money's role is important in linking these diverse elements. It is a tool necessary to unify the country around common reference points. Places, dialects and economic situations are diverse, but there is just one currency. The use of the lira and its careful filmic representation are ways of creating a sense of national unity through symbols and the common experience of this currency. Money, like the neo-realist films themselves, is one of those 'circulation signs which refer to the collective history of people' (Brunetta 1995: 433). Banknotes, coins and to a certain extent cheques, when represented, are a constitutive element of this collective identity, crossing borders between regions, between rich and poor, cities and countryside. In this sense money works as an incredibly unifying object, a common sign that transcends language and regionalism.

Money is also an object and a simulacrum of everyday life. Its representation often functions to express something more than an object, a simple tool of exchange, something more than just 'economic transactions' (Landy 2000: 132-133). The way money is exchanged, the way it is used as payment, passed from hand to hand, stolen, or simply hidden in a drawer, means more and represents more than a simple detail drawn from real life. Money blatantly represented on screen functions as something beyond a simple naturalist reproduction used to create an impression of reality. Since people can all relate to money as an everyday object in films in general, neo-realist films use and emphasize all of money's functions: to pay, to be paid, to give credit, to trust, to express wealth or poverty and ultimately also to create a sense of national unity.

All these functions come into play to show what cash money means and expresses in post-war cinema and in a country in need of reconstruction, a cinema and a country in the process of developing out of a difficult past. In a way, money constantly represented as *moneta*, as a universal equivalent becomes here the national *pecunia*, the national possession, Italy's "own" money. In its dimension as *pecunia*, money shown is grounded in a national reality and also in a national sovereignty. The lira is the product of the Italian State and these films keep emphasising this aspect of money in this specific period of Italian history.

Neo-realist films carry the idea of 'a nation's rebirth...and its immediate encounter with the struggle for survival in all its forms' (Frank 1951 in Leprohon 1972: 98). Neo-realist directors themselves have commented directly on their duty to present a country in alienation and in need of a renewed sense of national unity. Lattuada, for example, in an article of June 1945, remarks: 'The cinema is unequalled for revealing all the basic truths about a nation' (Leprohon 1972: 98). De Sica explains in 1960 that the new goal of cinema after the war was to realize itself in the context of the nation's loss of pride (Leprohon 1972: 92):

The war was a decisive experience for us all. Each of us felt the wild urge to sweep away all the worn-out plots of the Italian cinema and to set up our cameras in the midst of real life, in the midst of all that struck us with dismay.

In cinema, he adds, 'we sought to redeem our guilt' (92).

The directors' concern with Italy's new situation is reflected in their conscious use of the lira on screen. This can be seen in the use of money in their opposition to the German occupation shown, for example, in *Roma città aperta* or in their portrayal of a country economically devastated by war as shown in *Paisà*, *Due soldi di speranza* or *Umberto D.* *Roma città aperta* uses money to attain freedom and restore 'Italian national tradition': the one million lire in cash that Don Pietro carries for the Resistance movement demonstrate this as each banknote supposedly contributes to the struggle against the foreign invader and against the nation's internal corruption. In this context, neo-realist films were often made as a 'promotion and defence of an Italian national tradition' (Forgacs 1989: 55).

Minting Money as a National Activity

The printing and issuing of currency are activities regarded as 'eminently national'³ (Dupré 2001: 23) and as part of a series of state-produced images that together form what Althusser calls 'ideological State apparatuses'⁴ (Althusser 1970: 3). The images that result contribute to unify local memories in a common national culture (Dupré 2001: 23):

According to the model which Louis Althusser called *Ideological State Apparatuses*, one could then suggest the notion of Popular State Image which would qualify every image

³ 'éminemment nationales'

⁴ 'appareils idéologiques d'État'

produced and widely distributed by official institutions: postage stamps, administrative seals, logos (diplomas, tax forms, letterheads...), badges, medals, but also uniforms, banners, flags, etc. So many “eloquent images”, unobtrusive images of propaganda.⁵

Within these images, the banknote is central both in its function as sign of value, as instrument of exchange, and as symbol of the State’s sovereign authority. The banknote, like other instruments used by the State, is part of an ‘absolute obligation to enlist local memories in the common background of a national culture’⁶ (Nora 1984: 652).

Money as currency inscribes itself in the ‘common background’ of a country and serves in its own way to define the national identity and culture beyond regions, peoples and language diversity: ‘the development of a collective memory appears as a prior necessity, a counter-power to the inertia of differences, a counterbalance to ways of living and dying’⁷ (Nora 1984: 652). The common background that Nora refers to is part of a series of obligations and duties that are incumbent upon the State (Nora 2001: xxxvii) and that confirm its sovereignty. Banknotes and coins are tangible

⁵ ‘Selon le modèle que Louis Althusser nommait *Appareils idéologiques d’État*, on pourrait donc avancer la notion d’Image Populaire d’État qui qualifierait toutes images produites et largement diffusées par des institutions officielles : timbres-poste, cachets administratifs, logos (diplômes, feuilles d’impôts, papiers en-tête...), écussons, médailles, mais aussi uniformes, bannières, drapeaux, etc. Autant d’ “images parlantes”, discrètes images de la propagande’.

⁶ ‘obligation absolue d’ enrôler des mémoires locales dans le fond commun d’une culture nationale’. This essay by Pierre Nora is not translated in the English version of *Les Lieux de mémoire*.

⁷ ‘La construction d’une mémoire collective apparaît comme une nécessité prioritaire, un contre-pouvoir aux inerties des différences, un contrepoids aux façons de vivre et de mourir.’

products of state obligations and duties, not the product of vague utopias, and are available, useful and valuable only within certain clearly circumscribed geographical boundaries. Money, in this way, works to convey the common national and cultural experience because these images issued and created by national institutions circulating throughout the country inscribe themselves on local memory, and provide a link with the national experience.

As a vehicle of national identity, the lira, like any currency at a given moment in time, is the expression of the State's political, social and economic programme and ambitions: 'An expression of political, financial and economic power, money, in its material form is also an ideological expression of this power'⁸ (Dupré 2001: 23). Neo-realist films reflect and build on this. With the films specifically located within a particular region or city, they nevertheless show the lira as a national representation that surmounts the country's real diversity. It figures symbolically to focus the specific economic and social problems and situations throughout the country beyond, but also within, the regional differences in economic situation, language and geographical location. The lira, like other currencies, is specific in its name, size, design and in the sums entailed, although the specific design of the banknotes represented is the least emphasised feature. The lira is also specific not just to Italy as a geographical zone but to the periods represented in the films.

⁸ 'Expression du pouvoir politique, financier, économique, la monnaie, par sa forme matérielle, est aussi une de ses manifestations idéologiques.'

The representation of money in neo-realist films can be more fully appreciated through a brief reflection on the history of the lira itself. The lira became the national currency in Italy in 1861 when Vittorio Emanuele II was crowned king. During Mussolini's regime, the king then, Vittorio Emanuele III, remained the titular or symbolic head of the country with little executive power. The presence of a king emphasised the existence of an ancestral lineage up to 1946. Not only was the king still functioning as titular head of Italy but his face, his image, graced the national currency. Coins, as well as banknotes, in this sense, symbolised the nation as a whole. Theoretically his image was the guarantor, alongside symbols of Fascism, for all the money in circulation.

During the war banknotes and coins were used all over Europe as a special tool for propaganda: Mussolini, Hitler and Pétain all manipulated the images that figured on national currencies for political purposes. After the war banknotes and coins appeared as signs of a possible regeneration. In Italy, in 1946, with the emergence of the new republic, the design of banknotes and coins was switched to neutral and impersonal forms, mostly symbols linked to work and agriculture. This was a radical change from what went on before with no reference to the past or to any emblematic personage. It is interesting in this connection how neo-realist films, without showing any precise banknote design from the period, nevertheless reflect these symbols of work and agriculture in their preoccupation with the present through the daily life and activities of common citizens.

Italian currency: before, during and after Mussolini.



Five lire (1925) with image of King Vittorio Emmanuelle III.



Five lire from Fascist period with image of King Vittorio Emmanuelle III.



One hundred lire (1938).



Five hundred lire (1947).



Five thousand lire (1947).

The filming of large one-thousand and small one-hundred lira notes underscores the lira as a universal equivalent and its central place as a national symbol. As a national State-guaranteed currency, the lira creates a homogeneous scale of monetary reference. The larger the banknote, the larger the amount of money represented, and the films often play on this: in the pawning sequence of *Ladri di biciclette*, for example, the large seven one-thousand lira banknotes are set in contrast to the small five one-hundred lira banknotes Maria obtains for the sheets. While the larger banknotes are central in the frame and occupy a certain amount of frame space, the smaller notes are hardly visible in comparison and the shot over

the pawnbroker's shoulder is soon cut, thus not allowing a clear representation of the small banknotes.

These banknotes in *Ladri di biciclette*, moreover, represent the same monetary value per unit as the one-thousand lira banknotes (four million lire in total) that Jerry (John Kitzmiller), the American GI, steals in *Senza pietà*; the fresh one-thousand lira banknote Mara (Nelluccia Giammona) proudly pulls out of a wad of banknotes and places on the counter to pay for salt in *La terra trema*; or the one-hundred lira banknotes ensconced in a wallet and counted out in *Due soldi di speranza*. All these films, too, are set in different locations: *Ladri di biciclette* take place in Rome, *Senza pietà* in Livorno, *Due soldi di speranza* near Naples, and *La terra trema* in Aci Trezza in Sicily.

The materiality of on-screen banknotes contributes to implanting a certain image of Italy as a country while it highlights at the same time the political, economic and social realities of the various regional settings. In *Due soldi di speranza*, the very title refers to small change and the film itself only shows crumpled and worn one-hundred lira banknotes. *Umberto D.* constantly goes back and forth in displays of one-thousand and one-hundred lira banknotes. Umberto repeatedly, with great heaps of one-hundred lira banknotes, attempts to settle his debt with his landlady, who systematically refuses in disgust—the banknotes delivered by the maid Maria (Maria-Pia Casilio) are too small and not enough. On the other hand, when Umberto, in a desperate attempt to find Flike, his beloved little dog, tries to pay his small taxi fare to the animal shelter with a one-thousand lira

banknote, the driver, annoyed, refuses claiming the amount is too large to change. The money shown in these films underlines the ongoing daily life in specific locations all the while connecting it to the larger, national, reality.



La terra trema: from a wad in her hand, Mara places a one-thousand lira note on counter.



Umberto D.: Umberto pays cab-fare with one-thousand lira note.



Umberto D.: landlady refuses in disgust the one-hundred lira notes Maria offers in Umberto's name.

Moreover, Deshayé notes in *La Monnaie miroir des rois* (Dupré 2001: 24):

What shines through and circulates with the monetary sign is much more than the face of a sovereign or more generally the chief of state. It is the image of a character, a political policy, its aims, its successes, insufficiencies or failures, its avatars, the symbolism of power itself, the image of its means through time and space, from ancient Greece to our times.⁹

The representation of money creates a sense of national unity or at least a sense of belonging to a common political and geographical entity beyond social and economic disparities. This is clear, for example, in *La terra trema* or *Il cammino della speranza* where the sense of location is central and places the action in Sicily, a region far poorer than the rest of Italy. In *La terra trema*, fishing under the wholesalers' price control is a prerequisite for the fishermen of Aci Trezza. Its location and language seem almost to separate Sicily from the rest of the country.

In *La terra trema*, as in *Il cammino della speranza*, however, the sense of belonging to Italy as a whole is accentuated by the representation of a national currency through close-ups of banknotes early in the film. The money scene starts with a long shot of the family's fishermen hovering

⁹ "Ce qui peut transparaître et circuler avec le signe monétaire, c'est beaucoup plus que le visage d'un souverain ou d'une façon plus générale du chef de l'état. C'est l'image d'un caractère, d'une politique, de ses ambitions, réussites, insuffisances ou échecs, de ses avatars, le symbolisme du pouvoir lui-même, la figure de ses moyens à travers le temps et l'espace, de la Grèce antique à nos jours."

about the bed where the grandfather sits clutching a few paltry banknotes, meagre revenue from the night's catch. The bed where he counts and divides the seven thousand five hundred lire between the different members of the family, is the only piece of furniture in the room. This room, while it signals privacy and ownership, also highlights the poverty of the household that seemingly lacks even a table to carry on family business. The scene ends with a shot isolating the banknotes on the bed, through a number of intermediary shots, insisting on banknotes as rare objects, difficult to earn in this remote part of Italy, yet indispensable as tools of exchange. This repeated filming of the lira, whether in *La terra trema* or in *Ladri di biciclette* or *Senza pietà*, connects particular places and situations to a larger national reality in a given historical context.

La terra trema



Grandfather Valastro on bed, banknotes in hand.



Intermediary shot—division of fishing revenue.



Isolated shot—banknotes on bed.

In neo-realist films, the representation of paper money immediately asserts a direct image of Italy as a nation, its current state, its ambitions, its diversity as well as the difficulties experienced in ordinary life throughout the country in the specifically post-World War II historical context. The young republic, having no past and trying to rebuild a “new” nation, has only its own programme to offer. As a result, neo-realist films use images of money, one of the new republic’s only tangible signs in everyday circulation, in order to present concretely the daily reality of Italian life. At the same time, the use of national currency as a symbol of unity highlights, beyond disparities, a value of money derived purely from the guarantee of national institutions and not from any intrinsic value of paper.

Money and the Nation's Corruption

In several neo-realist films, money shown suggests, through personal stories, the corruption of the nation and its institutions. Emphasis is therefore often placed on the depiction of the consequences of war and the presence of foreign troops: the raids on bakeries led by Pina (Anna Magnani) in *Roma città aperta* and by Angelina (Anna Magnani) in *L'onorevole Angelina* (The Honourable Angelina 1948); the black marketeering (*Tombolo, paradiso nero* [*Tombolo Black Paradise*] 1947; *Roma città aperta*); the smuggling of goods (*Senza pietà*); the smuggling of people to Argentina (*Senza pietà*) and to France (*Il cammino della speranza*); and the spreading prostitution of women, forced by circumstances to put themselves on the market (*Napoli milionaria* [*Naples Millionaire*] 1950, *Senza pietà*, *Roma città libera*, *Il bandito*, *Paisà* [Roman episode]). In *Caccia tragica*, *La città si difende* or *Senza pietà* the plot partly revolves around a theft, for the "highest" motives, of large sums of money, to be carried off in bags or suitcases. The representation of money reveals in this context a generalized sense of loss of national dignity through the extent of corruption and greed playing on the vulnerability of weaker and poorer people.

One sequence in *Roma città aperta* illustrates in its use of money at least two of the points mentioned above. The sequence centres alternately on Don Pietro and Marina (Maria Michi). The character of the priest, Don Pietro, shows a strong sense of duty towards the restoration of the Italian

nation through the Resistance, while that of Marina is the embodiment of a formerly honest person, now corrupted through drug addiction occasioned by the war and the German occupation. She is ready to betray Giorgio Manfredi (Marcello Pagliero), her Italian boyfriend, for a fix. Money is essential to the partisans' struggle and therefore is considered "good" money. On the other hand, drug-money leading to the corruption of individuals (Marina) and through them that of the nation and its institutions (the Italian police and public officials in general), is "bad" money.

This is the only money sequence in *Roma città aperta* but it is crucial. Crosscutting editing runs the "good" money theme (partisan money) concurrently with the "bad" money theme (drug-money). The action starts inside Francesco's (Francesco Grandjacquet) apartment where Giorgio has taken refuge. Giorgio is also a Resistance leader and a key figure hunted by the Gestapo. In hiding, he entrusts the local priest, Don Pietro, with the delivery of "a sum of money" that same evening to a messenger for the five hundred partisans held up in the Tagliacozzo Mountains.

Don Pietro assumes the perilous task, linking it in his mind to a moral duty—the vital struggle for the nation's liberation, as he remarks to Giorgio: "...for those who sacrifice themselves this is even too little"¹⁰. Don Pietro's words link the individual, money and the nation. Money is necessary to save the nation and leads to morally higher actions, and in this case, money is more than a simple universal equivalent or an affirmation of

¹⁰ "...con loro chi si sacrificano non è anche troppo".

wealth and power. Here it temporarily loses its negative connotations: even a priest can consider it his moral duty to illegally carry one million lire with no disgrace.

Sent to collect the money from an illegal underground printing press located in an antique shop basement, Don Pietro is taken to a contiguous room: the priest and the anonymous Resistance director of the press face the camera, in a medium-shot at shoulder height, as the director hands over three books. Don Pietro, surprised to see books, only realises their subtle implication when he is shown that the pages are actually one-thousand lira banknotes. Wipes are used in the crosscutting editing and juxtapose Don Pietro's good deeds through his handling of "good" money with Marina's corruption and degradation. At work in the cabaret, she returns to her dressing room, sits down nervous and ill at ease, anxiously checking the contents of a small bottle. The shot of Marina, her back to the camera and facing a mirror, parallels, but in an opposite fashion, that of Don Pietro and the director who faced the camera when handing over the money-books: "good" money is shown frontally, with no shame; while Marina's shameful addiction is filmed from the back of the room with Marina's face only captured in a mirror, bottle momentarily in hand.

The backgrounds of the two scenes, the austere print shop and the supposed artificiality of the cabaret dressing room, differ radically. Marina, living in an artificial world and in need of drugs, is probably less in control than the sober Resistance people intent on their mission. The fuller dimensions of Marina's corruption become apparent with the entrance of

Ingrid (Giovanna Galletti) in her dressing room, a seductive Gestapo agent and Marina's drug dealer. The actual drug here, like "bad" money manipulated by the Gestapo, opens Marina later to crimes otherwise unthinkable: the betrayal of Giorgio and through him of the Resistance, a betrayal that results in the terrible death of at least three people—Giorgio, Don Pietro and an anonymous German deserter.

The shot of Don Pietro delivering the money-books to a messenger is contrasted in the editing through a rather long dissolve with a long shot of Italian police happily enforcing the German curfew on the streets of Rome. This apposition of shots further emphasizes the "good" struggle that the Resistance money is fostering, a struggle directed against, among other things, the collaborating Italian police, who function here as a dynamic symbol of the widespread corruption of occupied Italy.

In the use of parallel editing to make a point about money, this sequence, like that of the pawning in *Ladri di biciclette*, also runs counter to Bazin's idea of realism as observational. Don Pietro's money mission, moreover, shows money as something more than a mere instrument of exchange, it is money put to a high cause, money for the restoration of Italian national integrity. The representation of money in this sequence simultaneously shows corruption and a possibility of redemption. The two spheres, corruption and redemption, are neither antagonistic nor mutually exclusive, rather, they complement one another. Nevertheless redemption through the representation of "good" money rises above the corruption implicit in "bad" money. Furthermore *Roma città aperta* 'effectively

propagandizes for Italian unity at a time when many felt the necessity of a purge of all those who had cooperated with the Fascists' (Sitney 1995: 36).



Roma città aperta: Don Pietro leafs through the pages of bound banknotes.

Conclusion

In neo-realist films, money shown connects a country laid low by several years of war with a cinema that thought of itself as different and perhaps as part of a general reconstruction movement. The representation of money parallels that of a country where the national currency, the national *pecunia*, is a strong symbol of unity at a time when not only regional, but also political and historical divisions, deriving from the war and fascism, resurface.

Money is mainly used as *moneta*, a tool of exchange. It is constantly circulating, and interestingly, against realist aesthetic, quite often shot in close-up or isolated shots. That money is depicted as only

circulating and not hoarded is an important dynamic in the films. Always changing hands, money is nowhere in one place long enough to be saved up and used as a means for longer-term projects. The protagonists spend their entire time attempting to scrape together small change, and in that attempt are frequently driven to sell off their precious high use-value possessions.

It is only in a later film, *Le notti di Cabiria* (*Nights of Cabiria* 1957), that the possibility of saving a substantial sum of money is made possible. That Cabiria (Giuletta Masina) manages to pull together three hundred fifty thousand lire from the sale of her house and another four hundred thousand lire from her bank account, suggests, in contrast to many neo-realist film characters, her improved financial circumstances: she owns her own house (*pecunia*) and, despite her being a prostitute, she has her own bank account. This hoarding's materiality is emphasised through the shot of Cabiria proudly exhibiting her wad of banknotes on the restaurant table.

For the impoverished characters of neo-realist films, a bank account is not even remotely in the realm of possibility, except in the case of *La terra trema* in which the Valastro family mortgages all their belongings to become the owners of an account, however temporary. Still, generally speaking, within the images of money in neo-realist films, the paper banknote is central and prevalent both in its function as a sign of value, as a tool of exchange, and as a symbol of the State's sovereign authority.



Le notti di Cabiria: Cabiria and her 750,000 lira hoard.

Following Barthes' argument that new money, not backed by ancestry or by a king, has lost its referent, one can make a parallel here between the referent of money being ancestry and the referent of money being any item of high use-value. If the young Italian republic has no past, money likewise, as a sign and representation, has no referent except itself.

The value of money is disconnected from that of high use-value or labour-intensive commodities. The high use-value or labour-intensive commodities shown in neo-realist films would furnish 'a fact' (Barthes 1974: 39). New money, however, is just a representation, an unstable equivalent that disconnects the characters from what they estimate as valuable.

And the films emphasise this disconnection: *La terra trema*, for example, alternates shots of a night's fishing or of the many boxes of salted anchovies (high use-value and labour-intensive) with the family's grinding poverty and their chronic financial loss in selling their fish (low exchange-value) to wholesalers. In other films as well, all the high use-value commodities pawned or sold mean little in terms of cash money. And in

this, if money really is the measure of value, it has also lost its traditional and concrete referents and is revealed once again in its most profound paradox: its self-evident high worth as opposed to its worthless physical reality as ordinary paper in neo-realist films.

CHAPTER FOUR: HIGH FINANCE IN FRENCH CINEMA

Introduction

Neo-realist films offer images of money as paper, money mostly in its function as *moneta*, as exchange. Monetary transactions are shown repeatedly, whether to emphasize a certain ordinary character in the exchanges themselves or the lira as a symbol of national unity. The cash of neo-realist films, is not backed by any substantial material like gold, yet it still holds a degree of materiality as palpable paper. Films on high finance introduce a new dimensionality of money as abstract capital used in large-scale transactions and in a world that deals with the business of money itself.

In a capitalist system in which, especially since the 1970s and 1980s, '*finance* (the buying and selling of money, a currency about currency) has superseded *manufacture* as the supposed cutting edge of capitalism' (Williamson 1991: 158), the current financial news is perceived as increasingly shaping economic health. In this context, the ups and downs of the Stock Market play perhaps a bigger role than ever before. It seems relevant, then, to look at a number of films from this period of shift, whose central themes focus on finance, banks, the Stock Market, and the business of 'currency about currency'.

Over the past twenty-five years, several films offer stories whose context is drawn from the world of high finance. Alongside *Trading Places* (1983) and *Working Girl* (1988), *Wall Street*, with its obvious title, is an example of mainstream film whose story centres on characters speculating and playing on the new heights of high-finance characteristic of the 1980s (Williamson 1991; Roffman and Simpson 1994). *Rollover* (1981) and *Demonlover* (2001), centring on female characters, are also set in the world of high finance. And the scandal involving the investment banker Nick Leeson resulted in a best-selling autobiography (1996) and two films, *Rogue Trader* (1999) and *Banqueroute* (*Bankruptcy* 2000). These films tell Leeson's story, his lavish lifestyle and the way his shady wheeling and dealing ultimately broke one of the UK's oldest and most respected banks, creating a scandal of international proportions.

Rogue Trader is the more famous of the two films, a big-budget British production, starring Ewan McGregor portraying Leeson from his swift rise to his astounding fall. The black-and-white low-budget *Banqueroute*, on the other hand, is not an adaptation of Leeson's autobiography but draws loosely on the scandal itself and tells the story of Nicolas Lanson (Mathieu Demy) on the run from the investment bank where he is employed and from which he has lifted a fortune in cash. On a fast track, Lanson pursues a high-life of cocaine, prostitutes and free spending, all presented as just characteristic of any enterprising stock broker of the 1980s and 1990s.

French cinema of the 1970s and early 1980s also offers some significant, if less talked-about, mainstream films centring on the world of money and high finance. Shot with major stars, *La Banquière* (*The Woman Banker* 1980), *Le Sucre* (*Sugar* 1978), *L'Argent des autres* (*Other People's Money* 1978), *Mille milliards de dollars* (*A Thousand Billion Dollars* 1982), or *Stavisky* (1973) all focus on a world of banks, bankers, stocks and stock-options, interest rates, savings and investment, financial schemes and calculations, where the value of money, since the severance of the gold exchange standard, only refers to itself. In this world the Stock Market and the Commodity Exchange are not immune to the influence and interests of the political sphere and the more traditional financial establishment. Financiers and politicians are often seen working hand in hand, at least so long as their friendship is useful to both sides, while individual investors and their savings are the victims of shady manoeuvres that largely go beyond their ken.

This chapter on money in French cinema focuses mainly on the above grouping of films, with reference to other films from a broader viewing and to an earlier wave of films centred on the world of high finance in the 1920s and 1930s with titles such as *La Banque Nemo* (*The Nemo Bank* 1934), *Ces Messieurs de la Santé* (1933) and *L'Argent* (1928).

Most of the more recent films were successful at the domestic box-office, a public appraisal that was not, for the most part, shared by the critics. They were conceived and shot under the conservative presidency of Georges Pompidou (1969-1974) and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1974-

1981), that is to say, before François Mitterand was elected president in May 1981, before the promise of change many expected from the socialist party's access to power.

Regardless of this, however, these films were not conceived as politically activist in tone as such: some of the filmmakers have even taken direct stands against a political reading of their work. In the case of *Mille milliards de dollars*, for instance, Verneuil explained that (Babe 1982):

I am not a politically committed filmmaker. Between you and me, they present us too often with Manichaeian films. I was simply seduced by a more ambitious theme. And I merely expose. As for the rest, it is just cinema!¹

Commenting in this vein on *La Banquière*, Girod made clear that, although Emma Eckhert (Romy Schneider) is based on the real life character of Marthe Hanau (1886-1935), his objective in making the film was 'to invent fictional characters, to compose a saga based on this affair' rather than to construct a political statement (Girod 1980: 6).

Yet, the films themselves are decidedly moralistic, sometimes naïvely so, when it comes to the representation of money. This is quite clear from their insistence on how *bad* money is or how *bad* people become, when they possess it or lust after it. This rather simplistic stance in the presentation of the denizens of the world of finance was often decried

¹'Je ne suis pas un cinéaste engagé. Entre nous, ils nous donnent trop souvent des films manichéens. J'ai simplement été séduit par un sujet plus ambitieux. Et je me contente de dénoncer. Le reste, c'est du cinéma !'

by the critics who indicated the contradiction implied between the actual cost of the films and the clichéd moral stance on money they present. In the case of *La Banquière*, for example, Rochu (1980) emphasizes this contradiction in spelling out, to create an effect, the actual money spent in old francs, adding for this purpose two digits to the actual sum:

A billion and a half old francs [were] invested by Francis Girod's company, Zeitun productions, FR3, Gaumont, SFP... In French cinema, *La Banquière* is generally thought of as a superproduction, even if the film attacks the "powers of money", as numerous posters announce in the streets of Paris'².

Thematically, films such as *La Banquière*, *Le Sucre*, *L'Argent des autres* or *Mille milliards de dollars* all deal with excess, with 'charged topics'³ and with 'the corruption, the bestiality and the ugly side of man in society'⁴ (Prédal 1996: 363). They are characterised by a 'taste for denunciation and a lucid pessimism towards men's behaviour when in society' (363). These popular films come after the "fiction de gauche" trend of the post-1968 era⁵ but they address a moderate left-wing audience.

² 'Un milliard et demi d'anciens francs apportés par la société de Francis Girod, Zeitun productions, FR3, Gaumont, la SFP... Dans le cinéma français, *La Banquière* fait figure de superproduction, même si ce film s'attaque aux "puissances d'argent" comme l'annoncent d'innombrables affiches sur les murs de Paris.'

³ 'sujets épineux'

⁴ 'la corruption, la bestialité et la laideur de l'homme en société'

⁵ The expression was coined by Serge Toubiana in *Les Cahiers du cinéma* in April 1977, while reviewing Yves Boisset's latest film *Le Juge Fayard dit le shériff* (*Judge Fayard Called the Sheriff* 1976): 'Des films qui se proposent de balayer fictionnellement toutes les institutions bourgeoises en crise, de dénoncer le mauvais fonctionnement du pouvoir, et de servir ou de cautionner une relance de ces institutions, dès lors gouvernées par un autre pouvoir : celui d'une gauche dont le programme aussi bien que les hommes chargés de le

Here 'it is no longer a matter of being infuriated with respect to a foreign totalitarian regime, but of attacking head-on the French political system, under the inspiration of the most red-hot contemporary scandals'⁶ (Dehée 2000: 34). *L'Argent des autres*, for example, is 'de Challenges' denunciation of the real-estate operations of the de Gaulle period'⁷ (35). This wave of politically motivated films (as opposed to more militant films) functions in the mainstream cinema circuit with its large-scale budgets, high-profile stars, and immediate wide release (34). Rancière remarks, moreover, that 'what remains is the bare idea of the "conspiracy" ... orchestrated from above by an occult and all powerful machine'⁸ (Rancière 1985: 107). And indeed banks, Stock Markets, governments, corporations are perceived as 'occult and powerful' machines operated by individuals driven by a lust for money and power regardless of other considerations or others' interests.

Several of these films go back to scandals dating from the 1930s and in this sense they mirror a trend in films on finance that emerged in France in the late 1920s and 1930s, starting with *L'Argent*. As a matter of fact in the 1970s as in the 1930s 'the accumulation of scandals revealed by

mettre en application sont prêts à se mettre en place, à la place espérée prochainement vacante.' (Dehée 2000: 35)

⁶ 'Il ne s'agit plus de s'indigner contre tel régime totalitaire étranger, mais d'attaquer de front le système politique français, en s'inspirant des affaires contemporaines les plus brûlantes'

⁷ 'une dénonciation du gaullisme immobilier par de Chalonge'

⁸ 'Ce qui reste c'est l'idée nue de la 'machination' ... orchestrée d'en haut par une machine occulte et toute puissante.'

the press supplies scriptwriters with a holding tank abounding in stories'⁹ (Dehée 2000: 32).

This chapter focuses then on the representation of money in its own meta-world, the world of high finance. The first part aims at understanding how the films selected capture the processes that govern the functioning of high finance, its codes and rules, and the sums involved. The Stock Market is visually a central locus of this functioning. The representation of money itself is examined in its different forms as well as in its negative connotations. The second part establishes and works towards a fuller understanding of the connections these films have with the events and books they are adapted from in the context of finance and money after the end of the gold-exchange standard, and with the trend of 1920s and 1930s films on high finance. This work will highlight certain financial aspects of the stories that are often, and even surprisingly, very opaque. This reinforces the widespread conception that anything that has to do with finance and banking is necessarily something mysterious. Finance, in its immateriality, is contrasted with the materiality of money. Finally, the third part discusses, essentially through a reading of *La Banquière*, the question of who manipulates the money and in this way investigates the gender divide in positions of high power in French cinema, how it appears on the screen and how it is played upon.

⁹ 'L'accumulation des scandales révélés par la presse fournit aux scénaristes un abondant vivier d'histoires.'

1. Money and High Finance

Money and high finance provide the atmosphere and background for *La Banquière*, *Le Sucre*, *L'Argent des autres* and *Mille milliards de dollars*, films in which the main characters play against this general background in accordance with set roles. They stand, in other words, in relationship to the world of business and finance from the angle of their assigned function in that world. A character, who, for example, works within the financial sphere, does not necessarily see things in the same way as another character who views that same world from without: Cornelius A. Woeagen (Mel Ferrer), the American CEO of the corporation Garson Texas International (GTI) in *Mille milliards de dollars*, in contrast to the zealous journalist Philippe Kerjean (Patrick Dewaere) who investigates GTI's shady business. Cornelius A. Woeagen is obviously the insider while Philippe Kerjean is the outsider.

The films, in this context, focus on characters who are in some way marginal or marginalized within the larger picture of the more established financial industry: the unknown journalist Kerjean, from the above example, in *Mille milliards de dollars*; the small town speculator Adrien Courtois (Jean Carmet) and the middleman Raoul d'Homecourt de la Vibraye (Gérard Depardieu) in *Le Sucre*; the obscure executive Henri Rainier (Jean-Louis Trintignant) in *L'Argent des autres* and the transgressive woman-banker, Emma Eckhert, in *La Banquière*.

These figures, because of who they are within the films, retain a certain marginality. This is true even when they only experience moments of high notoriety before a precipitate fall from power and position as in the case of Emma, the most famous and controversial banker in Paris until her blackmail, dethronement, jail and murder; or in the case of Alexandre Stavisky (Jean-Paul Belmondo) in *Stavisky*, a notoriously high-flying wheeler-dealer who is ultimately pushed to suicide through the scandalous revelation of widespread corruption within the upper echelons of the political establishment.

Visible High Finance

Finance is the sum of all processes involved in the management and administration of money. It is a system that encompasses not only the making of investments but also such things as the provision of banking facilities, the circulation of money and the granting of credit. It is thus commonly understood to operate within the context of banks, the Stock Market, and brokerage houses. Finance also exists within a clearly defined legal structure. Large-scale financial operations are typically referred to as high finance and it is this world that is generally portrayed in the films under discussion.

High finance exists in a framework where money is made to “work”, to “grow”. It is also the world in which money figures not only as

a tool of exchange, but also and mainly as capital to be invested and through which both the notion of trust and the market continuously fix the volatile value of stocks, bonds, and of money itself. Money here appears as written or spoken *numbers* in contrast to actual cash, and functions as a kind of pure abstract construct. In the context of high finance, money appears as capital rather than money as small sums used as a tool of exchange in everyday life.

All the principal films under consideration centre on money and high finance. Since neither *Le Sucre*, *L'Argent des autres*, *La Banquière* or *Mille milliards de dollars* have been released outside of France, it may be useful to briefly summarize them.

La Banquière tells the story of Emma, a character directly inspired by the banker Marthe Hanau, an important and still controversial figure of the 1920s and 1930s with a visionary approach to savings, investing, and money in general. In the film Emma continually demonstrates her belief in the necessity for a strong currency in order to establish a healthy economy and to arise out of the consequences of the crash of 1929. She is the victim of her own acceptance of the corrupt political system of the Third Republic. The film recalls her rise and fall within the context of traditional banking and of a political regime characterized by its instability and the reign of personal interest. Here “new” banking confronts “old” banking. This period film draws largely, although not openly, on Desanti’s biography of Hanau (1968).

Le Sucre, a comedy, focuses on sugar speculation at the Commodity Exchange. Adrien, a zealous tax inspector from provincial France and in early retirement travels to Paris to seek advice on the investment possibilities for his wife's inheritance. By chance, at his wife's cousins' elegant flat, Adrien meets up with Renaud d'Homécourt de la Vibraye, who goes by the name Raoul and who happens to be a financial advisor and broker. Raoul works for an obscure brokerage company headed by the ambitious and rather unscrupulous Karbaoui (Roger Hanin), a native of Casablanca. Soon enough, the naive Adrien succumbs to Raoul and Karbaoui's attractive proposals, charmed at the prospect they present of easy money available at seemingly low risk on the Commodity Exchange.

Convinced, he decides in full trust to speculate all his wife's capital on sugar shares. Little by little, encouraged by his apparent success, he buys more and more of the same stock, trusting Raoul to the extent of signing over blank orders. Unbeknownst to him however, sugar prices have been artificially set to rise and inevitably at one point they begin to collapse. Adrien loses everything to this financial system whose functioning is to him totally opaque. Through investigation with Raoul's help, Adrien unveils the scheming underhanded processes of the Commodity Exchange and the collusion of banks, brokerage houses, influential speculators, and the political establishment.

The drama, *L'Argent des autres*, relates the struggle of one man, Henri Rainier, against his former employer, Miremant (Michel Serrault). Miremant is also the name of a Swiss family bank, Banque Miremant,

created by the director's ancestors generations before. During the course of his investigation, Rainier tries to understand the processes of an industry he previously thought was honest and transparent only to discover the reality is quite otherwise.

Finally, in the thriller *Mille milliards de dollars*, the journalist Kerjean looks at the world of high finance through the activities of the corporation GTI. The film, whose very title intimates the net worth of the twenty most important corporations, concerns the law of profit above anything else. As Kerjean digs into the hidden Nazi past of GTI, he finds that his and his son's lives are coming under threat. Despite this, he continues his investigation until he is able to disclose the criminal manipulations of one of the world's biggest companies.

These four films take place in banks (*La Banquière*, *L'Argent des autres*), at the Stock Market (*La Banquière*, *Le Sucre*), at the Commodity Exchange (*Le Sucre*), in stock-brokers' and asset-managers' offices (*La Banquière*, *Le Sucre*), as well as in the offices of newspapers and magazines (*La Défense du franc* in *La Banquière* and *La Tribune* in *Mille milliards de dollars*). Some films show board meetings (*L'Argent des autres*, *Mille milliards de dollars*, *Le Sucre*) as well as corporate events: the annual GTI convention, for example, in *Mille milliards de dollars*; the corporate New Year's Eve party on the train in *La Banquière*. They deal in some way with investment and risk, interest rates, brokerage, venture capital, savings and dividends, and show financial expertise in operation, as well as the management of money—*other* people's money.

La Banquière and *Le Sucre* both take place at moments in the history of the Stock Market when high profits seem just within reach. The films' stories are all about speculation and rely on the Stock Market, the epicentre of finance and financial activities, as their central locus. The Stock Market, the 'capitalization market', is (Goux 1997: 161):

... located above the two other markets since it is neither commercial exchange, governed by the principle of equivalence between money and commodities, nor the market where the relationship between capital and labour is played out (in the form of profit and wages), but is rather a market where "values", that are themselves shares of invested capital, are sold and purchased.

It is noteworthy that the Stock Market here is set against the market of commodities and the market of labour and, in this view, is situated 'above' all other commercial activities and, like a heartbeat, gives it its pulse. This is useful in explaining the way in which these films feature the Stock Market centrally.

In *La Banquière*, for example, Emma is clearly ahead of her time in that she sees the Stock Market as central to any financial activity. All of her business tactics centre on it as her prime means for amassing money in the face of a banking establishment still reserved to a small group of informed initiates, usually men. As banker she succeeds in raising the customary interest rates paid to her clients because of her Stock Market profits. In a radio interview she comments on this power as a new phenomenon: she

claims that the year before she offered a 9.32% interest rate while traditional banks were still only offering between 1% and 1.5%. She explains this new-found ability through a reference to the exceptional circumstances that obtained for the Stock Market in the 1920s: “we are entering upon a period in which Stock Market profits are going to exceed all expectation”¹⁰.

Scenes that actually take place at the Stock Market emphasise its centrality as well as the euphoria born of high market performance, whether it is the frenzy of Moïse (Jacques Fabri) with his team of employees racing up the grand staircase of the Paris Bourse or ourselves ushered by the camera into the precincts of the trading room, where we witness the wild uncontrollable rise of the shares of an oil company, *Royale des pétroles*, at a time when, as mentioned in the chapter on gold, oil itself has become the “new gold”. As in *L'Argent* (1928), by inviting the spectator inside a space usually invisible, the films seem to give the viewer a direct experience of the Stock Market’s ongoing action.

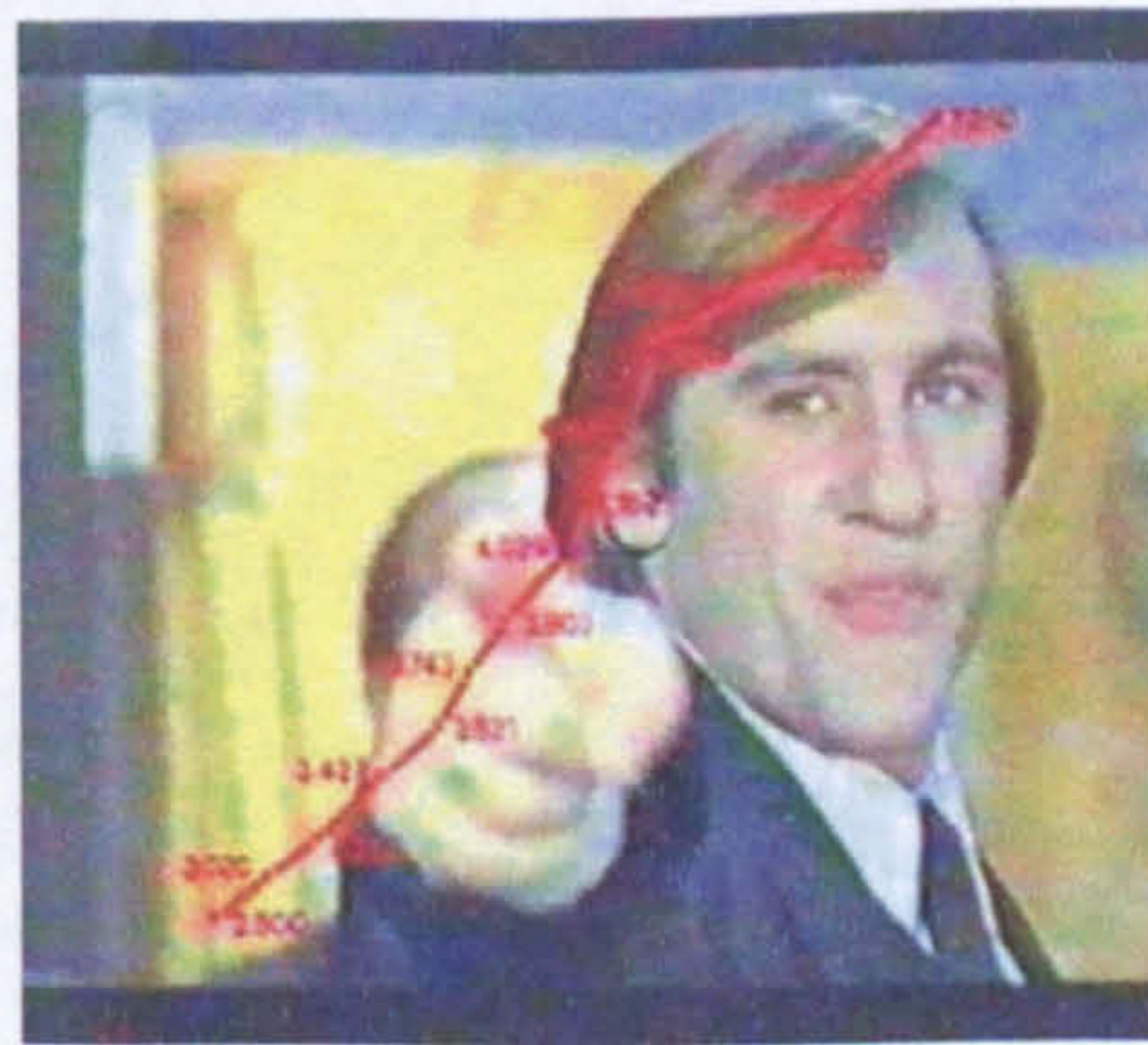


La Banquière: race up the stairs outside the Paris Bourse.

¹⁰ “Nous entrons dans une période où les profits en bourse vont dépasser toutes les prévisions.”

In *Le Sucre*, the first scene at the Stock Market also illustrates its position in the film. Here, the superimposition of the broker Raoul in buy-sell frenzy and of a see-through chart in red illustrating exploding sugar prices emphasise the dominance of Stock Market performance and its position as central locus in the film: sugar shares are fetching heretofore unheard-of selling prices and it is these high levels of trade that are the centre of the film's development.

In addition, each increase in sugar-share price is superimposed on filmed images of some kind of meter. The size of the numbers in red grows as the price per share grows.



Le Sucre: superimposition—Raoul and see-through chart with rise of sugar shares.



Le Sucre: superimposition—meter and expanding digits in sugar-share quotes.

Nevertheless, although money as banknotes, coins or even cheques and credit cards, is rarely shown as such, when it is shown it becomes very meaningful and could even be said to ground the film in money's all too palpable materiality. Before coming back to the materiality of money as establishing a contrast with the immateriality of finance, it is important to notice how money as finance sets the atmosphere of the films and filters through virtually every aspect of the stories. This atmosphere establishes the films, from their opening, as being about money's overwhelming significance as a medium of finance as capital rather than as simply a tool of exchange. Capital here, though, is also money constantly circulating, a kind of large scale and impalpable *moneta*.

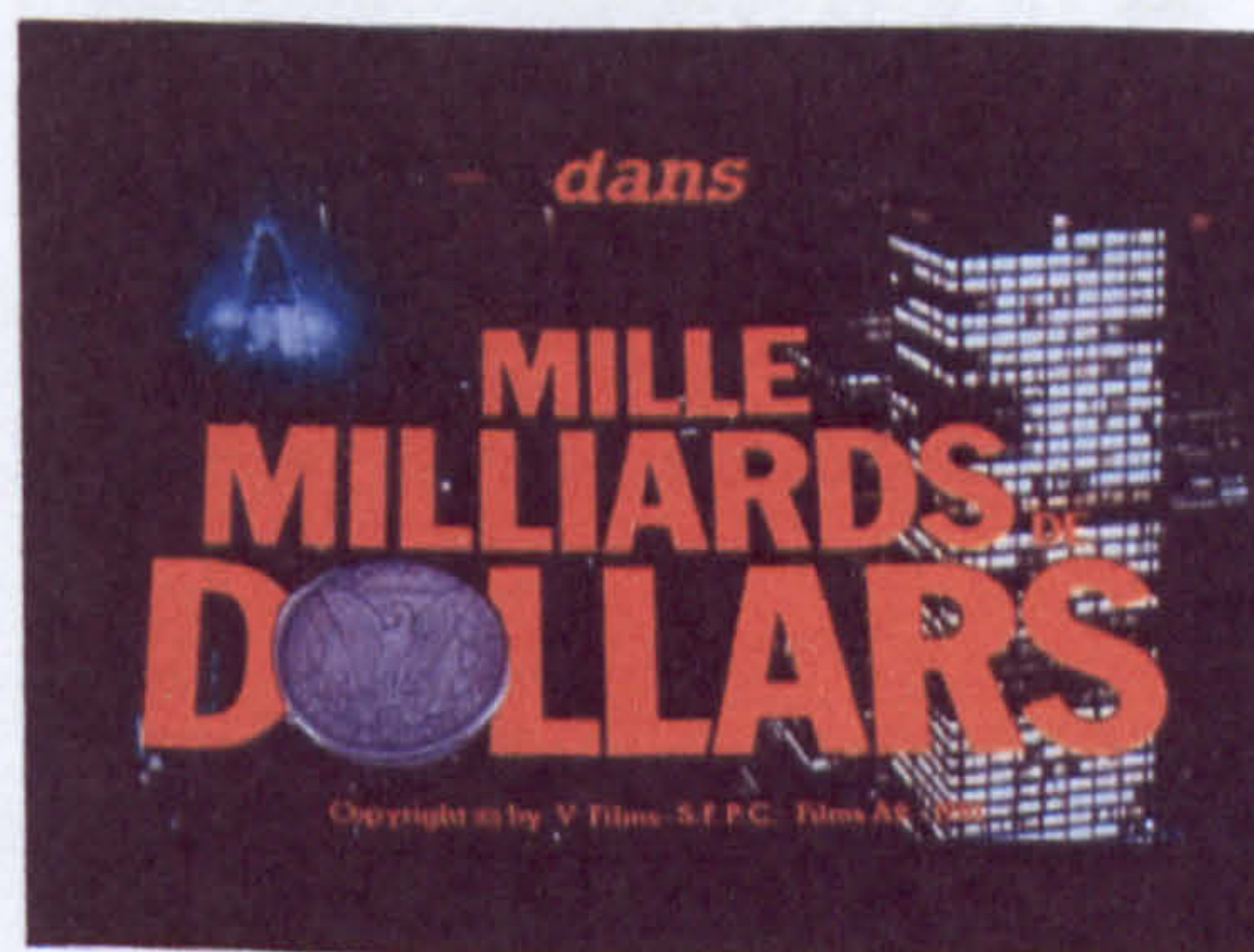
The film titles already indicate their concern with money and finance: banking in *La Banquière*, other people's money in *L'Argent des autres*, and a vast sum in *Mille milliards de dollars*. From their first shots, the films are *about* money and fill the stories with an ambiance of speculation and investment, financial operations whose scale requires capital. The word capital itself refers to accumulated wealth, and, because of its Latin root *capitalis*, of or pertaining to the head, indicates a principle or that from which things flow, and connotes the idea of something essential, fundamental and pre-eminent, and for this reason figures as something central to the whole notion of business.

In the opening credit section of *Mille milliards de dollars* the "o" in the word dollar has been replaced by a US silver dollar. The credits are also interspersed with nighttime long shots of stereotypical financial-district high-rises that accentuate both their isolation in space as well as their dark and shady quality, and suggest a link with the remote and dark character of the large-scale financial operations to unfold in the film.

L'Argent des autres opens with long shots of a dazzlingly white, brightly lit hospital-like space functioning as an executive recruitment centre. This scene is immediately contrasted by long shots of the silent, dark corridors of the Banque Miremant that show an oppressive and almost frightening obscurity occasioned by a sudden electrical outage. Once again the darkness of the bank's corridors suggests the darkness of the bank's own financial operations.

The opening sequence of *Le Sucre* as well, is both an illustration of the title and an indication of what the film is about. In large block capital letters, the title flashes between shots of beetroot, the raw material of white sugar production. In close-up, a crane seizes beetroot and heaps them on to a mountain of the vegetable, giving an impression of overwhelming abundance. From a low angle, beetroot seem to fall from the sky, and this is followed by an even more expansive panoramic shot of an enormous mass of beetroot, ready for on-site transformation, all set in a stark semi-industrial environment.

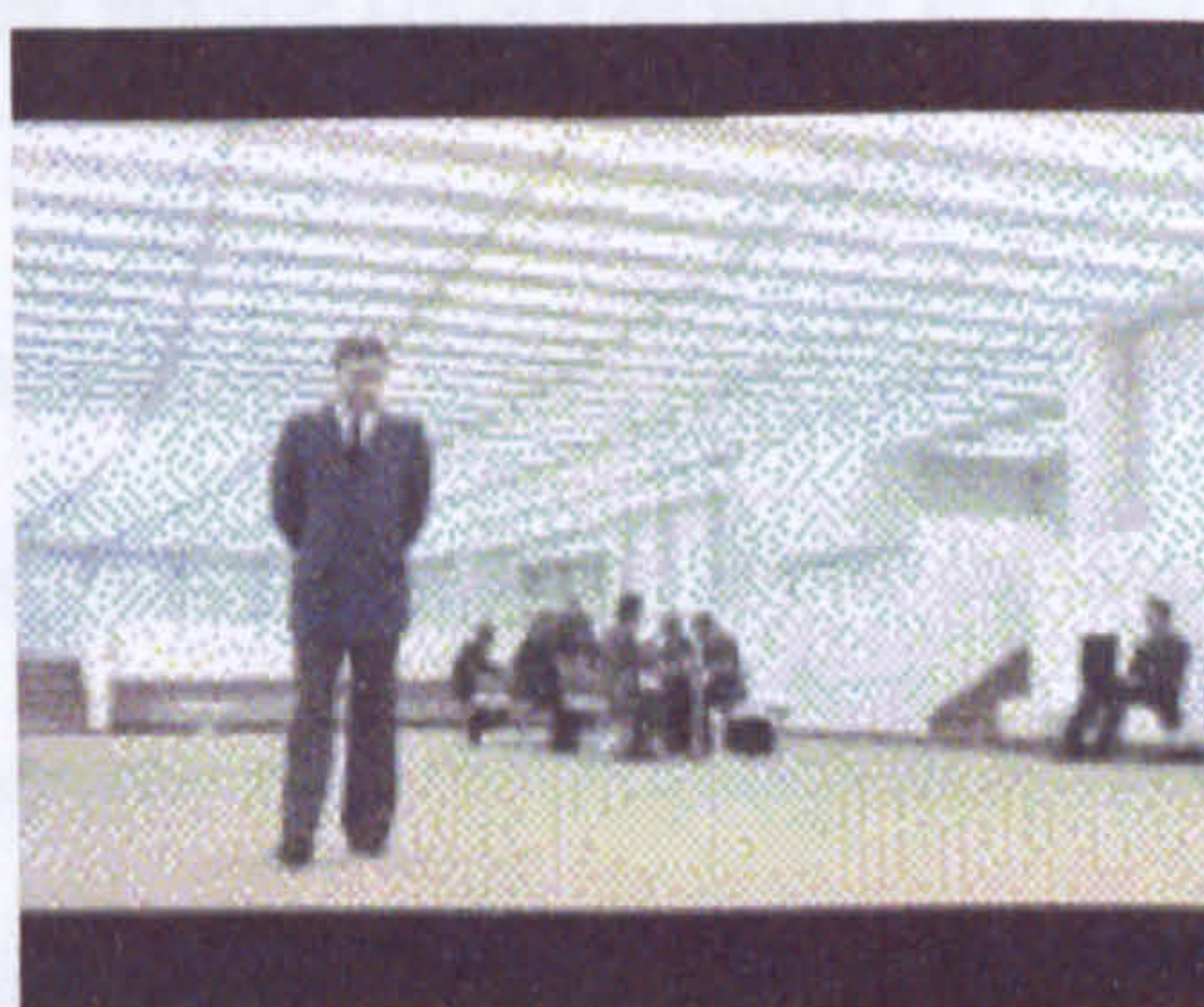
This scene of plenty is indeed what the film is about: sugar, here a concrete, palpable commodity with high use-value, is contrasted in the rest of the film with an immaterial paper commodity-share of little use-value to be bought and sold for money on the Commodity Exchange and referring only abstractly to sugar. The title itself suggests that ‘the sugar in the film is that commodity on paper that can spread fortunes or ruin on the Stock Market’ (Moskowitz 1978: 28).



Mille milliards de dollars: credits—
silver dollar replacing letter “o”.



Mille milliards de dollars: credits—
stereotypical financial district background.



L'Argent des autres: long shot—
Rainier in a brightly lit recruitment centre.



L'Argent des autres: long shot—
darkness of the Banque Miremant.

High finance, then, is central in setting up, often from the titles themselves, the atmosphere of these films, whether it is at the Stock Market, in banks, or in other high finance related scenes. High finance

works as an almost abstract representation of money. Money here consists of ever-circulating capital. These films constantly play on the contrast between the vast and immaterial sums of high finance and the all-too-palpable, smaller but still very real sums of money actually shown.

Materiality of Money versus Immateriality of Finance

These films pay great attention to creating a sense of materiality in a world of Stock Market speculation where share transactions are a 'sign of immateriality, difference, non-presence' (Goux 1997: 170). The stocks themselves, as 'empty signifiers' (170) are contrasted with actual representations of money. Banks and Stock Markets, large buildings and lavish offices are all there to re-present money, to refer to money indirectly rather than to show it concretely. Board meetings, Stock Market scenes, and other concrete images of money-making (lavish buildings, receptions, parties, dinners, luxurious clothes and cars), as well as cash money itself, are featured in order to counterbalance the complexity and immateriality, the virtual character, of financial operations. As Bell remarks about Zola's *L'Argent* (1988: 131):

In the Stock Market, the distance between the sphere of material reality and that of financial operations increases dramatically.

This tendency is further radicalized by the fact that buying and selling operations are possible in which the speculator never

actually takes delivery of the shares in question, never actually possesses them.'

Money in major business meetings is central even if not actually shown. There are several examples of this: the board meeting of Banque Miremant in *L'Argent des autres*; the annual directorial GTI convention in *Mille milliards de dollars*; the meeting between ministers and bankers in *Le Sucre*, as well as smaller business meetings throughout the film. The convention of GTI, for example, in *Mille milliards de dollars* features a larger-than-life meeting table in the shape of the planet dominated by a projection screen displaying profits and losses, all situated in an enormous conference room framed by masonry walls with the GTI acronym sculpted prominently over a monumental entrance way. All of this display clearly signals money.

This convention, moreover, as well as the board meeting in *L'Argent des autres*, is shown as flashbacks, the flashback technique itself serving to heighten money's silent "presence", for it not only provides critical expositional information, it also clothes that information in all the glory of the visual rather than the dry oral testimony, that would otherwise have been Kerjean's or Rainier's desiccated accounts of the events.

Likewise, shots of vast office buildings appear to emphasise money's invisible presence: filmed from below, the high-rise building of the offices of the magazine *La Tribune* in *Mille milliards de dollars*; the impressive entrance on Boulevard Haussman in Paris which Emma buys in

La Banquière to house all her business and newspaper activities; the imposing main hall of the traditional bank managed by Vanister (comparable, in dimensions, to Banque Miremant's entrance hall in *L'Argent des autres*), whose glass ceiling, shot from below, gives an idea of how big and important the bank is and, by extension, its director as the camera pans slowly down to frame Vanister himself.



Mille milliards de dollars: GTI annual convention.



Mille milliards de dollars: Cornelius A. Woeagen looking at the projection screen dominating the conference room.



L'Argent des autres: Rainier in obscurity and Banque Miremant grand entrance hall.



La Banquière: Emma's new building Boulevard Haussman.

In terms of the representation of money, there is no direct display of cash in the films that corresponds to the sums talked or written about. Despite persistent references to these sums, money is rarely actually shown as a tool of exchange or as savings, except to emphasise the difference in scale between cash money used in everyday ordinary life or money in a personal savings account and the large amounts being dealt with in finance. This contrast is particularly visible in a more recent film, *Demonlover*, where the close-ups of the cash withdrawal and of banknotes only serve to accentuate the gap between money as a tool in daily life and money at play in big business—impalpable perhaps, but also vast in scale as compared to the relatively petty two-hundred franc banknotes that Hervé Le Millinec

(Charles Berling) withdraws from the automated cash terminal with his “gold” credit card (the “gold” colour of the card being in itself a reference to “material” money).



Demonlover: close-up—Hervé taking out money with his “gold” credit card.



Demonlover: trading room.

When actual banknotes are shown, they appear as mere symbols of larger transactions and profits discussed or referred to on computer screens and filmed in medium or long shot: the scene just mentioned in *Demonlover* contrasts with the figures on computer screens and the sums uttered in the trading room of the financial company where Hervé works. The filming of Emma in *La Banquière*, bribing Sir Charles (Alan Adair)

with wads of banknotes in recompense for his insider information concerning new oil-findings in Aden also contrasts with the millions she makes speculating. Here, the large banknotes in two wads tossed inside his briefcase are a mere fraction of the profit Emma derives from his insider tip. In fact, most of her assets are not in “real” money but in shares, options, and buildings: a mixture, in other words, of material and virtual possessions. In cash she actually keeps “only” two million francs in her Boulogne country-house safe, just a small portion of her total assets.

The films do not show suitcases stuffed with hoardes of material money, banknotes or gold. In fact, there could be no suitcase big enough for the amounts alluded to and dealt with. The actual displays of cash money however are striking and often filmed in close-up: bundles of banknotes in *La Banquière* and in *Le Sucre* or the gold coins in the animation film-within-a-film in *L'Argent des autres*. The banknotes in *Le Sucre*, connected with the broker Karbaoui's undercover and undeclared Stock Market profits, are initially laid out on a large table, some destined for the vault and others stuffed into large black trash bags to be closeted for safe keeping. In *L'Argent des autres*, money appears in a short animation film presented by the businessman Chevalier d'Aven (Claude Brasseur) to his major backers and investors to celebrate the first billion raised by the Héritage Foncier, a mutual fund of his creation for small investors. Money here is portrayed as an object with no particular use in itself except as regards its own potential reproduction and multiplication.

Although couched in a period, the 1970s, after the end of the gold-exchange standard, the film, when it refers to profits, presents Louis d'Or, gold coins symbolic of another era (introduced in France in 1640) redolent of monetary security and stability. By this means the animation film-within-a-film emphasises savings as producing profits in the form of “real” money, that is, palpably heavy coins with an indisputable value deriving both from the past and the substance it is made of. As Goux remarks, ‘gold currency also has, traditionally, this feature of the material commodity, in that it carries the pledge of its value in itself, in its weight and substance’ (1997: 170). Incidentally, the soundtrack song, based on motifs typical of financial processes, echoes the images on the screen: “speculation, inflation, devaluation”.



La Banquière: close-up—wads of banknotes.



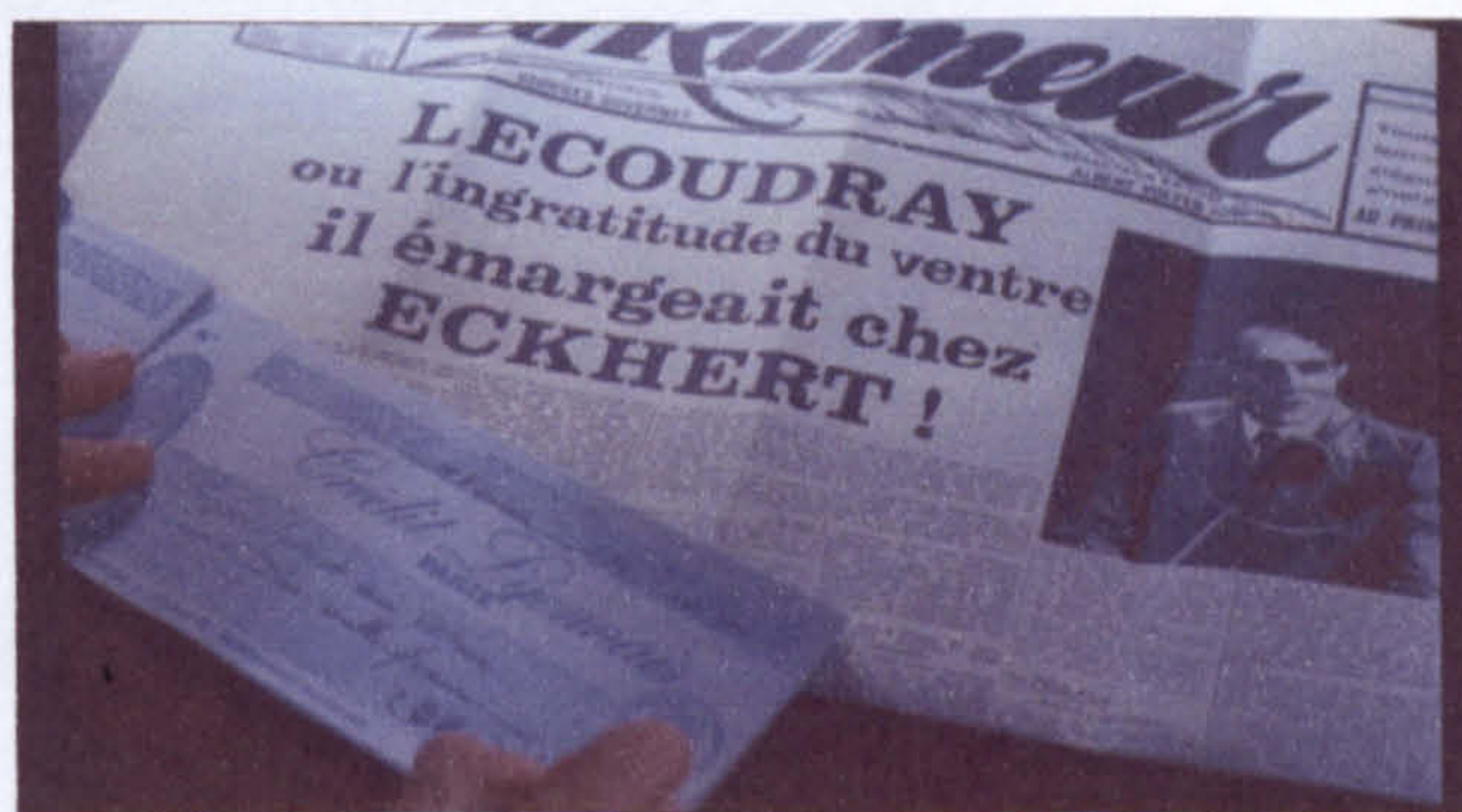
Le Sucre: close-up—bundles of fresh banknotes laid out on large table.

In these films on finance, although the physical representations are striking as seen, the actual sums, the capital involved in high finance operations, are not represented as such. The transactions involve enormous sums, impossible to carry around by hand and also impalpable, because they are the signs of a different, virtual economy. Money is not so much gold or cash to be held in some place as it is the capital of contemporary economy, an abstract representation forever circulating, never hoarded and always at “work”.

“Bad” and Dirty Money

Often money seen functions as a sign of illegal or doubtful transaction and also foreshadows dark developments. The larger the sum, the more evil are both the money and protagonists connected with it. Throughout *La Banquière*, money seen signals bribery, illegality and “bad” money. This is

apparent from the Louis d'Or at the beginning of the film when Emma, still a teenager, receives a generous tip from one of her parents' clients after she delivers a hat, from the banknote bribes, from the cheques paid to accommodating board members from the parliamentary world, from the cheques to the gutter-press, or from the stock-options certificates she offers to her political "friends".



La Banquière: close-up—Emma signs a 10,000 francs cheque to gutter press.



La Banquière: stock-option certificates on table.



La Banquière: chequebook ready for accommodating board members.

In *Le Sucre*, the piles of banknotes also call attention to the illegality and risky character of the transactions Karbaoui is carrying on. Already from the first time money is seen, it foreshadows sinister happenings. In a Paris restaurant, the broker Raoul gives an overstuffed envelope of five-hundred franc bills to one of his clients, a doctor. Before handing over the envelope, Raoul is sitting on it, as if the money is too “dirty” and disreputable to be anywhere else. It is also a way to protect money physically, as the large number of banknotes could easily be stolen. He can put it neither in his pocket (the envelope is too big), nor simply leave it sitting on the table—one does not leave so much money in plain view for everyone to see. Bewildered by the sheer amount of money (filmed in close-up) the happy speculator-doctor, through Raoul’s clever agency, decides to wager yet again all his profits on another potentially lucrative commodity: sugar. At this point in the action it is clear by implication the profits symbolised in the close-up of the envelope presage a comparable scale of financial loss.



Le Sucre: close-up—Raoul's client opens his envelope of Stock Market profits.

The films feature both material and immaterial money, with material money mostly seen as dirty and bad; while immaterial money, the money reserved for complex high finance operations, retains a certain mysterious but neutral character. It is subtly ironic and paradoxical that almost every use of material money carries negative connotations, in a cinema industry itself necessarily dependent on large amounts of it.

Films such as *La Banquière*, *Mille milliards de dollars*, *Le Sucre* and *L'Argent des autres* endlessly show money as a bad thing, while simultaneously the films are relatively large-budget productions. As Georges Conchon, the scriptwriter of both *Le Sucre* and *La Banquière* remarks, 'it is money, among us French, that is in bad odour' (1977: 20)¹¹.

This repetition of recurrent negative patterns in the representation of money marks the paradox between money shown in films and money used on the production of films. This apparent contradiction can be already explicitly present in the original conception of a film, as for example with

¹¹ 'C'est l'argent, chez nous, qui a la mauvaise odeur.'

L'Herbier's choice of subject matter in *L'Argent* (Beylie and Marie 1978:

36):

To cling to a film project, one needs a hero, whether you love or hate him, in the end it is the same thing: Gance had Napoléon, he worshiped Napoléon, he identified with him; I myself had to find something of the same sort, but I found nothing I worshiped, there was one thing, however, that I hated above everything else and that was money This was the character which stimulated me incredibly.¹²

Paradoxically, while the film *L'Argent* continuously shows money as evil, it stood out itself as a remarkably big-budget film costing between four and five million francs of the time (Beylie and Marie 1978: 36; Abel 1984: 513). In most of these films, then, the actual representation of money has negative connotations, whereas the unseen capital of finance retains a neutral significance.

¹² 'Pour s'accrocher à un film, il faut un héros, qu'on l'aime ou qu'on le déteste, c'est au fond la même chose : Gance a eu Napoléon, il adorait Napoléon, il s'identifiait à lui, moi je devais trouver quelque chose du même genre, or je ne trouvais rien à adorer, mais par contre il y avait une chose que je détestais entre toutes, c'était l'argent C'était ça le personnage qui me stimulait prodigieusement.'

Other Forms of Money

In films of high finance, characters, whether women or men, manifest signs of wealth through their outward appearance and general way of life. A common characteristic of high finance protagonists once they have money, is to spend it on items that lavishly and explicitly display their state of wealth—such things as attire, expensive cars, palatial dwellings, kingly offices and business surroundings, as well as patronising magnificent hotels and restaurants. In a context where mystery envelops the functioning of high finance and money, dress code, for example, is a particularly obvious way of showing off and spending money. In fact ‘expenditure on dress has its advantage over most other methods’ in ‘that our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at first glance’ (Veblen 1956: 167). In this way, the protagonists’ outfits signify money even if they do not actually “touch” visible sums of money that correspond to the scale of their financial transactions and personal wealth. They further demonstrate that ‘simple conspicuous waste of goods is effective and gratifying as far as it goes; it is good prima facie evidence of pecuniary success, and consequently prima facie evidence of social worth’ (169).

It is in this ‘conspicuous consumption’ (166) that money, even though not apparent, is most visible: Emma in *La Banquière* and Diane de Monx (Connie Nielsen) in *Demonlover* are both dressed in a variety of outfits and wear jewels that highlight their wealth and social status.

Likewise in the case of Adrien and Raoul in *Le Sucre* who buy the same expensive flamboyant blue suit in celebration of their highly successful collaboration and Stock Market profits, once again illustrating how fine dress signifies money, without actually showing money itself.

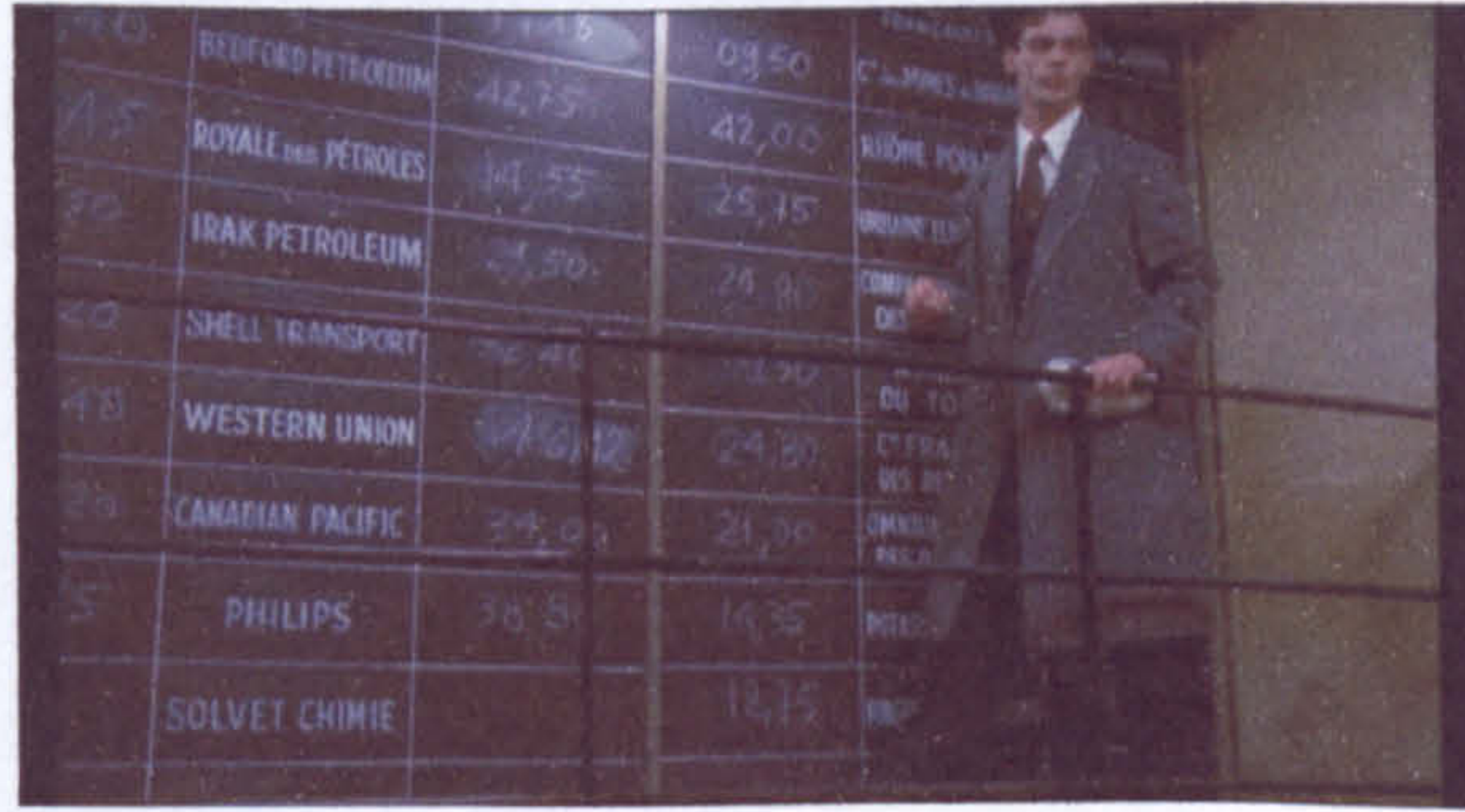
2. Concrete Money, Immaterial Finance, and References to History

Money, the Stock Market and the Financial World

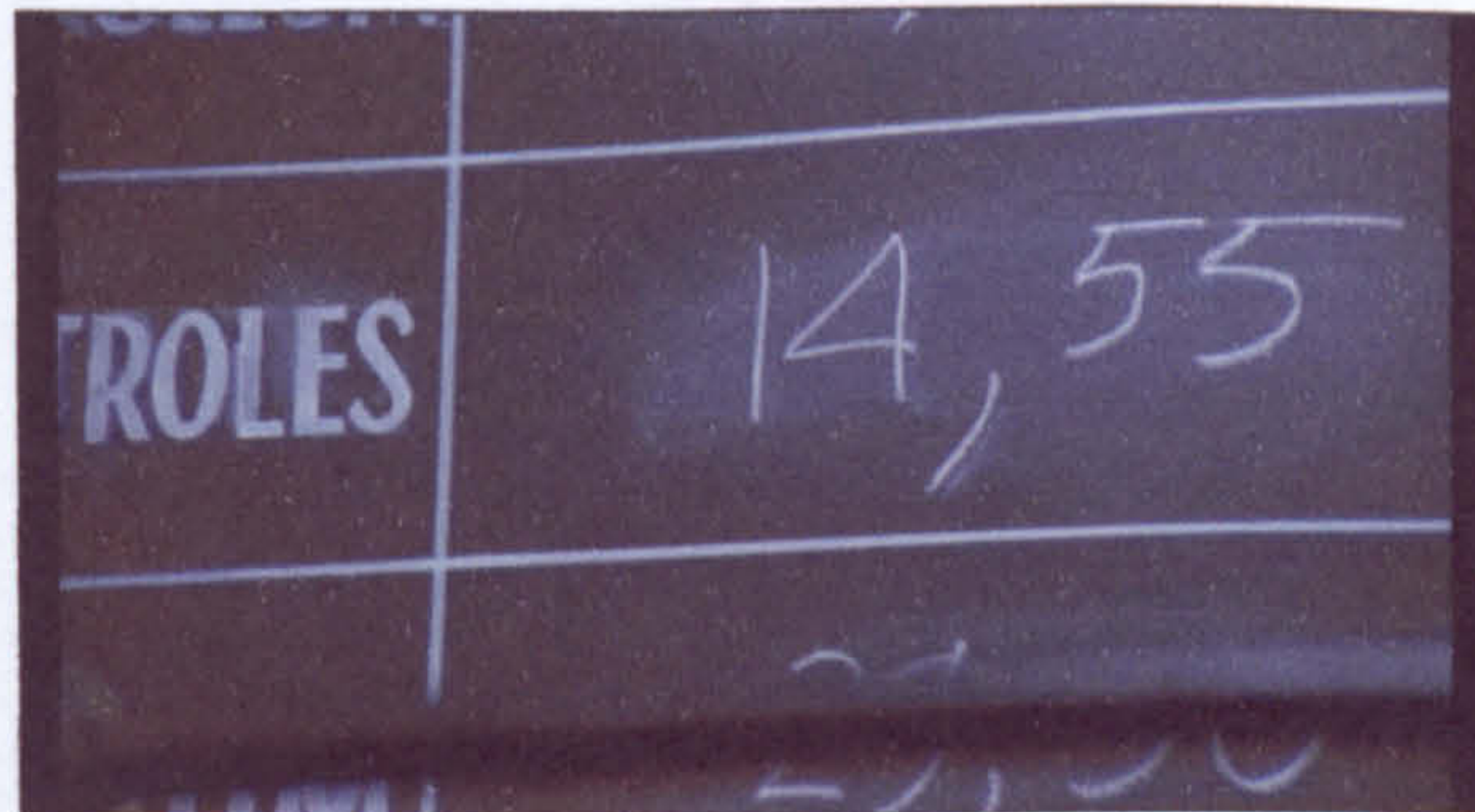
In *La Banquière*, *Le Sucre* and *Mille milliards de dollars*, actual shots of palpable money—cash and also cheques—convey a sense of materiality and concreteness that establishes a contrast with the more obscure and abstract operations of banking and high finance.

The presentation of money on-screen allows money to figure importantly in the narrative, while the film's inability to represent high finance operations in a concrete and clear way emphasizes it as abstract and here rather like a dynamic background setting. This aspect of the representation of high finance regularly leads on to events that are themselves abstract and even obscure. Sabatier's suicide (Philippe Collin) in *La Banquière*, for example, results apparently from one of Emma's Stock Market manipulations with respect to his company, Urbaine Électrique, and persists as inexplicable to the very end.

It is when *La Banquière* shows concrete money or financial moments in the concrete (particularly Stock Market scenes) that temporarily some events become clear and that money is set more obviously in the context of larger scale financial operations. The most concrete representations of high finance take place, as in other films, in scenes featuring the Stock Market floor during trading hours. In *La Banquière*, one scene takes place on the trading floor: the quotation board is filmed in long shot followed by a zoom-in and close-ups of the quotations themselves. A clerk writes in chalk the quotes next to their company names. These numbers are erased and re-written continuously as the market fluctuates. In this scene, the emphasis is on the rise of the Royale des Pétroles shares, a British company that specializes in finding and exploiting oil in the Middle East. The rise in the company's quotes is fully understandable since it results directly from the discovery of major oil sources in Aden. The profits (a sum never disclosed) that Emma makes by buying all the available shares of *Royale des pétroles* before the increase in price-per-share are central to the film's story. It is this operation that definitively pushes her business forward and that also triggers particularly harsh reactions from the traditional banking establishment.



La Banquière: long shot—Stock Market's quotation board.



La Banquière: close shot—company Royale des Pétroles' quotation.

In general, Stock Market scenes are relatively easy to understand with their simple buy-and-sell rules that accord with market demand as regards a given company or commodity. These scenes are also presented with a spectacular *mise-en-scène*. Already in *L'Argent* one thousand five hundred extras and eighteen cinematographers were hired to do the scenes at the Paris Bourse. This in itself would indicate that in *L'Argent*, but also in *La Banquière* and *Le Sucre*, they were meant to represent key moments both visually and narratively. The scenes in *La Banquière* and *Le Sucre* link the fluctuation of the market with concrete commodities: oil in *La Banquière*, sugar in *Le Sucre*.



Le Sucre: Commodity Market trading room.

More complex financial operations, however, which are in fact central to the film stories, are not represented by imagery and are actually hardly understandable despite the few lines of dialogue thrown in here and there, but this dialogue hardly clarifies the general opacity of the high finance subplot.

The irony here is that the main protagonists seemingly understand what is happening in the sphere of high finance, *they* get what is going on, or at least they do most of the time and so they know things of which *we* are ignorant. This gap in understanding is heightened by dialogue and explanation centring on financial operations that the protagonists in fact themselves make seem complex and in this way add to the enigmatic character of the world of high finance, a world, it seems, only an initiate can hope to access or understand, a world situated above or on the margin of ordinary life, a world of mystery and magic, of “good” versus “evil” that the films would perpetuate.

Because finance is obscure in these films, it is often through their connection to fact-based stories that the financial sub-plots seem to become less opaque and make more sense, at least to a French audience familiar at

the time with the stories. The connection is openly made in adaptations of fact-based books and the lives of real characters from the past. Emma in *La Banquière* and Alexandre in *Stavisky* are based on notorious real-life characters from the 1920s and 1930s. These stories, probably little known outside France, could be considered as almost part of the popular mythology of the time, not dissimilar in this to Nick Leeson's story in the UK.

1930s-1970s: a new wave of films on high finance?

The 1970s and 1980s French films on finance have been understood as a new 'wave' of films on this topic following that of the 1930s. Frodon argues that this new wave signified 'the triumph of money'¹³ (1995: 591), the end of the money taboo in politics and in society and that it opened the way to new representations of money in film. With *Stavisky*, *L'Argent des autres*, but also *L'Associé* (1979), *L'Imprécateur* (1977) and *Une Étrange affaire* (1981), films on the world of business and finance and more particularly films based on financial scandals, especially those of the Third Republic, would then reflect themes and aspects of films on similar topics made in the 1920s and 1930s. Frodon holds that 'modern money' that is the

¹³ 'le triomphe de l'argent'

money of 'finance and speculation, from banks to the Stock Market ... has hardly been an explicit topic'¹⁴ (591) of French cinema since *L'Argent*.

L'Argent, with its big budget and focus on money previously alluded to, tells of the adventures of Nicolas Saccard, a Jewish financier whose interest in making money knows few, if any, moral boundaries. The film centres on money as capital and on high finance. Money as such is not represented, but Stock Market scenes are pivotal visually and for the story. Share transactions at the Paris Bourse and intertitles refer to money. Although *L'Argent* is adapted from Zola's novel, the choice of contemporary setting allows the film to strengthen its denunciation of finance and speculation as necessarily connected to wrongdoing. Made in 1928, *L'Argent* appears at the beginning of a period of great instability for the French economy and politics and is the first in a series of films with high finance at the centre.

Both the 1930s and the 1970s represent periods of economic global crisis as well as major and ongoing economic shifts: the crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, the oil crisis of the 1970s, the inconvertibility of the US dollar, and the acceleration of globalization. Both periods and both film waves share to a certain, but differing extent, the insecurity—and particularly the financial insecurity—of the times from which they emerged.

As for money itself in the 1970s, after the US government decided in 1971 to put an end to the gold-exchange standard, money-signs, losing

¹⁴ '[L'argent] de la finance et de la spéculation, de la banque et de la Bourse ... n'a guère été un sujet explicite au cinéma.'

their solid equivalence with gold, suddenly became even less material than they had ever been before. The US dollar bill, in a world where the dollar was *de facto* the world currency, 'as a promissory note became a tautological void' (Rotman 1993: 88-89). Money had then been officially turned into signs no longer convertible into gold. All money signs worldwide began to float one against the other without the support of the dollar and its gold-exchange standard. A bank reserve in dollars meant little more than the quotation of the dollar at a given moment in time: the dollar became, in other words, 'an inconvertible currency with no intrinsic internal value whose extrinsic value with respect to other currencies was allowed to float in accordance with market forces' (89).

A parallel can be traced here between the end of the gold-exchange standard and the depression of the 1930s and its exploding inflation: in both cases money really became only pieces of paper or metal that did not carry any value in themselves. *Le Sucre*, for example, plays metaphorically on this new insecurity of the floating value of money not backed by a solid substance. In the opening sequence the film shows beetroot as the solid commodity sugar, and then Stock Market sugar figures in fluctuation that hardly bear any connection to sugar itself, especially since the sugar shares bounce between quotes as high as 8,700 francs to as low as 1,000 francs—hardly a show of stability in value.

In general, the films of the 1930s and 1970s, in these two periods of increased economic, financial, and therefore monetary insecurity, play on the gap between the interests of big and small investors and between

bankers and the rest of the population. One of the main differences, however, between the two film waves is that directors and scriptwriters of the 1970s openly based their work on fact-based events, conceiving it as reflections on real events.

La Banquière, *L'Argent des autres* as well as *Mille milliards de dollars* have all taken stories from "real-life" sources. As mentioned before, *La Banquière* is based on the story of Marthe Hanau, a forgotten banking pioneer who lived between the two wars and was persecuted both for being a woman and for being a banker who had made her own way up through the ranks without help from the old establishment. This connection is emphasized in the book that came out with the film (Chanel, Conchon and Noli 1980).

L'Argent des autres, another reflection on a familiar event, is a film adaptation of the eponymous novelised account by Nancy Markham (1977), wife of an executive employee of the French investment company Le Patrimoine Foncier, who was sacked, like Rainier in the film, under a false charge of mismanagement. Together with his wife, he fought against 'the injustice and omnipotence of one of these citadels of the modern world—the large investment banks'¹⁵ (de Baroncelli 1978). The whole affair became a *cause célèbre*, and according to de Baroncelli in *Le Monde*, 'nothing is invented in *L'Argent des autres*'¹⁶ (1978).

¹⁵ 'l'injustice et la toute puissance d'une de ces citadelles du monde moderne que sont les grandes banques d'affaires.'

¹⁶ 'Rien n'est inventé dans l'argent des autres.'

Mille milliards de dollars, was inspired by Max Dordives and economist Robert Lattès' non-fiction book of the same title (1969). Their book describes the immense wealth of thirty of the world's largest corporations, mostly American, which monopolise a major portion of the world's riches through their branches and subsidiary companies. The sheer immensity of the wealth of these multinationals suggests the title of both book and film. Although the film's plot is fictional, it is the non-fictional book that gives it substance and legitimacy.¹⁷ The book was actually published again in 1982, probably in concert with the film's release.

Le Sucre by contrast is only loosely based on a relatively minor scandal that occurred on the Commodity Exchange a few years earlier and that led to the financial ruin of a number of small speculators. The release of the film came together with a novelized version of the script by Conchon (1977). The film plays, by way of comedy, on most speculators' stereotypical fear that the "big" financial players necessarily take advantage of small investors, sometimes even ruining them, for their own advantage. *Le Sucre* appears at the same time as other popular comedies that feature banks, bank robberies and finance: *Faites sauter la banque* (Blow the Bank 1963), *Moi y'en a vouloir des sous* (*Me, I Want to Have Dough* 1973), *Hold-up* (1985), and *Association de malfaiteurs* (*Gangsters' Partnership* 1986).

¹⁷ There are not many examples of fiction films adapted from non-fiction books on economic matters, another example, more recent and from the US is Richard Linklater's adaptation (2006) of Eric Schlosser's book *Fast Food Nation* (2001).

Most of the films of this period appear to employ “real” events to denounce, however gently, the use and abuse of high finance by professionals. At the same time, in taking for their base real stories, these films ground their financial plots in a more accessible public knowledge that perhaps facilitates understanding of the obscure financial dimensions of the stories.

By contrast, the plots of 1930s films were directly inspired by contemporary events, but this inspiration was not openly avowed. The directors and scriptwriters claimed that the stories were figments of their imagination, while clearly denouncing the corruption seemingly inherent in the world of high finance. Nevertheless, films of the 1930s were a direct take on the current French financial and political scene, hence ‘these films wilfully take on the appearance of direct witnesses of their times’ (Baldizzone 1974: 73)¹⁸. This appearance explains much of the censorship that *La Banque Némó* had to undergo prior to release.

Between 1928 and 1934, France was politically destabilised by several financial scandals involving important figures of the government. Accused of fraud, bribery or corruption, businessmen and bankers (and later politicians) were subject to investigation and prosecution: from Louis-Lucien Klotz in 1928 for bookmaking fraud, speculation and bad cheques; to Marthe Hanau who was first arrested in 1928 but continually appeared in court on different fraud charges until 1934; to Albert Oustric in November

¹⁸ ‘Ces films se donnaient volontiers l’allure de témoignages directs sur leur temps.’

1930 for bank fraud; and, most famously, to Alexandre Stavisky for multiple fraud.

First arrested in 1926, Stavisky later triggered the collapse of three governments in one month and ultimately that of the Third Republic itself, on 6 February 1934 less than a month after his strange and unexplained “suicide” on 9 January. The Stavisky scandal was one too many in a long series of scandals. It exasperated the public and led to strong critical reaction against politicians (Miquel 1989: 668). The nature and scale of these scandals was perceived as new at the time, and the existing law was inadequate for crimes such as the ‘breach of trust and fraud using national public savings’¹⁹ (Gauteur 1985: 76). It was only in 1935 that a new law came into being that provided for the possibility of imprisonment of up to ten years for this type of offence against the public trust.

In the meantime, through the late 1920s and 1930s, several plays and films, whose stories were set in the world of high finance, were inspired by the scandals and by the lack of legislation concerning financial criminality. The films reflect, in a period of great political instability and economic insecurity, both the new possibilities offered by the Stock Market and the absence of a proper legal accountability. They also play on the current public distrust of politics and high finance. In 1930s French cinema (Jeancolas 1983: 134):

Wheeling and dealing is the agenda. One ambiguity: André Citroën is admired when he places his name from top to bottom

¹⁹ ‘l’abus de confiance et l’escroquerie avec appel à l’épargne publique’

on the Eiffel tower, then he is execrated when he falls apart and his wild nights at the gambling table become known...The engineer who succeeds is congratulated, the financier despised. "Poor but honest, ruined by the financiers...": this formula flourishes under the pen of scriptwriters who draw their inspiration from the chronicles of the Oustric, Hanau and Stavisky scandals.²⁰

Playwrights and scriptwriters adapted or invented stories for the stage that in some cases made their way to the screen (Gauteur 1985: 76). Three plays (*spectacles*) from 1931 were inspired by the Oustric and Hanau stories: Rip's *La Viscosa (revue)* opened on 8 April, Paul Armont's *Ces Messieurs de la Santé* on the eleventh of the same month and Louis Verneuil's *La Banque Nemo* on 21 November. *La Viscosa* was a public failure, but both *Ces Messieurs de la Santé* and *La Banque Nemo* enjoyed huge success and were made into films. The stage versions already had impressive casts, with Arletty, for instance, in *La Viscosa* and Raimu in *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. Raimu also played in the film version.

²⁰ 'L'affairisme est à l'ordre du jour. Ambigu : on admire André Citroën quand il inscrit son nom du haut en bas de la tour Eiffel, puis on l'injurie quand il s'effondre et qu'on découvre ses folles soirées aux tables de jeu... On salue l'ingénieur qui réussit, on méprise le financier. "Pauvre mais honnête, ruiné par les financiers...", la formule prospère sous la plume des scénaristes qui puisent leur inspiration dans la chronique des affaires Oustric, Hanau ou Stavisky'. Other films on "les affaires" were made in France (Gauteur 1985: 80), particularly in the late 1940s with *Manon* (1949) and *Les Nouveaux maîtres (The New Masters 1949)*, as well as plays such as *La Tête des autres* (Marcel Aymé, 1952). According to Bessy and Chirat (1995), *Baccara* (1935) was also inspired by the Stavisky scandal.

Ces Messieurs de la Santé tells of the irresistible rise of Tafard (Raimu) who, after escaping from jail for corruption, starts doing business again by engaging in illegal arms trafficking and falsifying mineral assays. The wellbeing of the Stock Market comes to depend on his high-flying deals and at the end of the film the court, judging his wrongdoing, is forced to exonerate him, a result that makes everyone happier and richer, especially Tafard himself.

Like *La Banquière* and *Le Sucre*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*, *La Banque Némó* and also *Le Tunnel* (*The Tunnel* 1933) insist on the corruption of politicians. *Le Tunnel* focuses on a greedy financier ‘flooding the market with his shares to create panic, intending in the resultant crash to buy up all the remaining shares’ (Crisp 2002: 76). As Siclier wrote in *Le Monde* when *Ces Messieurs de la Santé* was aired on television in 1980: ‘one senses in this example of Saturday night cinema a society tormented by strong undercurrents, unhappy with the regime and the rottenness which is taking it over’ (Jeancolas 1983: 134)²¹. *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*, like most other films on the same topic made in the late 1920s and 1930s, sets itself against what these directors considered to be the decline of a certain type of society, its ‘rottenness’, in a world of corrupt financiers, mostly Jewish, and politicians who sink into total corruption out of purely personal self-interest with little legal accountability.

If for politicians to accept “presents” or any kind of gratuity was viewed as scandalous and called for big publicity, the films depict a world

²¹ ‘On sent vivre dans ce produit du cinéma du samedi soir une société travaillée par des remous profonds, mécontente du régime et de la pourriture en train de l’atteindre.’

where scandals are silenced before full exposure. Tafard, for example, in *Ces Messieurs de la Santé* remarks after his arrest (Gauteur, 1985: 79):

There are too many people who are bothered by my trial...That's why it drags on for so long. Only last week, just to scare them, I asked to be heard by the commission of inquiry... It seems that it caused quite an uproar at the Palais-Bourbeux (muddy palace).²²

Like *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*, *La Banque Némó*, as well as *Les Nouveaux riches* (*The New Rich* 1938) and *Avec le sourire* (*With a Smile* 1936), tell of protagonists' rise from abjectly debased social positions to positions of great wealth and power, in a world in which the end always justifies the means regardless of how harmful these means might be to the rest of society.

La Banque Némó, a film centring closely on the topic of high finance, recounts the social climb of Gustave Lebrèche (Victor Boucher) from a nobody to the most powerful banker in town through his ingenuity and shady practices. Once Lebrèche is involved in dubious financial affairs, a former army acquaintance and bank colleague denounces him, but Lebrèche's wheeling and dealing involve virtually the entire government, so the whole affair is covered up and Lebrèche remains in place. Although

²² 'Il y a trop de gens que mon procès embête... voilà pourquoi il traîne depuis si longtemps. Tiens, la semaine dernière, rien que pour leur faire peur, j'ai demandé à être entendu par la commission d'enquête... Il paraît que ça a fait un de ces raffuts, au Palais-Bourbeux.' 'Palais-Bourbeux' is a word-play on Palais Bourbon, the building housing the French National Assembly.

based on Verneuil's 1931 play (that is, three years prior to the Stavisky scandal) *La Banque Nemo*, shot in 1934, bore too close a resemblance to the actual scandal to escape censorship: one crucial twenty-minute scene featuring a cabinet meeting most explicitly emphasised their collusion with Lebrèche and his business interests, and was censored.

The time sequence here between the Stavisky scandal and the making and release of *La Banque Nemo* explains the problems encountered with the censors: the huge parliamentary crisis, resulting partly from a series of financial scandals and from the Stavisky affair in particular, occurred on 6 February while the film was being shot. The film was edited and the sound added the following month, before its review by the censors in April. *La Banque Nemo* was eventually released at the end of July 1934, during vacation time, 'in the general indifference of the holiday' (Jeancolas, 1983: 136), and it failed at the box-office despite extensive advertising.²³

All these 1930s films centre on money and finance in a corrupt world in which the characters are motivated solely by their personal drive to engage in speculation and money making. In *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*, Tafard explains that (Gauteur 1985: 79):

For me, to make the best of life means to be the strongest, to juggle with risk, to sit at a gambling table where the most exhilarating game in the world is being played. It is to vie with

²³ *La Banque Nemo* was released uncut in Switzerland and Belgium. For many years though, no print was available until the Swiss Film Archive found one in 1975 and donated it to the Cinemathèque Royale de Belgique which is the only institution to date that holds the uncut version of the film.

others for their most precious possession, money, and to wrest it from them by gambling precisely on their avarice and selfishness... And when I have finally succeeded in bringing those large banknotes they hold so dear into my vaults, it is also my greatest pleasure to return that money at will to its original use, once it has changed hands, because I wanted it that way.²⁴

Ces Messieurs de la Santé, *La Banque Nemo* or *Le Tunnel*, among others, are considered part of a trend of 'right-wing' films (Jeancolas, 1983: 136)²⁵ and they are emblematic of the anti-parliamentarianism typical of the 1930s. The Third Republic, a parliamentary democracy introduced in 1870 and in place until 1940, was especially shaken with the onslaught of the Depression in 1930. The political system was already unstable because of its parliamentary nature and governments would fall very easily under the pressure of the parliament—thirty different governments between 1920 and 1934 (Milza 1979: 166).

In addition to the instability of the political system, the agricultural, economic and financial crises led to further political and moral turmoil. Political institutions were criticized for the way they functioned, and the parliamentary world's reputation was tarnished by its connection to the

²⁴ 'Pour moi, jouir de la vie ... c'est être le plus fort, c'est jongler avec le risque, c'est s'asseoir à une table de jeu où se joue la partie la plus passionnante du monde. C'est disputer aux autres leur bien le plus précieux, l'argent, et le leur arracher en spéculant justement sur leur avarice et leur égoïsme... Et lorsque, enfin, j'ai réussi à faire venir là, dans mes coffres, ces grands billets qui leur sont si chers, c'est aussi mon meilleur plaisir que de rendre cet argent, comme il me plaît, à sa destination première, après qu'il a changé de mains, parce que je l'ai voulu.'

²⁵ 'film de droite'

world of business. The conjunction of all these elements gave rise to a growing anti-parliamentarianism, especially on the part of the nationalist and reactionary right. Different popular tendencies advocated for a change in the political system altogether (Milza 1979: 168). Anti-parliamentarianism intensified with the ongoing financial scandals and reached a level of paroxysm with Stavisky's suicide. Almost all of the 1930s films about high finance appear to denounce both the current political regime for its inefficiency and corruption, as well as the rise to power and wealth of characters heretofore not of the old banking establishment.

Films made in the 1970s and early 1980s on the other hand, also present characters who are often new to the financial world but who are supposedly aiming at more transparency and honesty although they find themselves victimised by big corporations and banks supported by the political and legal establishment. In this sense, what comes to the fore is once more the struggle of "good" money against "bad" money. Here the main characters along with small speculators and bank employees tend to embody "good" money, while the financial and political establishment tend to embody "bad" money.

Rainier, for example, the naive executive in *L'Argent des autres*, is portrayed as the innocent victim of a bank whose opacity and strangeness are quite stereotypical of the depiction of high finance in films. The bank is not seen as a transparent enterprise with clear and understandable rules. This aspect is accentuated by long shots of large, obscure labyrinthine

interiors inside the Banque Miremant, and shadowy unlit faces, all giving rise to a sense that the darkness, the silence, the opacity, as well as the locked doors and people's weird, hypocritical behaviour are only paralleling in some way the very functioning of the bank. And the functioning of the bank here finds support in the established legal and political system. This is seen clearly at the end of the film with the outcome of the trial against the bank in which it emerges unscathed and Rainier's reputation is not cleared.

Emma in *La Banquière* provides a second example, for despite her being part of the system, she also falls victim to higher interests and while all along she is depicted as the only existing banker defending small investors against established banks desperate to secure their positions as leaders, her honesty and motivations are not questioned. Emma wants to change the system, but the system is too established and too strong and it finally destroys her. In this guise, especially as a woman, she is seen as the new comer who uses money as a tool to change what she considers to be an unfair order. She is not depicted as malicious, nor is Rainier: it is the people opposing her who appear malicious, and the film's point of view is indeed hers. She is "good" while everybody outside her sphere is simply "bad". The simplicity of the "good"-versus-"bad" dichotomy has actually figured as one of the main criticisms against these films. Oudart, for example, commenting on *La Banquière* in *Les Cahiers du cinéma* writes (1980: 54):

The crisis of the 1930s, as seen through the story of Marthe Hanau, could have resulted in an interesting film if the subject had been dealt with. Instead of that we witness a pitiable cabaret act where bankers, politicians and judges wallow in the waters of the most cold-blooded cynicism and bleakest corruption, unite against Emma Eckhert who, one surmises, embodies "good" capital. This good capital is basically patriotic capital, that of a kind of Joan of Arc of finance.²⁶

In the 1970s and early 1980s films, the main characters suffer from an absence of loyalty on the part of the financial establishment and in this sense they are victims; while in the films of the late 1920s and 1930s there is a focus on the rise to power of greedy and morally questionable individuals who take advantage of the system itself. The main characters of the 1970s and early 1980s films are not unlike characters from 1980s Hollywood films on big business. As Williamson remarks for Hollywood films (1991: 155):

There is ... a sense that what the characters do (business) becomes endowed with what they are (good). All of them "show up" the unfairness and dishonesty of capitalism.

²⁶ 'La crise des années 30, à travers l'histoire de Marthe Hanau, aurait pu mener à un film intéressant si le sujet avait été traité. Au lieu de quoi nous assistons ici à une piteuse revue de chansonniers, où banquiers, politiciens et juges, barbotant dans les eaux du cynisme le plus glacé et de la corruption la plus glauque, se liguent contre Emma Eckert, qui incarne, on s'en doute, le "bon" capital. Ce bon capital, c'est au fond le capital patriotique, celui d'une sorte de Jeanne d'Arc de la finance.'

The existential bond between personal moral values and work-ethical values in the characters of *Wall Street*, *Trading Places* or *The Secret of My Success* (1987) could help understand the “good” and “bad” dichotomy at work in French films. The newcomers of the world of finance, the entrepreneurs, are fighting a ‘snobbish and unjust’ system, that of ‘heritage’ (157), in a world where the notion and value of money undergo profound changes.

On the one hand, then, the characters’ moral positions are oversimplified and on the other it is almost impossible to understand what is happening, financially, in the films. If the plots outside high finance are rather simple and straightforward, there is a kind of knowledge at play when it comes to high finance that is never made available to the viewer, a knowledge and intelligence that often only the protagonists are privy to. These films insist on money’s ‘magical side, simultaneously mysterious and spectacular, and a source of power henceforth free from taboo’ (Frodon 1995: 592)²⁷. Moreover, by keeping the audience at a distance like this, by failing to lead the viewer into a deeper awareness of the sense and meaning of the financial phenomena being portrayed, the films tend to emphasise only some of the inner workings of the Stock Market, isolated elements of finance, rather than to integrate speculation, for example, or inflation and devaluation, into a coherent and fully intelligible context.

What comes to the fore, beyond the good-bad dichotomy, is the characters’ response to these isolated aspects of high finance in the films:

²⁷ ‘côté magique, à la fois mystérieux, spectaculaire et source d’une puissance désormais sans tabou’

the excitement and euphoria of speculation in *Le Sucre* and *La Banquière*; Emma's courage in *La Banquière*; Rainier's despair in *L'Argent des autres* or the determination to uncover the conspiracy in *Mille milliards de dollars* and *L'Argent des autres*. In this context, "Good" and "bad" confront one another in a world of mystery and shadow that escapes understanding.

3. Money Manipulators

Money and Power: A Man's World

In this group of films in which the good-bad dichotomy emerges as one of the main features, it is instructive to observe how gender characterisation emerges and informs the characters' distinctive attributes and aspects. In these, but also in the 1920s and 1930s wave of films, most characters with power in the high-finance world are men. This is true on both ends of high finance, the customer side as well as the transactor side: bankers, brokers, middlemen, experts as well as speculators—Adrien Courtois, Henri Karbaoui, Grezillo (Michel Piccoli) and Raoul de la Vibraye (*Le Sucre*), Henri Rainier and Miremant (*L'Argent des autres*), Cornelius A. Woeagen (*Mille milliards de dollars*) or Gustave Lebrèche (*La Banque Nemo*) and Jean and Paul (André Luguet and Jean-Louis Barrault) in *À Nous deux, madame la vie* 1936). As for more contemporary films, finance professionals in high positions and their clients are still mostly men (Henri-

Pierre Volf and Hervé Le Millinec in *Demonlover*, Nicolas Lanson in *Banqueroute*, Philippe Seigner [Jérémie Renier] in *Violence des échanges en milieu tempéré* [*Work Hard, Play Hard*] 2003).

More generally women are presented as wives who assist their husbands in their professional lives (Cécile Rainier [Catherine Deneuve] in *L'Argent des autres*, Madame Karbaoui [Marthe Villalonga] in *Le Sucre*) and as secretaries (Elise Lipsky [Chloë Sevigny] in *Demonlover*). There are only a few exceptions in which women figure as bankers or in positions of power in financial companies, as for instance Diane de Monx in *Demonlover*²⁸. Emma seems to be the only woman in the French cinema of that period (the 1970s-1980s) who enjoys the lead role as banker, and she is probably the first woman to do so in French cinema in general. *La Banquière* in this sense is quite exceptional in its portrayal of a character who is both the creator of a bank and two financial newspapers, *La Gazette du franc* and *La Gazette des nations*. A quick survey of women in professions of power in French cinema of the last thirty years allows for a better understanding of *La Banquière*.

Women, in the 1980s, despite their increased involvement in professional life, still seldom appear on the screen in positions of political or economic power. In France in 1982, for example, 63.5% of women between the ages of 25 and 54 worked outside the home, although women

²⁸ In 1970s-1980s US cinema, there are more women in power in the world of high finance with for example Tess Mc Gill (Melanie Griffiths) and Katherine Parker (Sigourney Weaver) in *Working Girl* and Lee Winter (Jane Fonda) in *Rollover*, with attempts, in feminist films from Europe and in the US, to question the domination, on the screen and elsewhere, of the gender division of power roles in relation to the manipulation of money (*The Gold Diggers*, *She Must Be Seeing Things* 1987, *De Stille Rond Christine M.*).

as a whole still represented less than half of the total French work force (Dehée 2000: 239). In French cinema, a feminisation of jobs traditionally reserved to men actually began slowly at the end of the 1960s. This shift started with women employed in the police force: Jeanne Dumas (Marlène Jobert) in *Dernier domicile connu* (*Last Known Address* 1969) or Marie Garçin in *La Guerre des polices* (*The Police War* 1979), and Lise Tanquerelle (Annie Girardot) in *Tendre poulet* (*Dear Detective* 1977) as well as in *On a volé la cuisse de Jupiter* (*Someone stole Jupiter's Thigh* 1980). Annie Girardot plays the first female inspector in French cinema, but a few other women (although in fewer films than in the police sub-genre) are also promoted to jobs of more power in areas such as journalism, company management, politics, and even in prostitution as a business enterprise.

Madame Claude, for example, born Fernande Gruget in 1923, was a living myth in France as a central figure in high-class prostitution. After her fall from power her story was brought to the screen in the film bearing her name, *Madame Claude* (1977). Her clients included highly influential people: heads of states, diplomats and important businessmen. *Madame Claude* portrays a tough but fair woman who develops and runs her own highly successful enterprise. The film, grounded in her perspective, insists on the almost institutional relations that she ingeniously forged between herself and the political establishment that protected her for so many years, like Emma in *La Banquière*, before it became “convenient” to stage her downfall.

In the field of communications, Catherine Carré (Nicole Garcia) is an important journalist in the film *Le Quatrième pouvoir* (*The Fourth Power* 1985). Incidentally Françoise Giroud wrote the script. She herself was a journalist and the first woman in France to head a magazine as chief editor of *Elle* (1945-1953) and then co-founder and director of the weekly *L'Express* (1974) before assuming political responsibilities.

Occasionally women are featured as company directors. In *L'État de grâce* (*State of Grace* 1986), Florence Vannier-Bucher (Nicole Garcia) is the vice-president of the Conseil National du Patronnat Français (CNPF). She falls in love with Antoine Lombard (Sami Frey), a Secretary of State from the Socialist party, for whom she will eventually abandon her career. Florence's character as an important company director is the first of few roles of this sort given to women.

Like other businessmen and women in cinema, she bears all the clichés stereotypical of her position. She is politically conservative, reads *Le Figaro*, a right-wing newspaper, and is against any form of State intervention in business. The latter explains her executive role at the CNPF. She has a driver, her schedule is over-booked, and she demonstrates dictatorial tendencies especially at board meetings. Like Emma in *La Banquière*, she is ambitious and very much the social climber. Unlike Emma, however, she shows indifference to the working conditions of her employees. In addition to this, as mother, she pays little real attention to her

children. As Dehée remarks, 'Florence is neither a model boss nor a model woman'²⁹ (2000: 245) until she decides to leave her job for her lover.

Two films present businesswomen in secondary roles, Claire (Claire Nebout) in *Association de Malfaiteurs* and Catherine (Charlotte de Turkheim) and Sacha (Nathalie Baye) in *Rive droite, rive gauche* (*Right Bank, Left Bank* 1984). In both films Claire, head of a small company, and Catherine, director of a public-relations agency, as women, have had to or still have to use extra-professional seductive qualities in order to get where they are.

In cinema from this period, women invested with political responsibilities are even more unusual than businesswomen. Pauline Valens (Isabelle Adjani) in *Tout feu, tout flamme* (*All Fired Up* 1982) is a notable exception. She achieves the highest education possible at the prestigious École Polytechnique and subsequently becomes advisor to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Although the mother of several children, Pauline becomes essential to the French minister himself in the European Council, especially during the negotiations on monetary parity in Europe.

Pauline's brilliance is darkened by her hardness and tough-hearted coldness. The film brings this out through the difficulties she has with her father, difficulties that parallel her relations with power itself. And so 'the absence or irresponsibility of the father turns into the explanation for an

²⁹ 'Florence n'est ni un patron modèle ni un modèle de femme.'

irrational thirst for power'³⁰ (Dehée 2000: 247). Reunited with her father, Pauline ironically comes into a fuller possession of herself through a wiser use of power.

Women, like Pauline, must be exceptionally intelligent and beautiful in order to exercise power in the economic and political world, since they must often employ not just their brains but also their bodies in the struggle to achieve a high position; and when they do exercise power in films, they exercise it viciously and unscrupulously. Two further examples from this period confirm this: Marie-Ange de la Baume (Clémentine Célerié) in *La Vengeance d'une blonde* (*Revenge of a Blonde* 1994) and Laurence Ballard (Marie-France Pisier) in *Le Prix du danger* (*The Prize of Peril* 1982), as television producers, use ruthless and tyrannical authority in the work place.

Men on the other hand, in the films under discussion, need not be exceptional or outstanding either in their physical or mental make-up in order to wield executive functions and influence in the world of high finance. Male characters, in their attire, make up and hairstyle, often appear either drab, non-descript or even grotesque. In this they stand in sharp contrast with the elegant appearance of female characters in similar roles who regularly shift and change their outfits.

Raoul and Adrien in *Le Sucre*, having purchased matching vivid blue suits to celebrate their market profits, look more ridiculous than elegant; Rainier and Miremant in *L'Argent des autres* are pale and rather

³⁰ 'L'absence ou l'irresponsabilité du père devient l'explication d'une soif irraisonnée de pouvoir.'

constrained but certainly not radiant in their dark and rather tight-fitting business suits. Businessmen, as in *Demonlover* or *Mille milliards de dollars*, tend generally to be fitted out with a corporate-style wardrobe, almost as a kind of uniform. In *Mille milliard de dollars*, the drab uniform-like style of the male executives is accentuated in the GTI annual corporate dinner, showing businessmen from around the world, all dressed and looking the same like so many mannequins.

Men have 'ridiculous bodies'³¹ (Dehée 2000: 227) in the sense that their bodies and faces often show salient features that are grossly accentuated and therefore made in some way laughable. They are often asked to behave in ways bordering on sheer madness, like Grezillo in *Le Sucre*: his loud and uncontrollable laugh, his face shot in close-up as he delights in the results of his artificial manipulation of sugar shares at the commodities market. Dispensing with the impeccable and the unique, male financiers can act persuasively without the help of specially individualised appearance. When they do attempt to appear singular and unique, as in *Le Sucre*, they often incur strong ridicule.

On balance the representation of powerful women in a cinema context is 'better than is usually asserted'. Businesswomen, however, and women executives are still 'the least well off in this landscape' (Dehée 2000: 248-249).

³¹ 'le corps ridicule'

La Banquière: Emma and Money

Marthe Hanau's story was transferred to the screen almost fifty years after her death in 1935. Her aura and the scandal she provoked provided inspiration for *La Banquière* as well as for several films made in the 1930s. None of these earlier films, however, offer a woman banker as leading protagonist. In *La Banquière*, Emma, like the real Marthe Hanau, is the victim of a banking and political establishment which cannot tolerate her and which through its own interior dynamics must halt her activities and in the end eliminate her physically³². In the context of 1970s and 1980s films where the main characters struggle against a system much bigger than themselves of which they are the victims, a woman banker shown as the establishment's prey serves to emphasize her character as victim and in this way exploits the stereotype of women's fragility and vulnerability. The film thereby accentuates the dichotomy between "good" and "bad" in the guise of the "good" Emma who figures as the victim of "bad" people (police, bankers, politicians, judges, journalists) who in their fear are valiantly trying to keep the old system together.

A pioneer in finance, according to the director Girod (Béhar 1980: 17-18):

[Marthe Hanau] really invented, modern economy.... She invented mutual funds, she invented the syndicate of small

³² Marthe Hanau's enterprises were not well regarded by the more established and traditional banks of the time. Horace Finaly, then president of the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, famously orchestrated a press campaign against her, with the approval of the then prime Minister Raymond Poincaré (Desanti 1968: 127-149).

investors. She was branded as a “swindler” at the time, and fifty years later everyone is doing the same thing! One forgets that people cried in sorrow when she died, that there was a real relationship of sympathy between her and her public. And even more: an identification between small investors and the daughter of a hat-maker turned banker, in other words in the ranks of the mighty. ... She invented risk spreading via a portfolio of shares. It is the cavalry principle, practiced throughout modern capitalist economy.³³

Marthe Hanau, like Emma in the film, pretended that money was not her goal, that she was only using it to take ‘her revenge by using the power of the money she so mistrusts, just as she mistrusts the society she frequents’ (Siclier 1993: 105). Money is, however, central both to the life of Marthe Hanau and to Emma’s character in *La Banquière*. Before committing suicide, a few days previous to her scheduled release from prison, Marthe Hanau wrote a letter to her lawyer and long-time friend Maître Dominique commenting on her attitude to money (Desanti 1968: 245):

³³ ‘...complètement invente l’économie moderne.... C’est elle qui a inventé les SICAV, elle qui a inventé le syndicat des petits porteurs. Elle a été traitée d’”escroque” à l’époque, et cinquante ans après, tout le monde fait la même chose ! On oublie que les gens pleuraient de chagrin quand elle est morte, qu’il y a eu un véritable rapport de sympathie entre elle et son public. Et même plus : une identification entre ces petits porteurs et cette fille de chapelier devenue banquière, c’est-à-dire l’égale des grands.... Elle avait inventé le risque reparté sur un ensemble d’actions. C’est le principe de la cavalerie, qui est pratiqué par toute l’économie capitaliste moderne.’

The only efficient modern force is money; the only way to conquer in a corrupt, half-collapsed but still surviving world is by money. My weakness was and remains my 'disarmament' because I could not keep this only efficient modern force: money, money, money. And I am sick of money, this money that crushed me. I am disgusted with earning it, or at least its impotence. I do not regret having thrown away in 1928 all those millions that I could have kept "in their" manner, and I do not regret having distributed so much of it to criminals or renegades.³⁴

In *La Banquière* money generally figures on screen in some way related to Emma. Emma herself or her name appear virtually every time some form of money comes into view. This is true from the first scene of money in the film with Emma and a Louis d'Or in her hands to the scene of her throwing two bundles of banknotes into Sir Charles' briefcase; of the cheques written to fictional members of her board of directors, the stock options offered to corrupt politicians, and the scene of a slot machine in which a combination of three portraits of Emma corresponds to the jackpot in coins. No money and no financial operations exist without her in the film.

³⁴ "Le seul engin moderne efficace, c'est l'argent ; le seul moyen de vaincre dans un monde corrompu, c'est cet argent cependant déjà mi-écroulé, mais vivant encore. Ma faiblesse fut et reste mon "désarmement", parce que je n'ai pas su conserver ce seul engin moderne efficace : l'argent, l'argent, l'argent. Et j'ai la nausée de l'argent, de cet argent qui m'écrasa. J'ai le dégoût d'en gagner, sinon l'impuissance. Je ne regrette pas, en 1928, de leur avoir jetté tous ces millions que je pouvais, "à leur" manière, garder, et je ne regrette pas d'en avoir tant distribué à des félons ou à des renégats..."

Even if money pre-exists Emma, in the film it centres on her. Similarly, when Vanister and the head of government, Préfaille (Yves Brainville), decide to destroy her, they set up a strategy to shake the investors' confidence in her, and therefore in the money she represents, by mounting a gutter press campaign. Money and references to Emma play a key role in the setting up of this strategy with several image superimpositions of banknote wads as relating to gutter press editors and subsequent nasty headlines. Even here money appears on screen in direct connection with Emma, but as a tool to destroy her.

That money is so repeatedly and directly associated with Emma reveals important dimensions of her character as a banker and as a woman: an acute vision in finance, a strong sense of responsibility towards her clients and an unusual adaptability to the changing financial world of the 1920s. Her acute vision is expressed in what she defends in her newspapers and in her ability to foresee huge potential Stock Market profits and therefore new possibilities for small shareholders to benefit from these profits. Her sense of responsibility is brought out by the loyalty she actively feels towards her clients to the end, with her obsession to reimburse them, despite her being in jail and the forced closure of her financial enterprise. Her unusual adaptability is manifest in her keen awareness of the old order and its need for change. This awareness leads her to undertake the very real risks involved in engineering changes in the way money is invested and circulates by creating more connectivity between the Stock Market profits and the small investors' savings—risky business calling for daring and

courage leading Emma to jail and death. In *La Banquière* then, Emma is not only beautiful and intelligent, she is exceptional in all ways pertinent to the film. Her qualities as a banker, as a journalist and as person are outstanding, and all of this is put forward and accentuated by the palpable image of money continually connected with her in the film.

La Banquière: Emma and Money



Emma and wads of banknotes.



Slot machine and three portraits of Emma.



Superimposition—front page gutter press with editor and wad of banknotes.

Like other female power figures in this period of French cinema, Emma lives in a man's world: all her business associates, the politicians, stock brokers, journalists as well as the other bankers she deals with, are men. In this respect her choice of profession is in itself a statement of her will to professional equality and her refusal to let gender stand in the way. In fact Emma is the only woman of power in the film. The other working women here are her mother, the cleaning women and Colette. Her mother runs a hat-making shop with her father, but she appears briefly at the beginning of the film and hardly provides inspiration for Emma who abides her mother's authority with difficulty. The cleaning women in her bank building, with whom Emma maintains good terms, address her as "Madame la Présidente" which clearly reveals the relationship of power and hierarchy. Finally the wife of Emma's former lover Rémy Lecoudray (Daniel Mesguich), Colette (Marie-France Pisier) becomes Emma's assistant and confidante in the second half of the film. Among all these women Emma is the sole executive woman.

If the director, however, sees in Marthe Hanau, a woman who had to behave and sometimes look like a man in order to build a financial empire in the 1920s, Emma's character is not so evidently made to do so (Béhar 1980: 14):

Marthe Hanau was the first woman to live as a man: like a man, she forced her way into the jungle of power and money, she invented modern economy, foreshadowed modern-day moral liberty, and wound up as the box-office star of a huge scandal, before dying a prophet in her own land.³⁵

Whereas Marthe Hanau was carrying out executive functions until then largely reserved to men and had to dress and act as a man to enter the Stock Market building which at the time was prohibited to women (Desanti 1968: 7-12), Emma's character, on the other hand, beyond her outstanding professional achievements, is based not so much on her mannish qualities as on her femininity, her clothes and make-up as well as her accustomed manner in dealing with employees and clients—more “gentle”, amiable and kind than would normally be expected of male characters in the same position.

It is because she is both a newcomer to the world of high finance and a woman, that she is portrayed as developing close and rather “maternal” relationships with her clients in the way she protects their

³⁵ ‘Marthe Hanau fut la première femme à vivre comme un homme : elle s’est lancée, comme un homme, dans la jungle du pouvoir et de l’argent, a inventé l’économie moderne, préfiguré la liberté des mœurs d’aujourd’hui, s’est retrouvée en tête du box-office du scandale, est morte d’avoir eu raison avant tout le monde.’

financial interests, clients who themselves are newcomers to the world of savings and high finance. Marthe Hanau was often sarcastically referred to as “la mère Hanau” (Desanti 1968: 194) just as Emma in the film whom the banker Vanister calls “la mère Eckhert” with obvious disdain. But Emma’s personal concern for her clients is a very real thing when spelled out in financial terms. She in fact offers an 8% guaranteed interest rate on her clients’ deposits while traditional banks are only offering about 1%, a fact that is insisted upon in the 8% motif running through the film on posters, on glass doors, on train seats and diamond brooch, in ball rooms, and with 8% shaped biscuits.

La Banquière: 8% motif



8% motif on biscuits.



8% motif on antimacassar and diamond brooch.



8% motif and decorative light fixtures.

Emma's "maternal" side as a banker finds further emphasis in her Martinis and boardrooms, and the characters involve in that same activity as a journalist, the creator and proprietor of *La Défense du franc* and *La Défense de l'Europe*, newspapers she aimed at the small investor and a generally larger reading public than the traditional financial press. In her promotion of a strong national currency in *La Défense du franc* and of peace in Europe in *La Défense de l'Europe*, a promotion she sees as key to a healthy economy that entails high interest rates, her detractors and especially the banker Vanister view her as excessively maternal, misleading and even deceptive in her economic conceptions and operations.

La Banquière, like *L'État de grâce* and the other films here under discussion, signals a change not only in the very fact that business women exist and are shown, but that they sometimes even succeed as central protagonists in mainstream films. Likewise, although the films' topics do not differ radically from films driven by male protagonists, they do differ slightly in the treatment of the characters in business roles. This becomes clear especially in the case of female executives who are made to play on

their feminine wiles, charm and even seduction, often with an attendant exaggeration of their professional, moral and psychological qualities.

Conclusion

High finance figures centrally in this group of films from the 1970s and early 1980s. The settings and stories take place in the world of banks, Stock Markets and boardrooms, and the characters evolve in that same environment. It is a world in which what counts is the fluctuation of shares, the ups and down of the economy, the strength of currencies and company performance. High finance, however, with its vast and immaterial sums is far from the all-too material representation of actual money. Money seen is the sign most of the time of illegal or corrupt transactions and presages dark developments.

More generally, these films reproduce patterns common to the representation of money in most of the other films under discussion in this thesis. Here the films confront “good” and “bad” through the representation of material money with its negative connotation; while the world of high finance, because its rules and operations remain in the shadow and are made difficult to understand, retains an aura of mystery and gives rise to a feeling of almost magic. Money seen must be “bad”, while the capital of high finance appears relatively neutral. High finance here, in films where the general plot is relatively straightforward and easy to follow, is

nevertheless a world that only the protagonists can understand. Based largely on actual financial scandals, these films, like those of the 1930s, suggest a world of morally questionable practices but without however giving clear explanations about the financial operations in question, as if it were better in this way to keep the mystery intact. At the same time, the 1970s and 1980s films specifically establish their main characters as morally “good” in the face of an overwhelming and unjust capitalism.

These films, in their representation of money as capital, also question the value of money, a value that is always subject to variation and is fixed at a given moment and only for the duration of that moment. This is especially so in the European and US context of the 1970s where currencies no longer refer to gold but only to themselves in relation one to another. The fluctuations of the Stock Market continuously modify what a given sum can buy by readjusting its worth. They play in an extreme way on the paradox of money itself: worth nothing because here it is only numbers and worth everything simply because of the immense value inevitably placed upon it.

Finally, despite what has been seen as a new ‘wave’ of films focusing on high finance and renewing some of the themes of the 1920s and 1930s films, other similar patterns emerge, especially in terms of the gender characterization of business people in general and bankers in particular. It is a man’s world where women have to be exceptionally intelligent as well as beautiful even to aspire to a career.

La Banquière, in this context, appears as the sole example of a film which presents a woman banker in a position of power. Still, *La Banquière* and the more recent *Demonlover* or *L'Ivresse du pouvoir* (*A Comedy of Power* 2006) bring about a condemnation of their powerful chief protagonists to an ignominious downfall from power and position: *La Banquière* in the case of Emma, the banker and business woman; *Demonlover* in the case of Diane, the business lawyer; and *L'Ivresse du pouvoir* in the case of Jeanne Charmant-Killman (Isabelle Huppert), a judge specialised in financial matters. It is as if women in power, whatever their wishes, cannot persist in their position for the duration of the film.

CHAPTER FIVE: MONEY AND HORROR

Introduction

Psycho (1960), together with *The Birds* (1963), largely defines the basis of modern horror film (Wells 2001: 76; Waller 2000: 257). *Psycho* marks a turning point in that (Wells 2001: 75):

It is the moment when the monster, as a metaphor or myth, is conflated with the reality of a modern world in which humankind is increasingly self-conscious and alienated from its pre-determined social structures.

The world of horror films hereafter becomes less defined by right and wrong and creates an ambivalence that constantly 'underpins modern existence and ... threatens to ensure its collapse' (75).

In *Psycho*, the story unfolds from Marion Crane's (Janet Leigh) theft of forty thousand dollars in cash. Instead of depositing the money in the bank as her employer has instructed her, she keeps it for herself and soon after, anxiously drives out of Phoenix. The money, in the form of one-hundred dollar bills, is represented in all its materiality on screen in the everyday context of her work and of her later escape.



Psycho: \$40,000 cash.



Psycho: Marion hides dollar bills in newspaper at Bates Motel.

Since *Psycho*, several films have emerged in which the horror derives from money or in which money is at stake in the horror process. Money and its concerns, however, do not account generally for the horror of horror films. While money and money matters may be central to society and the order of things, money as a horror factor is not central to the genre as such. Money, however, as a foundational object central to our social and economic system figures more or less openly as a focal point in some horror films. Monetary fears, which were already present in the previous chapter, are here drawn out to climactic proportions. The notion of money leading to death and destruction is taken to an extreme, and the very

existence of private property, of money as a tool of exchange and as a symbol of value are brought into question in a genre where the use of terror is central.

This chapter focuses on the representation of money on screen in its materiality and in its various uses in two groups of films from the 1970s and 1980s: real-estate horror films, particularly *The Amityville Horror* (1979) and *Pacific Heights* (1990), and George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Day of the Dead* (1985) and *Land of the Dead* (2005). Real-estate horror films address money matters self-consciously while Romero's zombie films are not so evidently about money. The aim here is to understand how the very depiction of money generates or deepens a sense of horror.

For the sake of chronological and thematic unity, the corpus comprises films made after *Psycho*. After *Psycho* films become increasingly 'unstable, unfixed and ungrounded in any reality, truth or identity other than those the narrative provides, and there emerges a threat of sublime excess, of a new darkness of multiple and labyrinthine narratives, in which human myths again dissolve, confronted by an uncanny force' beyond control (Botting 1996: 171). Another influence deriving from *Psycho* 'may be viewed as *ambivalent realism*, and is predicated on locating horror in a realist context but playing out an essentially amoral agenda or determining a scenario where moral or ethical certainty is unattainable' (Wells 2001: 76). These dynamics that characterise contemporary horror films ultimately 'promote excess in the

genre, and refuse the consensus and constraint of much in the pre-*Psycho* years' (76-77). This is coupled in terms of aesthetics with an extreme use of violence and gore (Waller 2000: 260) especially after *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). All of these factors are verified in the present selection of films which promote excess in the genre and often do it tangentially through representations of money. Horror films, however, are primarily about horror, about terror.

The choice of films here is the result of a broader viewing, particularly of US films from the 1970s and 1980s, and Italian films, especially those of Dario Argento and Mario Bava. Among these, only the two groupings mentioned above appeared to have shown money in a direct way and in connection with horror, in a genre otherwise not focused on money.

Real-estate horror films use money and financial fears to project a dark threat to society and the family, question moral values and situate the story in the US in an everyday context. In Romero's zombie films, human myths and the foundations of society dissolve in the face of the uncanny force of the uncontrollable hunger of the living dead, in an endless spectacle of violence and excess where money is key in determining the collapse of all values and of society. Beyond their differences, what these films have in common is the horror which partly results from money fears characteristic of that period of time, the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to the direct examination of the films mentioned, this chapter draws upon occasional references to other films viewed. In tracing the representation of

money in horror films, this study continues to work through the divide between the notions of *moneta* and *pecunia*, and the concepts of use-value and exchange-value.

Money itself as a dynamic element portrayed in horror films has not generally been the subject of systematic study. *The Amityville Horror* was singled out as ‘the horror movie as economic nightmare’ (King 1981: 137-138). Additionally, a small group of 1980s US films, of which *Pacific Heights* is part, was inspired by the yuppie generation as well as a real-estate boom, and was examined in its use of economic and financial factors for creating and signifying horror (Powers 1987; Grant 1998 and 1999; Ward 1990). While seldom a central theme in horror movies, when it is shown, money is of interest because the horror genre deals ‘with a grand scale chaos that threatens “the order of things”’ (Sobchack 1987: 176-177). The threat to the order of things is one of ‘moral chaos, the disruption of natural order (assumed to be God’s order), and the threat to the harmony of hearth and home’ (177). This threat, when considered more specifically in relation to money as a means of exchange and as property, calls the meaning and value of money itself directly into question.

This questioning is actually a kind of annihilation dynamic. To call the notion of money into question, money which is minted and approved by a sovereign authority, represents in horror films an all encompassing threat of destruction for a much larger system of value within which the protagonists (and the spectators) live, move and have their being. This applies to the occurrence of money as well. Money in other genres is

otherwise hardly called into question in such an extreme way. Once money is present, it becomes important to the larger calling-into-question of values and social structure, even when money as such, here mostly banknotes, only appears singularly or tangentially.

Whether presented on a large or small scale, money touches on many issues within society, because of the threat of chaos, the threat of total social and moral collapse that they entail. This is visible in the various uses to which money is put or in films where money creates horror; the money used for example to pay for a wedding party (*The Amityville Horror*); the money of consumerism (*Dawn of the Dead*, *Land of the Dead*); money as banked (*Dawn of the Dead*, *Day of the Dead*); money as linked with power (*Land of the Dead*) and with real estate (*The Amityville Horror*, *Pacific Heights*). The harmony of specific environments or situations is also disrupted by money matters in, for example, shots of banknotes (*The Amityville Horror*, *Pacific Heights*) sometimes followed by their disappearance (*The Amityville Horror*, *After Hours* 1985), and images conveying the greed of selfish individuals (Cholo [John Leguizamo] or Kaufman [Dennis Hopper] in *Land of the Dead*).

Greed here, as in other genres, merits its just consequences: Carter Hayes (Michael Keaton) in *Pacific Heights*, already deprived of his inheritance, is jailed and eventually dies a terrible death; the dance school's "vice-directress" (Joan Bennett) and the other witches of *Suspiria* (1977) all perish together as the house literally collapses on them, and Helen Chester (Jacqueline Pierreux) in the segment 'La goccia d'acqua' of *I tre*

tre volti della paura (1963) mysteriously falls into the hands of the spirits of the dead who have returned to exact vengeance for her theft of a ring on a dead woman's hand, just as in *The Fog* (1980) where the dead attack the community and kill to avenge the centuries-old theft of their golden cross.

A "bad" or mysterious death for greedy characters transcends, though, the boundaries of the horror genre since it occurs in other films besides: by dehydration, for example, in the middle of the desert for McTeague and Marcus (Jean Hersholt) in *Greed* and for Dobbs in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* who is brutally murdered. In all these films the protagonists, living only for their desire for more money, cross the threshold between having a "just" amount and desiring too much of it. This all-too moral sense of an excessive desire for money is usually represented visually by the hypnotising effect of glittering gold dust (*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*), of gold painted coins in an otherwise black and white film (*Greed*), of excessively lavish interiors (*Suspiria*), or of a shiny ring (*I tre volti della paura*). Greed, although important as an emotional reaction to money, is not central to the present study of horror films since it is only a "side-effect" of money. Greed is discussed tangentially when it is included in a larger framework as regards the representation of money.

This chapter first focuses on films that centre on real-estate nightmares and 'yuppie horror films' (Grant 1996 and 1998). These films play on the idea of economic and pecuniary horror in the context of the US in the 1970s and 1980s, and concern private financial problems and the money of individual persons. They also represent a continuation of the

“haunted-house” theme recurrent throughout the history of horror film. Here horror derives, at least partly, from the very act of acquiring the property itself. Money is shown to present a threat of bankruptcy and a threat to moral and family values.

Romero’s zombie films form the grouping examined in the second part of this chapter. Horror threatens society as a whole and money is used tangentially to highlight it. In these films, the horror derives primarily from the fact that dead people are returning to life, shaking the foundations of human society and its organisational structure. Money appears as a tool of exchange, as an object of possession and desire, corruption and theft, and it signifies a horror that is extreme in its consequences.

1. Real-Estate Nightmare: House as Horror

The Amityville Horror and *Pacific Heights* offer plots centred on money through the prism of real estate. In these two films, the story involves the acquisition of a house by a couple (*Pacific Heights*) or by a family (*The Amityville Horror*), an acquisition that represents for them a singularly large and unprecedented outlay. In *Pacific Heights* Patty Palmer (Melanie Griffith) and Drake Goodman (Matthew Modine) are buying their first—and expensive—house, and in *The Amityville Horror* Cathy Lutz (Margot Kidder) even mentions specifically that it is the first time in her family that

anyone has purchased property: up to this time they have always been renters. Horror here arises from buying, owning and living in a house (*The Amityville Horror*), or from buying and living in a house while renting apartments in that same house for profit (*Pacific Heights*).

It is the opportunity of owning private property with its attendant pecuniary fears (mortgages, upkeep and maintenance) that lead to horror. This is true both in the case of the palatial yuppie home in *Pacific Heights* and in the rambling suburban house in *The Amityville Horror*. In *Pacific Heights* the San Francisco house costs seven hundred fifty thousand dollars and in *The Amityville Horror* the Long Island house costs eighty thousand dollars. The relative costs here are felt for the protagonists as exorbitant and this is operative in generating the horror that ensues.

These are films where horror itself consciously derives from economic matters. The presentation of money on screen can be the source or at least an important element in the horror process. By creating a link between economic and financial matters and horror, money also serves to give rise to fears that are recurrent and even basic to horror film. These two films use money visually, as part of the plot, and also as a dynamic element that signals and explains the horror.

The “Bad” House: Money, Real Estate and the US Context

The Amityville Horror and *Pacific Heights* both use a “bad house” as the source of horror. The bad-house theme found in the 1970s and 1980s horror genre is tied to economic considerations and the horror itself results, at least in part, from the money involved in buying and running a house. The “bad house” or “bad place” is the ‘upscale variation of the horror film’s old dark house’ (Grant 1998: 282-283). The subgenre of the old dark house takes its name from the seminal film *The Old Dark House* (1932) (Newman 1996: 237).

Both films are part of a long tradition of horror films set in a haunted house, or, as Dr. Markway (Richard Johnson) explains in the opening sequence of *The Haunting* (1963): “an evil old house, the kind that some people call haunted”. Here the New England Victorian mansion is said to be “alive” and “haunted” because of the mysterious deaths of several of its female inhabitants. The house, possessed of paranormal, otherworldly powers, like the hotel in *The Shining* (1980), is itself the source of horror. *Psycho* is also set partly in the family house as well as the motel, but even though horror arises inside the house and motel, neither the house nor the motel are themselves the source of horror.

Already in early cinema, films featuring a haunted house are numerous (*The Haunted House* 1899, *Tramp in the Haunted House* 1900, and *Haunted House* 1906). The genre really took off, however, in the 1920s

with filmed plays featuring protagonists 'drawn to a decrepit mansion where a maniac lurks; sometimes the house is said to be haunted' (Daniels 1996: 237), as in the screen adaptation of *The Bat* (1926), a play by Mary Roberts Rinehart, or the several films adapted from John Willard's play *The Cat and the Canary* (1927, 1939, and 1979). In these films, as later in *The House of Fear* (1945) where Sherlock Holmes investigates the mysterious deaths of seven wealthy individuals, mysterious events occur because of fake ghosts who are soon unmasked. The world of early films is one of 'shadows and thunderstorms and sliding panels' (Daniels 1996: 237).

Following the success of the 'joke filled yet creepy' first remake of *The Cat and the Canary* (1939) starring Bob Hope, the old dark house became a pattern (Daniels 1996: 237). This popularity has led to many adaptations, sequels and remakes of the same story. Poe's story *The Fall of the House of Usher*, about a decaying house on the point of collapse and a family doomed to destruction, has been adapted for cinema and television at least fifteen times worldwide since the 1920s: *La Chute de la maison Usher* (1928), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1928; 1942; 1949; 1958 [TV]; 1978; 1982; 1988), *Lights Out* (1949 [TV series]), *House of Usher* (1960 and 2005), *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (1966), *Zanik domu Usheru* (1981), *El hundimiento de la casa Usher* (1983), and *Usher* (2002).

In the era following the popular success of mainstream horror films such as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973), *The Amityville Horror* also generated many subsequent films. *The Amityville Horror*

became one of the top-grossing films at the US box-office in 1979, earning thirty five million dollars domestically (Cook 2000: 323), and turned the Amityville story into 'the Amityville industry' (Newman 1988: 165).

The original film was followed by seven sequels and one remake: *Amityville 2: The Possession* (1982), *Amityville 3 – D* (1983), *Amityville 4: The Evil Escapes* (1989), *The Amityville Curse* (1990), *Amityville: A New Generation* (1992), *Amityville 1992: It's About Time* (1992), *Amityville Dollhouse* (1996), and the remake *The Amityville Horror* (2005). All the Amityville films concern a house haunted by demonic forces, although only the original connects money to horror so directly.

In four sequels and the remake, the house is at first the family's dream home only to devolve into a source of horror (*Amityville 2* and *4*, *The Amityville Curse*, *Amityville Dollhouse*, *The Amityville Horror* [2005]). In two sequels, individuals, as opposed to families, are the target of supernatural forces: a sceptical reporter, John Baxter (Tony Roberts), moves into the house to investigate the strange curse (*Amityville 3*); and an unlucky and unaware distant relative, Keyes Terry (Ross Partridge), finds himself in possession of the malefic house (*Amityville: A New Generation*). The 2005 remake of *The Amityville Horror* connects horror to the acquisition of a house but makes absolutely no show of money itself, being totally centred on family values.

Within the haunted house subgenre, there are at least two important storyline trends linking houses to their money value. One trend concerns

inherited houses or houses in which the heir is yet to be designated, as for example in the films *The Cat And The Canary* (1927, 1939 and 1979), *Amityville: A New Generation*, *The Haunting*, *The House* (1986), *House 2: The Second Story* (1987) and *The House in Nightmare Park* (1973). Another storyline trend concerns houses as commodities that possess supernatural powers, weird owners and sometimes mysterious tenants. This trend clearly includes *The Amityville Horror*, and also *The Uninvited* (1944), *The House on Haunted Hill* (1959) *The House that Bled Death* (1981), *The House where Evil Dwells* (1982), *Quella villa accanto al cimitero* (*House by the Cemetery*, 1981), *The House of Dies Drear* (1984) and *The House on Tombstone Hill* (1992). As an enclosed and isolated space, but also as a property that costs much money, the house is evidently a favourite location to create criminal, mysterious or supernatural phenomena causing fear and leading to horror.

This aspect has not been studied extensively, except for a group of US films from the 1980s mentioned earlier. There is little written about films that specifically use economic or financial elements with respect to the connection they establish between money and horror. Grant does reference money in his discussion of a group of ‘American films that presents a distinct variation of the horror film’ he calls ‘yuppie horror’ (1998: 280). Yuppie horror is a trend in film inspired by the 1980s US socio-economic “class” that came to be referred to as the “yuppie generation” (1996 and 1998) and is by definition a money-driven force. The term “yuppie” was coined in 1983. It describes an ‘emergent and

seemingly distinct class of young urban professionals, transcending categories of both race and gender, that embraced values of conspicuous consumption and technology as unambiguously positive' (Grant 1996: 280).

Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas), the prosperous financial executive of *Wall Street*, is the yuppie icon of the 1980s with his entrepreneurial style, high-revenue activities, luxurious lifestyle and general attitude towards money. He claims that "greed is good" because "money means choice". Like the young couple of *Pacific Heights*, yuppies reside in or near major cities, are less than forty-five years old and strongly aspire to economic and social success. Yuppie horror films are in this way a development out of the general US economic and political context.

Grant (1998: 280) includes *Pacific Heights* in his grouping of yuppie horror films, alongside, among other titles, *After Hours*, *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985), *Something Wild* (1986), *Fatal Attraction* (1987), *Bad Influence* (1991), and *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (1992). *Pacific Heights* is different from *After Hours*, *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Bad Influence* or *Something Wild* in that it does not depict the encounter of yuppie middle-class protagonists from well-off neighbourhoods, with edgy characters from murky, downtown haunts with their hints of sexual transgression. *Pacific Heights*, like *Fatal Attraction*, *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* and *Bad Influence*, features families and individuals under threat from an unexpectedly vicious villain. These films though, unlike *Pacific Heights*, concern a threat to personal and moral

values rather than to bank accounts. Furthermore, *Pacific Heights*' horror takes its origin in the acquisition of a house.

Even when they share affinities with other genres, yuppie horror films 'retain much of the style and syntax of the horror genre, while substituting a new set of semantic elements' (Grant 1998: 280). This 'distinct generic cycle', instead of 'expressing the repression and contradictions of bourgeois society generally', a feature that has been placed at the centre of horror film (Wood 2003; Grant 1984; Clover 1992), 'addresses the anxieties of an affluent culture in an era of prolonged recession' (Grant 1998: 280).

The Amityville Horror and *Pacific Heights* both feature representations of money and yet, even though money is crucial to the horror process, they correspond to two different contexts and kinds of horror. One was made in the 1970s and the other one in the 1980s, both are about real-estate nightmares but one shows the threat to the house and to money using supernatural phenomena while the other features an evil character that is not the production of the devil or of the spirits of the dead. *The Amityville Horror* has all the qualities and particularities of the horror genre film, while *Pacific Heights* is more a mixed-genre, not entirely a horror film but bordering on the thriller, precisely because it does not use the threat of the supernatural. Within the horror genre, *The Amityville Horror* is, as other films made after *Rosemary's Baby*, a 'real life', a 'based-on-fact horror film' (Newman 1988: 165). It corresponds to a trend of films born when William Peter Blatty modelled his novel (1971), and the

script of the film *The Exorcist* 'on a documented case history of twentieth-century possession' (Newman 1988: 165). This 'form' actually 'only hit big when Jay Anson's heavily fictionalised account' (165), *The Amityville Horror* (1977) became a surprise best seller and was quickly turned into a relatively big-budget film by AIP with a cost 'in the \$3 to \$4 million range' (Cook 2000: 323). *The Amityville Horror* is both insistently based on contemporary reality while playing with supernatural events and the belief in the existence of demonic forces. On the other hand, in *Pacific Heights* and the yuppie horror films, horror does not result from paranormal forces. The potential "evil" resides in one of the characters and in real places as shown in shots of downtown, "dangerous" and "transgressive" Manhattan locales: Lower East Side in *Desperately Seeking Susan*, Soho in *After Hours*, the Meat Market in *Fatal Attraction*.

Real-Estate Horror and Economic Fears

Both *The Amityville Horror* and *Pacific Heights* are typical of the periods in which they were produced. They both illustrate 'the horror movie as economic nightmare' (King 1981: 137), and therefore 'often serve as an extraordinarily accurate barometer of those things which trouble the night thoughts of a whole society' (134). In relation to money and here to US dollars, both films are set after the gold-exchange standard. This meant that

a sum of dollars no longer had a fixed value in gold but bore a floating exchange rate to other currencies and to gold. As a consequence, a house was perhaps felt as something more “real” and palpable than money, since the US dollar had lost its direct association and fixed value with respect to any palpable material such as gold. A house would become even more one’s possession, *pecunia*, as opposed to abstract and artificial money, no longer backed by any “solid” substance.

The Amityville Horror was also made not long after the major oil crisis of 1973 that shook the US and introduced fear in relation to economic growth, consumerism and wealth. It was a period of high inflation and high mortgage rates, a time of economic unease. Released at the end of the following decade, *Pacific Heights* expresses a different kind of fear. Made during the final stages of a significant economic growth period, “the golden 1980s”, it is one of the films—with *After Hours*, *Blue Velvet* (1986) *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Into the Night* (1985), *Mike’s Murder* (1984), *Crossroads* (1986), *Lost in America* (1985) and *Something Wild* for example—that expresses some of the fears spread by Reaganomics. ‘Beneath Reagan’s smiling America’, *Pacific Heights* and other yuppie horror films reveal the ‘darkest dreams of the Republic’ (Powers 1987: 48). These yuppie films are ‘daring, bleak, and woefully uneven’ (48). They represent a certain ‘Manichaeian, middle class paranoia: once you leave bourgeois life, you’re immediately prey to crime, madness, squalor, poverty’ (51). Both *The Amityville Horror* and *Pacific Heights* in fact clearly define these realities in the social origins and class of their

protagonists: east-coast suburban middle class in the case of *The Amityville Horror*; west-coast urban middle class in *Pacific Heights*. In *Pacific Heights* and other yuppie horror films, moreover, it is class status and the accidental encounter between people of different classes that provides some of the dynamic elements leading to horror.

House As Possession (*Pecunia*)

Both *The Amityville Horror* and *Pacific Heights* are entirely centred on a house. The house itself is in a way the main protagonist. The house, the dream house here, its cost, the financial sacrifice it requires, the new life it implies are important elements in the films. A house is expensive, it represents a large investment, both financially and emotionally. It is one's possession, *pecunia*, it is material like *moneta* but not neutral. The use of money to buy for a dwelling is not an indifferent gesture. The house is no longer a pile of banknotes; it is invested with feelings as it materialises in a home. In *Pacific Heights*, the house seemingly becomes more important than the sole relationship between Patty and Drake. On the verge of emotional breakdown and bankruptcy, they would rather seek loans from shabby offices than consider selling their property. This film, like *The Amityville Horror*, also plays with the all-importance of the house by never presenting the possibility of a foreclosure. The house appears here as a

property in a world where banks give loans without concretely asking for their money back.

The “evil” first originates in the house itself, as if its cost gave it its emotional value while disconnecting it from the “real” world of mortgages, debt and foreclosure. As in *The Amityville Horror* and *Pacific Heights*, the combination of the actual cost and the emotional involvement in property are the basis of several other films that take place in bad houses. The idea of a house being both expensive and more than a simple money investment is important, for example, in the newly purchased family or couple suburban houses of *Fatal Attraction* and *Desperately Seeking Susan*. The importance of the house as an investment, as property, *pecunia*, is emphasised in the repetitive and insistent shots of, for example, the house equipped with the latest kitchen appliances in *Desperately Seeking Susan*, but also in the heavy décor of the rich bourgeois interiors in *Bad Influence* or *The Haunting*.

The Amityville Horror and *Pacific Heights*, in their second scene, already introduce real estate with the protagonists visiting property they are about to buy. In both cases they comment on the high price before eventually deciding to buy it. Each of the houses is given a precise value in dollars and this is the departure point in the unfolding of the stories' horror. Both films open with a scene of extreme violence: Carter being beaten up by hit men in *Pacific Heights* and the in-house massacre in *The Amityville Horror*. The house here is first the object of an exchange of money, as in the case of any other commodity, before becoming one's own property,

invested with feelings and, in this instance, supernatural powers as well. In both films, the money used to buy the house is not actually shown, nor do we see the transaction itself, the actual acquisition. In each film the visit that leads to acquisition is followed directly by a scene in which the couple settles in the house. The financial value and cost of the acquisition seem to be suggested in shots of the house which in themselves represent the money that was spent to buy it, while horror often emerges from the house itself and in the actual shots of banknotes in the context of the house.

In *Pacific Heights*, Patty and Drake are a rather naïve unmarried couple who decide to pool their money in order to procure a loan to buy a house in an upmarket neighbourhood of San Francisco, Pacific Heights. They buy the house despite its high cost and the warning of a close friend who is worried that the investment is too risky for them. In order to pay the mortgage, they create two separate rental flats on the ground floor.

In *The Amityville Horror*, George (James Brolin) and Cathy Lutz are a recently married couple with three children from Cathy's previous relationship. The Lutzes, in search of a home, are visiting the Amityville house for the first time. The house is for sale at a low price—eighty thousand dollars—far below its one-hundred-twenty-thousand-dollar market value. The couple's viewing of each of the rooms is crosscut with shots of the shotgun shooting of an entire family a year earlier, room by room. Since this massacre, the house has naturally acquired a bad reputation, which explains its relatively low market price. But the Lutzes fall in love with the house and are unimpressed by its history, which neither

frightens nor discourages them from buying it. In convincing Cathy, George remarks that “houses have no memory”. The way the house is shot, however, contradicts George’s opinion. From the first image of *The Amityville Horror*, the repeated long shots of the house from a low angle and the shots where the house occupies most of the frame, are almost overwhelming in accentuating the impression of the dominance of the house as haunted by evil supernatural forces. This impression is reinforced by the fact that, during their first visit, the Lutzes are shot from within the house or its attendant shed, as if the house itself had a life of its own and was observing them.

Visually, films about “bad” houses often feature numerous long shots of the house, usually at night, from a low angle (*Psycho*, *Suspiria*, *The Haunting*, *House of Usher* 1960). The bad house is usually shown as isolated in space and cut off from surrounding houses. The isolation can be real, as in *The Amityville Horror*, *Psycho*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and in the post-modern wealthy house of the *giallo*, as the house of the first murder in *Tenebrae* (1982), for example. It can also be created by the film itself, as in *Pacific Heights*, where the house dominates a prospect of San Francisco and is surrounded by neighbouring houses as in the first shot of the house’s exterior after Patty and Drake move in. As the house becomes a place of horror, it stands seemingly on its own in one of the recurrent low-angle long shots that isolate it in space and highlight it seemingly as dominating the characters’ lives who look at it from below or

are seen in it from below, whether in front of it, entering it or climbing the stairs.



Psycho: “bad” house from low angle at darkest night.



Pacific Heights: house not yet isolated from neighbouring houses, just after Patty and Drake move in.



Pacific Heights: “bad” house from low angle and isolated in space as horror mounts.



Pacific Heights: Patty, Drake and “bad” house from low angle and in isolation.



Pacific Heights: shot from low angle of Patty returning home to “bad” house.



Pacific Heights: “bad” house at night from low angle, in isolation, and from Drake’s point of view.



The Amityville Horror: first image of film—“bad” house shot from low angle at night with red sky.



The Amityville Horror: Cathy and George’s first visit —“bad” house shot from low angle at a distance.



The Amityville Horror: “bad” house shot from low angle, occupying three quarters of frame.

In *Pacific Heights*, the “bad” events and interactions take place or start within the house. Despite a few welcoming moments at the beginning

of the film, none of the protagonists ever establishes a real connection with neighbours. This isolation grows with Patty and Drake increasingly featured inside the house. Outside the house, they are regularly shown dealing with troublesome developments from within the house—legal negotiations, court appearances, financial consultations with their bank and a loan agency. That so much of the story takes place inside the house and the numerous long shots of the house from below accentuate the notion of the house as source of the horror.

The “Evil” House as Financial Nightmare

In both *The Amityville Horror* and *Pacific Heights*, the couples have to sustain oppressive mortgages far beyond their reach. These mortgages and the threat to financial security they imply accentuate the horror. Patty and Drake rent one of the flats to a Japanese couple, Mira and Toshio Watanabe (Nobu McCarthy and Mako); the other, under suspicious circumstances, to a seemingly prosperous man, Carter (a fake name, as we learn later on in the film).

Carter proceeds, with no leave, to move into the flat after misleading and lying to Drake and making up references while promising money that in reality he does not have or is not willing to pay. He also does this by offering to pay six-month’s cash in advance, on the spot, checking

emphatically the money he has on hand in his wallet. A close-shot of his hands counting one-hundred dollar bills emphasises the centrality of the money in a scene that sparks the nightmare. Drake, in his economic insecurity, is not insensitive to the spectacle of the banknotes flashed in the wallet or to the prospect of this rich potential tenant. The banknotes clearly impress him, as they are meant to. In the same scene, Carter remarks he only has two thousand nine hundred dollars with him, offers to pay two thousand dollars on the spot and wire the rest before changing his mind. He ends up paying nothing; no exchange of money takes place.

Taking illegal possession of the flat and never paying rent, he persists in his course: he changes the locks, drives the other tenants away and makes life unbearable for Patty and Drake. Carter employs virtually every possible dirty trick to drive the couple from their house: he breeds and then plants a massive infestation of cockroaches in the Watanabe flat; he raises a seemingly never-ending din of construction noise at night, and at length he brings in the law against Drake whom he provokes to personal assault and even battery on repeated occasions. Carter's ultimate goal, and apparently usual strategy, is to bring civil suit against his landlords, and by doing so to gain, under California law, legal ownership of their property. Creating impossible and horrific conditions inside a house or flat, Carter achieves his single-minded goal of driving the owner out and gaining possession himself by court order, only to resell the house at a huge profit. His whole way of life is centred on extorting money. In *Pacific Heights*

Carter himself, in combination with the house, is the nightmare; no supernatural phenomenon explains the threat of bankruptcy.



Pacific Heights: close-up—Carter's hands counting one-hundred dollar bills in wallet.



Pacific Heights: Drake mesmerized by spectacle of the one-hundred dollar bills.

In *The Amityville Horror*, on the other hand, the house soon appears to be really haunted: several supernatural manifestations occur and George himself starts to hear “bad” voices, voices of evil that push him towards potentially murdering his entire family, reproducing in this way the previous massacre. This aspect of the horror is accentuated in that George comes to physically resemble the jailed killer, who claims to have been under the influence of malignant voices originating in the house. George's

mind seems to slip away and he starts developing a strangely uncharacteristic violence in his behaviour. At the same time he dissociates himself from his normal life routines: he no longer goes to work or takes care of his business. He therefore stops earning money both for his business and his mortgage. As the film progresses, his relation to money grows increasingly problematic since he necessarily has less and less of it. George, more and more possessed by the evil spirit present in the house, finds himself, the sole provider for his family, on the verge of bankruptcy, a bankruptcy that also threatens his company, his close professional partner and his employees.

In these two real-estate nightmare films, the “evil” introduces different kinds of threat: threats to the family, the house, and to life in general; and more specifically threats to the couple’s bank account, which, together with the general atmosphere of terror, leads on the nightmare prospect of total economic and financial ruin. In *Pacific Heights*, having overextended themselves by buying a house beyond their means, Patty and Drake leave the door open to Carter who proceeds to take full advantage of their financial vulnerability. They thought of the house as a viable economic unit that would bring them mortgage money through the rental of the ground-floor flats. The reality proves quite different: Carter, in making the two flats unrentable, brings the couple to the brink of financial ruin while at the same time threatening their lives. The financial threat, in both films, is linked to a threat to life itself. In both cases the protagonists fight not only to remain economically solvent but to keep their lives intact as

well. Life and financial stability will demand the sacrifice of their projected dream-house.

The money-disaster events in *Pacific Heights* are entirely secular in nature since, in yuppie horror films, according to Grant (1998: 281):

The fears and anxieties of the yuppie subculture ... encourage the transformation of “evil” from the classic horror film’s otherworldly supernatural to the material and economic pressures of this world that is too much with us.

This shift in the genre means that it is not a supernatural figure that threatens bank accounts and property but a mundane one of everyday reality. Carter embodies this “evil” figure in his cruel sadistic determination to ruin the nice young yuppie couple—it is hardly an accident that Drake’s surname is Goodman. As in other yuppie horror films, in *Pacific Heights*, two worlds and two world-views are meeting, and it is precisely this meeting, through representations of money, that creates the financial threat. These worlds are represented, on the one hand, by Patty and Drake’s middle-class environment and dreams and, on the other, by Carter’s upper-class background and underhanded way of life. Although he is no longer rich since he has been ousted from the family trust, it is made clear that he does not come from a working-class background with its attendant struggle to survive. He lies about work, pretending he is employed by a trust, when in reality he probably has never had a job. He drives a Porsche and is

dressed expensively. He behaves as if totally entitled, as if money could never be a problem. His background seems to explain why he shows no sympathy for Patty and Drake, for their need of a regular job, or for their middle-class mentality and dreams. For Carter money is a plaything and a way to avenge his rejection from his family, whereas for Patty and Drake money is a serious tool for building life. Carter, when it comes to money, actually also makes playthings of his friends, a fact which isolates him as the “evil” character in the film.

As the mundane horror emerges in *Pacific Heights*, it permits a glimpse into the ‘dark underworld of bankruptcy and property divestiture’ (Grant 1998: 282). This happens through shots of money, of financial institutions, and of the house. Money and the house also figure as objects of some kind of irrepressible material desire.

Although dollar banknotes in Carter’s wallet are shot in close-up during his first visit to the house, these banknotes merely emphasize that money is the foundation of the relationship between the young couple and anyone seeking to rent a flat in the house. But this display of actual dollars also foreshadows entry into the ‘dark underworld’ of a troubled financial future.

The shots of financial institutions show the evolution of the couple’s relations with these institutions. In the beginning of the film Patty and Drake are serious and reliable clients of a large and well-established bank situated in an impressive building in the heart of San Francisco. The

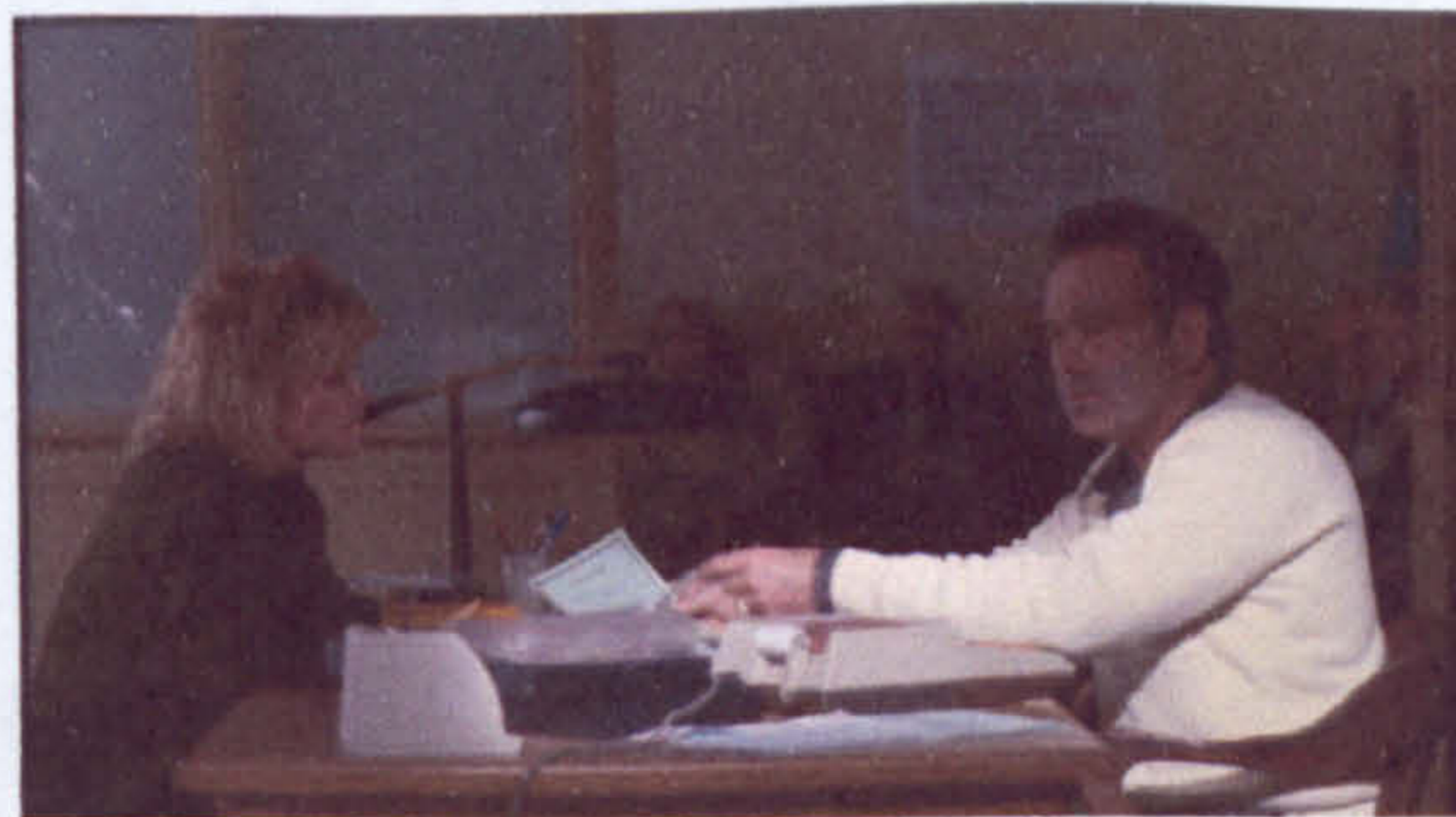
bank's broad, open and spacious glass-enclosed lobby is clearly a part of the couple's world and they approach their mortgage provider with relative confidence. In the second part of the film, however, this easy trust has been broken and the prestigious bank refuses to back them further. In desperation Patty resorts to the crowded offices of a rather shabby savings and loan organisation with its beckoning "LOANS" signpost on the building of a crowded neighbourhood. The offices themselves are small, low-ceilinged and enclosed, and contrast sharply with the large spacious bank from which they secured their original mortgage. These lenders specialize in low collateral high-interest service to people who can command little credit and who are often down on their luck and desperate as Patty is for quick cash. From these images, Patty and Drake's financial comedown and descent into insolvency is made tangible and the meaning of the horror of the 'dark underworld of bankruptcy and property divestiture' is made palpable. All of this takes place in the context of a house they are so attached to that they cannot accept the idea of selling it, as the clerk suggests in the loans office. The house has gained an emotional value beyond its market price.



Pacific Heights: the traditional, well-established and spacious bank.



Pacific Heights: beckoning loan office signpost.



Pacific Heights: shabby office of loan company.

While in *Pacific Heights* it is the rupture of the relation between the landlord, the tenant and the bank that constitutes the threat of bankruptcy, in *The Amityville Horror* it is the supernatural forces inside the house that slowly lead the family to the brink of bankruptcy. *The Amityville Horror* is a 'primal haunted house story' (King 1981: 141) coupled with a financial

nightmare in which 'evil invades the worldly supernatural as a sign of the economic pressures of this world' (141).

In these two films, as in other films outside the horror genre, the simple fact that money does appear introduces a break in the narrative, a sign that something bad is going to happen. In *The Amityville Horror*, dollar banknotes are shown on screen at a turning point in the story. It is also the first and only scene with actual money filmed. The Lutz family is preparing to go to the wedding of Cathy's younger brother, Jimmy (Marc Vahanian). They are in the "bad" house when the scene takes place. A close-up of a pair of hands counting banknotes with the fireplace in the background introduces the groom on his wedding day. The fire here is clearly a sign of "hell" in a house where the first thing they hung on a wall was a cross. Jimmy keeps checking the money he has in his hands over and over again, making sure that none of the one thousand five hundred dollars for the caterer is missing. His sister arrives and, noting how repeatedly he has counted and recounted his money, assures him that there is no possibility of mistake. At this point Jimmy slides the money into the pocket of his suit coat lying folded on the couch. George enters the room and when they are about to leave, Jimmy picks up the suit coat and once again checks his pocket and finds the money now missing. The money has vanished, left on the living room couch. A low-angle long shot of the three protagonists with the couch in the foreground, shows them as seemingly trapped within the walls of the room and therefore by the house. In total panic Jimmy desperately tries to find the missing banknotes, obviously a hugely

significant sum for him. George, his face madly distorted by the malignant forces of the house, offers to write a cheque covering the caterer's cost, despite the prior agreement with him for payment in cash. A last zoom-in on Jimmy as he leaves the room focuses on the couch and dissolves into another low-angle long shot of the bad house bathed in the darkness of night, with the familiar eerie melody that has signalled all the supernatural events since the beginning of the film. The bad house here appears to be able to make things vanish: banknotes, despite their obviously palpable materiality mysteriously disappear—their only trace being a bank money-band, stamped with the numerals \$500 lying hidden under the couch.



The Amityville Horror: Jimmy counting banknotes with fireplace in background.



The Amityville Horror: low-angle long shot of house following disappearance of Jimmy's \$1500.

This scene of horror reveals George as now seriously possessed by an uncanny force: he appears pale, he shivers and feels sick all the time; he has become aggressive and impatient; and he finds himself unable to explain what it is exactly that is happening to him. Feeling physically indisposed, he and his family precipitately leave the wedding reception early, after his having argued with the caterer over payment by cheque rather than by cash. The difference between the materiality of cash and the immateriality of a cheque is emphasised in the caterer's refusal of a cheque that might never become actual money. The representation of cash, moreover, in the shots of banknotes and their disappearance, precipitates the slow collapse of the family into serious money problems. The show of physical money signals in the film that things are taking a wrong turn. The "dream house" now emerges as the "bad house", and it is through actual shots of money that all of this comes clear.

As in *The Amityville Horror*, in *Pacific Heights* the threat of bankruptcy comes not only from the house and the money involved in its

acquisition and maintenance, but also from other uses and kinds of money. In *The Amityville Horror* the disappearance of the banknotes, followed by George's bouncing cheque, brings bankruptcy a step closer, this time through the use of money outside the house itself, and of money involving directly a bank. As in *Pacific Heights*, the bank is no longer supporting the house owners. The house here, as in *Pacific Heights*, stands as the dynamic backdrop to more extreme events involving money. These events, if not actively resolved, are bound to end in irreversible financial collapse, and they all involve the use of either banknotes, cheques or credit cards.

In *Pacific Heights*, with the Watanabes gone and Carter not paying his rent, Patty and Drake are in a truly bad situation, on the brink of bankruptcy. Their predicament is made clear in that they are not disposed to sell the house, are turned down from further loans and their litigation to rid themselves of Carter is only just begun. When an eviction order is at length forthcoming, Patty shockingly discovers a flat, stripped bare and laid waste, with walls, paintings, appliances and furniture either disappeared or meticulously destroyed. All the money and loving energy Patty and Drake had expended in remodelling the flat is vanished and all for naught.

In a surprise twist, since the story might have ended here, Patty is not ready to give up the fight, but decides to pursue a personal investigation into the mysterious and now off-the-scene Carter. This twist adds a new dimension to the story as well as to the representation of money, and introduces an even greater threat of financial loss for Patty and Drake. As for the representation of money, it takes on new dimensions beyond

property: “real” and “palpable” cash, traveller cheques and electronic money in the form of credit cards come to the fore.

Patty tracks down Carter in his Los Angeles hotel. Carter has moved out of their rental flat, but not before having reproduced Drake’s identity and credit cards. He is now operating under the name of Drake Goodman and uses his credit cards to bankroll his lifestyle and pay for his luxury hotel suite. In her investigation Patty discovers that Carter is the disinherited scion of a wealthy family and that he is expert at this pastime of playing on people’s economic weakness in order to divest them of their financial holdings. Simultaneously Carter is courting the immensely wealthy Florence Peters (Tippi Hedren). Posing as his wife, Patty manages to enter Carter’s hotel suite and go through his private papers. Besides cash, she finds credit cards, travellers cheques and a passport, all under Carter’s new assumed name, Drake Goodman. She phones the bank to cancel his travellers cheques, phones Drake to cancel all his credit cards, and takes the cash for herself (she later leaves a large tip for the hotel cleaner). An isolated shot of Patty counting banknotes, of a drawer containing traveller cheques, and of a close-up of a credit card delineate graphically on screen these different forms of money that actually represent virtually all the forms of money available to an individual in that given time and place.

As a final assault on Carter’s larcenous way of life, she runs up a huge hotel bill ordering expensive items from room service for a supposed anniversary extravaganza. Through the bank’s refusal to honour these

expenditures, Carter discovers Patty's trick and in his rage finds himself arrested and sent to jail. In these degrading circumstances, he manages to convince Florence to cover the cost of his bail. Freed, Carter goes after the young couple.

The end of the film sets things "in order": Carter returns to San Francisco, set on the revenge murder of Patty. Through Drake's intervention, Carter himself, though, is made to fall backwards on a jutting pipe, only there as the result of his prior destruction of his former flat. With the "bad" Carter thus lifted from the scene, the end definitively removes physical as well as financial threat. The "good" couple, through Carter's violent killing, is reunited and sells the house at a twenty per cent profit: bought for seven hundred fifty thousand dollars, sold for nine hundred thousand dollars. The ending in this sense is not just "happy" because through reunion it endorses family values, but also because the house, once a horror, has turned out to be a very profitable investment.

As "evil", Carter generally threatens not only Patty and Drake as a young couple making their economic start in life but potentially anyone vested with financial assets. Patty and Drake are just one couple in a parade of targeted victims in Carter's career in fraud. The film makes clear that Carter, in his behaviour represents a threat to society in general.



Pacific Heights: close-up of Carter's forged credit card.



Pacific Heights: forged travellers cheques in drawer.



Pacific Heights: Patty counting dollar bills in Carter's hotel room.

The bad house is often coupled with that of the collapse of the family. Buying a house is an achievement on one's path to social integration and in the preservation of family values. Here honesty and money earned by sheer hard work, even when it is yuppie money, are put at

risk. This 'family horror' expresses deep down fears and threats to the laws of property and of ownership, laws that are basic to the existence of the capitalist system and to money itself. These financial fears are made palpable inside the newly bought property where 'all strife within the family is put down to supernatural pressures and plot resolutions emphasise togetherness' (Perks 1996: 112). As in *Pacific Heights* and other yuppie horror films, in *The Amityville Horror* and *Poltergeist* (1982), families systematically defeat "evil". This latter aspect is emphasized in shots of families reunited, as, for example, in the closing shot of *Fatal Attraction*: a zoom-in on a studio photograph of husband, wife and daughter insists heavily on the reunion of the family, the restoration of a "normal" order, after the horrific killing of the "dangerous" Alex (Glenn Close) by the husband and wife, Dan (Michael Douglas) and Beth (Anne Archer). In *The Amityville Horror*, the family is reunited but the house is lost. The drama of the Lutzes fleeing their house and abandoning all their belongings is accentuated by the story being told as a true story¹. The closing intertitle explains: "George and Kathleen Lutz and their family never reclaimed their house or their personal belongings. Today they live in another state". They have lost their one and only possession thus emphasising that here, the survival of the family is more important than material possessions. The irony in relation to money matters is that the real life Lutz couple went on

¹ The MGM 2005 special edition DVD of *The Amityville Horror* (two discs) even features several extra features proving the actual existence of the Amityville haunted house. They consist of an 'audio commentary by Dr. Hans Holzer. PhD Parapsychology' and of an introduction by the same Dr Holzer who claims to prove the veracity of the film's story with his own experience in parapsychology. The bonus disc features a two part documentary produced by the US History Channel as part of a series on 'History's Mysteries': *Amityville: The Haunting* and *Amityville: Horror or Hoax?* (2000).

to sell their story many times, from the book to the many film adaptations, realising a profit far beyond the resale value of the house they lost.

Real estate stories like this with their introduction of the horror motif, cast a sinister spell on the actions of buying, owning and spending, and on the idea of asking rent-money, and seeking bank loans and mortgages. The introduction of the *unheimlich* here, the uncanny, as trigger to horror, creates a disturbing, vacuous area, 'dangerous' space, a space that threatens economic values and belongings, a 'threat to the harmony of hearth and home' (Sobchack 1987: 176-177). The 'harmony of hearth and home' corresponds to everything the "devil" or the "evil" figure tries to destroy: "good" money, property, the couple, and the family. As in the case of the uncanny, the evil figure here exists only in relation to the familiar and to the normal, to a normality defined as the exact opposite of what the devil or evil figure represents, and therefore as the goal or aim in the process of destruction or destabilisation. Money in these films represents the link, the bridge between the devil or evil figure and normality, and explains how horror is projected through the prism of money and home ownership.

2. The Collapse of Society: Romero's *Dawn, Day and Land of the Dead*

Although it is true that Romero's *Dead* films are not exclusively about money, they are characteristically set in the contemporary world and money plays an important role in them. The 'spatial relocation to the American landscape and temporal relocation to the present' (Sobchack 1987: 177) is true of many post-*Psycho* and post-*Night of the Living Dead* (1968) films. A contemporary setting allows for open reflection on various aspects of society. Like Polanski in *Rosemary's Baby*, Romero, with his zombie creatures, employs features classic to the horror genre in films set in contemporary America. While not being only about money, Romero's *Dawn, Day and Land of the Dead* nevertheless continually offer a vision of social chaos signified at least implicitly by the collapse of money, both as a tool of exchange and as a means of ownership and hoarding.

The first instalment of the series, *Night of the Living Dead*, focuses, like its sequels, on the horror that emerges from the sudden and unexplained explosion of a zombie population. This explosion engenders social chaos and the spontaneous organisation of small groups of militia composed emphatically of white American males armed for combat against the alien invasion. This first film does not address the issue of money at all, but the idea of social collapse and invasion, and prepares not only for the film's sequels, but also situates *Night of the Living Dead* in the direct tradition of *The Birds* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956). *Night of*

the Living Dead, like several other films made in its wake, offers up a severe critique of US values and institutions. These films in their critique of contemporary social structures arise out of the economic boom years of the 1950s and 1960s. They include such titles as *It's Alive* (1974), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Carrie* (1976), *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) and *Shivers* (1975). They depict 'the failure of the nuclear family, the private home, the teenage couple, and the resourceful individual hero', and they reveal, like *Night of the Living Dead*, 'the flaws inherent in the media, local and federal government agencies, and the entire mechanism of civil defence' (Waller 2000: 258). In this sense *Night of the Living Dead* prefigures a trend in independently made horror films of such directors as David Cronenberg, Larry Cohen or John Carpenter, while *Rosemary's Baby* prefigures a trend of mainstream big-budget horror films with, for instance, *The Exorcist* or *The Omen* (1976). *Dawn and Day of the Dead* can be included in the lineage of independently made and subversive horror films subsequent to *Night of the Living Dead*.

Zombies, Money and the Slow Collapse of Social Structures

Money in the context of highly developed capitalism and consumerism functions as a central tool: it determines the value of anything for sale and allows for the possibility of exchange. Social collapse is brought about by the zombie invasion, zombies who do not live the same way, abide by the

same rules as living human beings. “Jesus, it is everywhere!” says Roger in *Dawn of the Dead* as they are in the helicopter looking for a place to land. The use of “it” to refer to the lumbering gait of the zombies simply establishes from the beginning that they cannot be referred to as “they”. “It” does not refer to people and even less to individuals but rather to an objectified mass of an unknown nature. Yet, “it” is what engenders social chaos and the ruin of money as a referent.

Impending social collapse and the fragility of our social structure are already central in *Night of the Living Dead* when the farmhouse phone ceases to function and Ben remarks: “It doesn’t take long for the world to fall apart, does it?” The three subsequent films begin in a world that is already in chaos. The questioning of social structures is expressed sharply in these films through a few crucial scenes featuring images and references to money, in an environment where the notions of buying, selling and owning are no longer its organising rationale.

Money is used after *Night of the Living Dead* precisely to emphasize a break in the acknowledged order. In the criticism of social structures and in the disclosure of moral and social chaos, a clear progression can be delineated from *Dawn*, to *Day*, and to *Land of the Dead*. In these films, the ‘treatment of social disintegration’ (Wood 2003: 116) calls into question the value of money and its use. The use of money can either lead to horror or function as an element in the horror process and therefore in the destruction and social disintegration that take place.

Both *Dawn* and *Day of the Dead* are films Wells reads under the heading 'Chaos and Collapse: 1960-2000' (2001: 74). These are films that 'expose the collapse of consumer capitalism, the inevitable lack of fulfilment in current models of existence and the deep anger that still fuels the limited desire to find alternatives and to somehow create a new society' (Wells 2001: 82). The latest of the series, *Land of the Dead*, may also be included in this category of films. In the three films various references and representations of money show its slow collapse.

Dawn of the Dead is the sequel to *Night of the Living Dead* but the zombie invasion seemingly takes place on a larger scale than in *Night of the Living Dead* and represents a more forceful assault on political and governmental institutions as well as on 1970s consumerist and middle-class culture in general. As in *Night of the Living Dead*, the dead are returning to a kind of quasi-life and their only goal is to eat the flesh of the living. The phenomenon that in the first film could be contained—it was local, or perhaps regional—has taken on national proportions. A brutal police (SWAT²) assault on a minority housing project occurs early on in the film. It is clearly a continuation of the last scene of *Night of the Living Dead* where Ben (Duane Jones), the last surviving protagonist in the house and a black man, is taken for a zombie and shot dead in an all-white militia campaign to get rid of zombies. In neither film does the campaign make a distinction between non-white people and zombies.

² Special Weapons Attack Tactics

With the discovery of zombies in the housing project and the ongoing news reports from the television station, it becomes obvious that zombies are everywhere and that there is little chance of survival by simply following official instructions. Confronted with the chaos brought on by the spread of the living dead, Francine (Gaylen Ross), an employee of the local television network, agrees to escape with her boyfriend Stephen (David Emge) in the helicopter he pilots for work. They are joined by Roger (Scott Reininger) and Peter (Ken Foree), two men from the SWAT team. After many hours of flight, avoiding cities as possible centres of law and order, they decide to land on the rooftop of a deserted shopping mall where they eventually settle. The small group appropriates spaces and consumer objects that in “normal” times would be governed by strict buy-and-sell, as well as property regulations: specific objects and services for money.

The mall is nothing more than an invitation to consume. It not only represents a safe haven once the few zombies inside are eliminated; it is also, and most importantly, a shoppers’ paradise where the protagonists can satisfy their wildest consumerist dreams without spending a dime. In the first “shopping” scene they run madly about, picking up items harum-scarum that they would probably otherwise have little interest in and no possibility of buying. Their ready access to the mall represents a ‘realization of the ultimate consumer society dream (the ready availability of every luxury, emblem, and status symbol of capitalist life, without the penalty of payment)’ (Wood 2003: 106) and also without the penalty of law since nothing is illegal. What would otherwise have been called looting in a

zombie-free world is simply no longer at issue because it is survival that is at stake here. The protagonists' happy life in the mall comes to an end when a group of organized bikers decides it also wants a share.

Throughout *Dawn*, in and through shots of money, hints and signals arise, of a possible shift, a gradual collapse in the use, value and necessity of money. The first close look at a zombie already features shots of money in the mall fountain, a place where people classically throw coins for good luck. A close shot of a hand grabbing coins from the fountain is followed by a long shot of what is now clearly a zombie, sitting in the water with his legs spread apart and snatching at coins, as a sign perhaps of vague recognition of now meaningless objects from his former life. These coins, shown before any other form of money, are not meant to convey the power of purchase and saving inherent in money. The value of this small change in its purchase power is meaningless and inconsequential. Actually, neither the four main protagonists nor the bikers' gang take any notice of the coins in the fountain: they are and always have been mere bits of metal of little worth. In the fountain their force does not reside in their monetary value, but in something rather more ethereal: the folk belief that tossing them into the fountain can bring good luck, and this, in the midst of a shopping-mall world entirely devoted to consumerism and spending. They have lost their meaning both as an object of superstition and as an object of value. This is especially so for the zombies, who embody bad luck and have lost any cognisance of value whatsoever. More generally here, the meaning of money itself and its exchange-value are being called into question: the

image of a zombie driven only by the desire to devour living human flesh, becomes representative of the overwhelming zombie population-threat. Furthermore, the zombie's foggy struggle to recognize and acknowledge money in the form of coins signals the eventual exhaustion of the use, value and necessity of money.



Dawn of the Dead: close shot—hand grabbing coins in mall fountain.



Dawn of the Dead: long shot—zombie with coins in both hands.

In the mall itself there is much irony in the representation of money in the two scenes in the bank. They feature first Peter and Stephen and then two of the bikers taking piles of banknotes from a well-tended and tidy

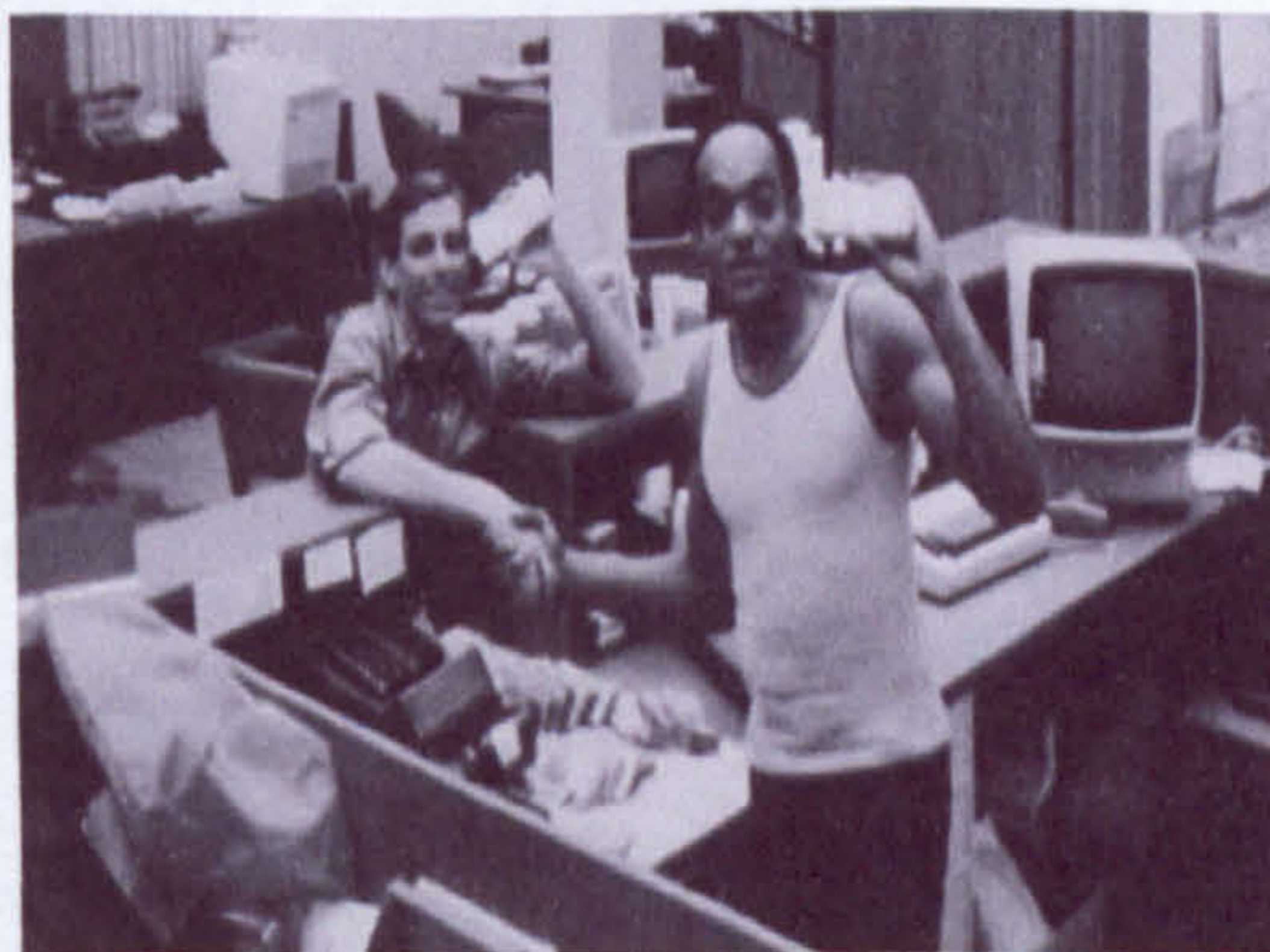
cash register. The first scene shows a cash-register drawer opening in close-up with its neat bundles of properly organised banknotes, to which Roger and Stephen decide to help themselves: "You never know!" they remark in self-justification. This shot of the drawer opening follows immediately a shot of a door closing on the refrigeration room of the mall, where Roger and Stephen have piled up bodies of dead zombies. It is only in a zombie world, a "dead" world, that they are able to help themselves to a bank's cash register. Turning to the bank's security camera, they even strike a smiling pose, holding their ill-gotten cash aloft seemingly in anticipation of the black and white snapshot that next flashes on the screen. This surveillance camera, in its high-angle position, ironically commands a panoramic view of an increasingly dead order of things. This bank scene establishes a certain kind of horror in the spectacle of society's gradual dissolution in its institutions and infrastructure. Money symbolises all of this. Belonging to no one, it signifies the irrelevance of the old order and the reign of a certain chaos since the protagonists clearly continue to act on the basis of a belief that their money still has value. Their very action illustrates the devaluation of money. In this world, video security cameras are useless. Nothing is written, nothing is recorded, nothing is monitored or supervised, and need not be.



Dawn of the Dead: close shot—opened cash-register drawer.



Dawn of the Dead: Peter and Stephen posing for bank's security camera.



Dawn of the Dead: security camera snapshot of Peter and Stephen.

Yet, in connection with money, if the bank has one function, it is precisely that of preserving the memory of the circulation of printed currency through records of accounts and transactions, all minutely noted

and stored in archives that are themselves under tight security: the very records of the political, and therefore economic, organisation of the community. Here, political and economic markers have collapsed, they have foundered in a world of survival where ancient codes have not withstood recent development and its most important consequence, the reversal of the “natural” order of life and death. Thus, the bank and the spaces normally allotted to consumption find themselves freed from any regulations precisely because the order of the world has been overturned.

This first scene at the bank, however, shows a rather measured kind of behaviour couched in a light-hearted free-for-all atmosphere. It contrasts with a second scene presenting a much different set of characters: an organised gang of bikers engaging in a wild raid on the shopping mall that exhibits violence, excess and destruction leading to moments of extreme gore. What at first seemed reasonable and even playful, now clearly gets out of hand. Once the Harley-Davidson gang of bikers invades the mall with their frenzied ‘delight in violence and slaughter’ (Wood 2003: 118), they loot everything in sight including the bank. In effect they ‘constitute a threat both to the zombies and to the besieged’ (118), one step further in the dislocation of society. The gang’s purpose ‘is simply to exploit and profit from that order’s disintegration’ (117). A symbolic change takes place between the first scene, which establishes a certain order in the mall, and the second, which challenges that order. The first is established at the bank with Peter and Stephen’s smiling snapshot and their measured presence in the mall, while the second shows the unbridled and orgiastic gang’s raid on

the mall and its bank. As the bikers open and strip the cash register, there is a sense of excess: they furiously toss the bundles of banknotes into a nondescript army bag, but the circumstance is so unexpected and there is so much money to be had, that in their mad haste to get as much as they can, they hurl fistfuls of it into the air, emphasizing both their unmeasured behaviour as well as the huge quantities of banknotes before them. This large quantity of banknotes is accentuated by the low-angle shot that focuses singularly on them as they fly in the air, suggesting a kind of grim play. *Dawn of the Dead* is, then, clearly about the breakdown and collapse of society as a whole, of its communication, its economy, but also of the state with its rules and institutions. This meltdown is particularly shown, though, in the total breakdown and collapse of money as one of the central institutionalised tools of the State and society.



Dawn of the Dead : banknotes in the air during bikers' raid on mall bank.

With respect to money, *Day of the Dead* starts off where *Dawn of the Dead* left off, except that it is set underground and not in a shopping

mall. In *Day of the Dead*, the former organised life above the ground has been swept away by the overwhelming presence of zombies. Set in a huge underground government storage complex used as a laboratory and barracks, *Day* explores the power relations between the military and civil scientists who are stationed there. Its premise, as shown in the second scene, is that nothing remains of human life in the surrounding region. No longer serving their original purpose, the official buildings of Florida's Fort Myers, now an abandoned town, have been deserted and occupied by zombies. From *Dawn* to *Day of the Dead*, money has gone from still bearing some value and use to one of the many abandoned objects adrift in the streets. As Wood remarks (2003: 289):

Perhaps the most significant progression from *Dawn* to *Day* lies in the images of money: in *Dawn* it was still worth helping oneself from the mall bank, 'just in case', in *Day*, money blows about the abandoned city streets, so much meaningless paper.

Shots of banknotes flying aloft are a recurrent motif in the *Dead* films: in *Dawn of the Dead* the gang throws them in the air; in *Day of the Dead* they are blown away by the wind; in *Land of the Dead* they are blown up and away by a car blast. In the flight of the money, these shots signal the downfall of society and its institutions as symbolized in the meaninglessness of money flying in the air, entirely devoid of significance as a means of exchange and a measure of value. At the end of *Dawn*, dollar banknotes as well as coins have become valueless piles of paper and heaps

of metal with no remaining value. Zombies have taken over the mall and chaos reigns. In a medium-long shot of legs and feet, the zombies trample abandoned banknotes as so many scraps of useless paper.



Dawn of the Dead: zombies trampling dollar bills.



Day of the Dead: dollar bills blown by the wind.



Land of the Dead: dollar bills aloft following Kaufman's car blast.

Money is back again in *Land of the Dead* and is central both visually and in the story's plot. This latest sequel goes further in connecting images of money directly with the total collapse of social structures. Set in the middle of an abandoned US city some years after the country's collapse due to the rise of the flesh-eating dead humans, *Land of the Dead* features Kaufman as a tycoon presiding over the board of directors of Fidler's Green. This enclosed community is very much organised like the country before the "invasion" in terms of its relationship to money. *Land of the Dead* could be a direct sequel, or a complementary film to *Dawn of the Dead*: in the beginning of *Dawn of the Dead*, the official television programs enjoin people to congregate in civic centres supposedly where life protected against the zombies can be organised. In *Day of the Dead*, the first sequence also suggests the existence of communities that seem to have been taken over by zombies not long before the beginning of the film. These centres could very well have been organised like Fidler's Green and collapsed in the same way. *Land of the Dead* could be read as a film depicting less the destiny of a few individuals, than that of the greater masses in the face of the zombie onslaught. In Fidler's Green people abide by Kaufman's rules in his CEO-like way of governing. Fidler's Green is organised on the basis of class and race, with money as central in that process. Dollars are crucial to everyday life and function as a means of power and a means of exchange. Dissidents, political opponents, or those who aid them face torture and death and are summarily disposed of.

Mulligan (Bruce Mc Fee), for example, a figure of the opposition who lives and preaches in a slum outside Fidler's Green, is imprisoned and only escapes an arbitrary death through the ultimate collapse of the community itself. Slack (Asia Argento), suspected of helping Mulligan, finds herself caged in a garish night-club, condemned to be eaten alive by two captive zombies for the entertainment and delight of the crowd.

Lily-white Fidler's Green, a high-rise luxury complex of apartments integrated with shopping mall, welcomes its wealthy inhabitants while leaving the poor under-classes to live and carry on what economic life they can in surrounding slums. Its mercenaries, provided with the latest in sophisticated arms and special equipment, are regularly sent outside to forage for supplies from abandoned shops—supplies that Kaufman and his organisation offer for sale in and outside Fidler's Green.

With Kaufman becoming ever richer and refusing to share any privilege, things start to unravel. While obviously this micro-society is falling apart, Kaufman and Cholo's greed becomes more and more visible. Cholo, in need of social and personal recognition from Kaufman, is careful to bring expensive and unique presents to his boss whenever he goes out to find supplies with Fidler's Green mercenaries. He also does Kaufman special favours as hit man by ridding him of unwanted individuals. At this point, because of his standing with Kaufman, he is quite sure that he deserves his own flat in Fidler's Green. In what proves to be his final encounter with Kaufman, Cholo, much to his surprise, realizes that he will never get his flat or money because of his Latino background and social

class, and that Kaufman, feeling no loyalty, is ready to get rid of him as well.

From here on the plot centres even more on money. Cholo and his contingent of mercenaries “steal” Kaufman’s cherished Dead Reckoning, an expensive (worth two million dollars), large, unique and efficient security vehicle. Like an oversize tank, Dead Reckoning is fitted out with every sort of sophisticated weapon and gadgetry, capable of accommodating a sizable number of combatants. In exchange for Dead Reckoning’s return, Cholo demands personal immunity and the delivery of five million dollars cash from Kaufman. While pretending he will hand over the money, Kaufman organizes a counter-offensive led by Riley (Simon Baker), Cholo’s former commander, and prepares to keep the money for himself.

Paralleling Kaufman and Cholo’s towering greed comes the zombies’ corresponding mental awakening. With the zombies’ rise and the imminent demise of Fidler’s Green, money comes even more centrally to the fore. Kaufman, in his desperate flight, rifles the community’s vault of all its cash and brutally murders members of his “government”. The dollar banknotes are soon enough, if not already, bereft of any value in a world where surviving is all important—and certainly more important than the absurdity of Kaufman’s two pathetic Burberry bags stuffed with worthless money. In the meantime, Cholo, beaten and wounded by a zombie, returns bent wholly on revenge against Kaufman. Kaufman and a now zombified Cholo are hell-bent for a grand finale of destruction. The two of them

together with the greed and values they embody, as well as the bags of money, disintegrate in a car blast brought on by gasoline spread by Big Daddy (Eugene Clark), a leading zombie who stands out in this universe as a former black man.



Land of the Dead: Kaufman stuffs Burberry bag with banknotes from community safe.

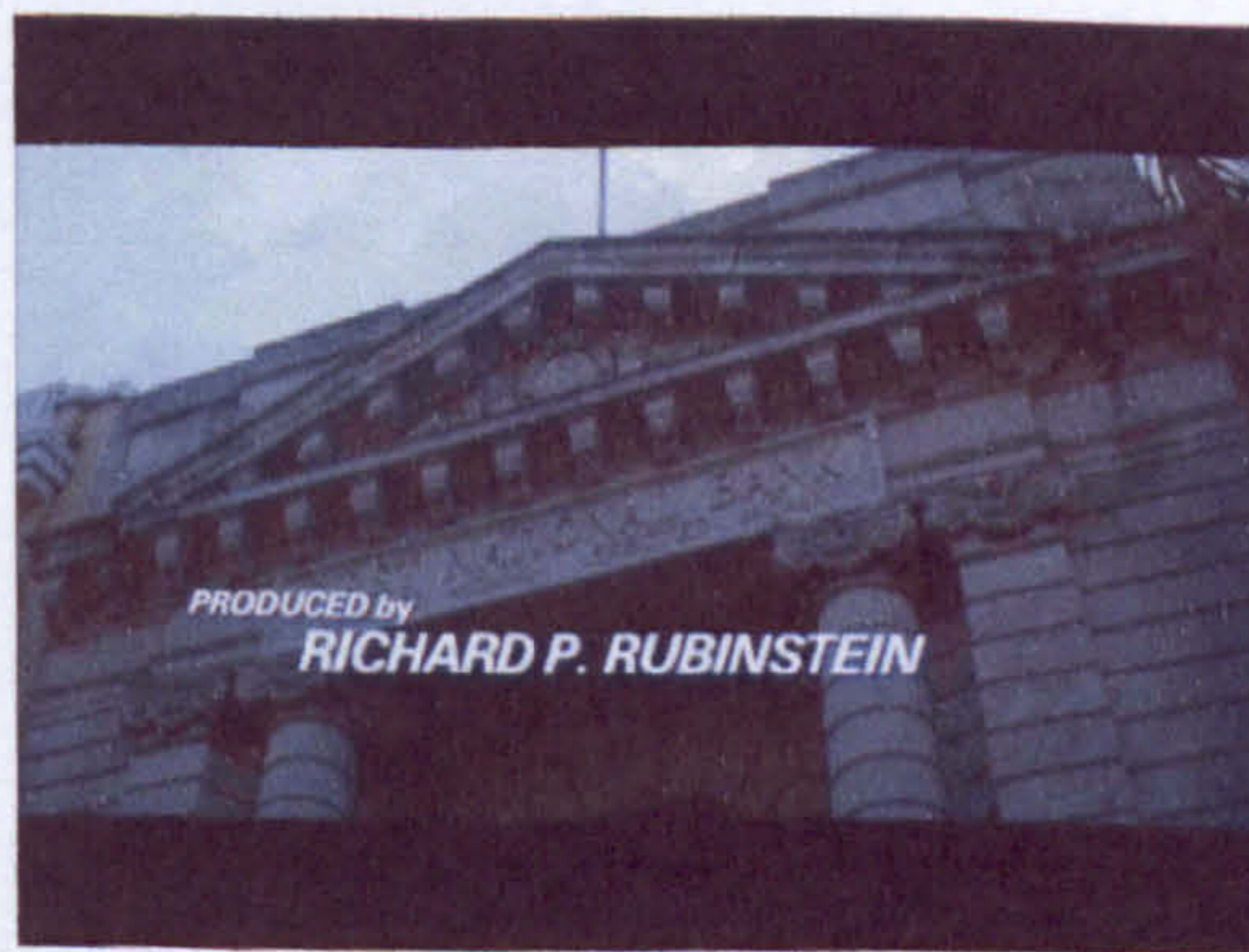
Big Daddy has recovered some intelligence of life and movement outside the zombies' driving instinct to eat raw flesh. All of this figures in the visual context of a shot specifically dedicated to blasted banknotes blown aloft in the air, a dynamic image encompassing the total destruction of the economic, political, and social order Fidler's Green represented in its twisted way. The imagery here, though, goes further than *Dawn and Day of the Dead*: the extreme violence of the scene not only underscores the uselessness of money but its total and absolute destruction. In *Dawn and Day of the Dead* fossils remain of the old society and its institutions, all of which are embodied in *Land of the Dead* by the figure of Kaufman who is ultimately exploded and blown away in the conflagration. All institutions have their total collapse herein.

Money: An Object of the Past

The world of *Dawn* and *Day of the Dead* functions without the practical use of money and when the films represent it, especially in *Day of the Dead*, they do so as if it were something of the past. In *Dawn of the Dead* dollars, although useless and valueless, continue to appear in shopping areas—places formerly devoted to buying and selling. In *Day of the Dead* the dysfunction and dislocation of social, economic and political reality has gone further. The political, economic, social and cultural memory of the country is stored in the underground compound where the protagonists work and hide from the zombies, in a totally altered world where this memory has become meaningless, unnecessary and gratuitous. It is clearly set as a story in which money has lost its function. The film shows money in its new uselessness in the beginning of the film in order to drive home the fact that money no longer matters at all, despite its one-time importance for society and economics, and despite its once absolute necessity for the military and scientific activities at stake here. Money is not shown at all in the underground compound. All this is significantly suggested in the second sequence of the film and presents itself as the logical result of money's loss of value already suggested in *Dawn of the Dead*.

During the credits of *Day of the Dead*, a bank building is shown in a series of shots of institutional buildings in the empty city of Fort Myers. Its name, 'FIRST NATIONAL BANK', sculpted in stone, appears from a low angle. The camera then moves gradually down to the massive entrance with

the door hanging open. An alligator stands on the threshold of the building's doorway. The image leaves no doubt about the loss of function of this space as a bank. A close-up of a skeleton precedes images of dollar bills. Banknotes are strewn about the street as so much rubbish, like dead leaves or the skeleton, fossils of a life now gone. The first shot of dollar bills is immediately juxtaposed with another shot of bills with old newspapers tossed about in the wind. The uselessness of paper money as a tool and measure of value is accentuated here: money lacks any concrete function either for the living or for the dead. As if this were not enough, the zombies all seem slowly to arise and stumble drunkenly in the direction of Sarah (Lori Cardille) and John (Terry Alexander). Two of the zombies come alongside the alligator from inside the abandoned bank, as if to mark the definitive death of all money and banking



Day of the Dead: low-angle shot—Fort Myers' First National Bank.



Day of the Dead: alligator on threshold of abandoned bank building.

Money only exists through a sovereign authority that guarantees its value. But in *Dawn* and *Day of the Dead* the authority, whether the government, the central bank or any other form of national power has vanished and can no longer, therefore, guarantee its value. This aspect is further accentuated in *Land of the Dead*, where dollar bills, once the micro-society of Fidler's Green has fallen apart, are totally worthless both in Fidler's Green and for use in escape from there. In *Dawn* and *Day of the Dead*, dollar bills and coins have lost their significance and regulatory structures: they are the remains of history, a sort of testimony to a past now gone. The mall in *Dawn of the Dead*, as an enclosed space, could be seen as a museum displaying the way people used to live in a former period. In an interview, Romero explains (Jones 2005: 82) that the choice of location, the mall, was significant:

The mall was a temple to the "me" generation of the time ... the stores were symbolic cathedrals meant to appear as an archaeological discovery revealing the gods and customs of a civilization now gone.

In *Dawn of the Dead*, while on the roof of the mall where they have landed, Roger, Peter, Stephen and Francine watch with amazement, through a roof window, the dead creatures wandering in the mall's corridors. They wonder why the zombies are congregating in the mall since they do not shop, or at least do not consume the same way living people do. They do not buy, they do not use money. If the zombies still spend time in the same places as during their life, they nevertheless do not obey the same rules as before. Even though their life is still focused on consumerism—conspicuous consumerism in a way since there is no end to their hunger—this new form of consumerism does not obey any idea of exchange or payment. The distinction between the “meaningful” action of the living and the merely “compulsive” action of the dead is underlined by the dialogue between Stephen and Francine in a scene showing the mall from above and in a series of shots and counter-shots of their faces:

Francine: “What are they doing? Why do they come here?”

Stephen: “Some kind of instinct. Memory. What they used to do.

This is an important place in their lives.”

Zombies have only one goal: to eat the flesh of the living and drink their blood, ‘with the idiotic, implacable single-mindedness of the hungry dead’ (King 1981: 136). Romero observed in an interview: ‘You have to be sympathetic with the creatures because they ain’t doin’ nothing. They’re like sharks: they can’t help behaving the way they do’ (Yakir 1979: 62). Unlike the living though, the zombies are not greedy for money or goods;

they are just greedy for human flesh: living human beings are the only thing that can provide them with the necessary, but never sufficient, amount of it. They are mysteriously driven to devour ceaselessly. Unlike vampires who in their lust for blood find nourishment and continuance in life, the zombies' unbridled drive to consume is apparently defined by no other need than consumption itself. Their whole existence is centred on consumerism, a different kind than the one they used to perform during their lifetime but, as before, it is endless and knows no boundaries. They are dead and remain dead no matter how much they consume; and unlike vampires and their need for blood, zombies seem to require no given amount of flesh and blood to ensure their ability to persist. Their survival does not hinge on their perpetual consumption of flesh.

The mall is a sort of miniature world, a utopia, where all that represents the social and capitalist order is at hand. From the bank to the food store, from clothes to entertainment, everything is on display and available. But money is no longer a key element in this world, like the coins left in the fountain that shine in their uselessness. The bank's cash register is filled with dollars, but these are important only to Peter and Stephen who remember the world they lived in beforehand.

The collapse of social structures has contributed in making this mall space into a display of the past rather than of the present and the future. While the zombies are wandering around the mall, the pre-recorded advertisements for sales and special offers are a reminder of the old invitation to spend money, a kind of historical trace of what the world and

its “order” used to be. They have turned into an outdated soundtrack that has lost its function.

Furthermore, as part of this same idea of a civilisation long gone, all forms of public service are disappearing, dissolving, whether it is the state, or any form of media or information. In *Day of the Dead*, the only authority remaining is the army, but an army that receives no further orders from above. There is no representation of any state or power outside the scientific-military compound.

The exceptional circumstances that have made money available have at the same time made it a useless tool and a non-existent measure of value. In both *Dawn* and *Day of the Dead* money has lost all its function and value, and all financial activity has ceased. Dollar bills bear no exchange-value whatsoever, since no authority guarantees their value, and they have lost their function as a universal equivalent. The link between a nation (the US) and its currency (the US dollar) has lost pertinence.

If one follows the order of the four films, the slow disappearance of the State and its institutions appears clearly. It is carefully staged throughout the films. In each film people live in total isolation from other communities and from a centralised political power. The zombie invasion in *Night of the Living Dead* is stopped by local militia-like groups whose goal is to preserve the now former order in the name of the nation. *Dawn of the Dead*, through the slow death of television transmissions, projects a country gradually ceasing to exist as such. In *Day of the Dead* the loss of any contact with other human beings has already led to the total isolation of

the military-scientific compound now under martial law in the underground complex housing a handful of survivors. And in *Land of the Dead*, the State has disappeared, but has been replaced by a corporation-like form of political power that functions under Kaufman as a capitalist conglomerate.

Institutions, and therefore money, cannot really have any function outside a highly organised political, economic and social system. Fidler's Green is only an artificial world, a kind of dystopia that has been recreated around the mall and its surrounding space. This total space could also be seen as a museum area for the preservation of the past, or of a certain idea of the past, where the dollar used to be central as a measure of value. The artificiality of monetary value, together with the collapse of state institutions, are highlighted here.

Conclusion

In the context of the US in the 1970s and 1980s, both real-estate horror and Romero's zombie films use money as a tool leading to or signifying horror and both show a kind of terror linked to an uncertainty in the value of money at a time when gold is no longer the substance of reference and cash and electronic money hardly mean more, intrinsically, than paper and numbers. *The Amityville Horror* and *Pacific Heights* place economic horror inside individual households, as a threat to bank accounts and to family values rather than as a threat to society as a whole. As Grant remarks, 'in

yuppie horror films, it would seem that to be under funded is more frightening than being undead' (Grant 1996: 287). This remark could equally apply to *The Amityville Horror*, which also runs the threat of bankruptcy parallel to that of life itself. The house is shown both as an economic and emotional investment. In this sense it fits in with the understanding of *pecunia* as one's own property or belongings, invested with feelings, something beyond the mere monetary transaction that is necessary for its purchase.

Moneta here turns into *pecunia* and it is in this transformation that the horrific events can take place. In both films, the house is indeed so over invested with feelings that it is only when horror has become as extreme as a threat to life itself that the Lutzes, in *The Amityville Horror*, and Patty and Drake, in *Pacific Heights*, accept the idea of leaving or selling it.

The house itself is the main protagonist, in a period when money, the universal equivalent, is no longer backed by gold. In this context, the house represents a "real", concrete possession, far from the abstract reality of money. The supposedly secure investment in property is called into question in real-estate horror film: the "evil" or "devil" at work threatens bank accounts in both films in a series of events that are bound to end in financial collapse. Within this dynamic, emphasis on the house as investment, as well as the representation of financial institutions and money, are operative in creating and suggesting horror. The relatively happy endings, however, affirm the family and the couple with their

“good” values and money as set against the “bad” aims of the house itself or of the villain with their threat to life and financial stability.

In contrast, Romero’s zombie films are about the collapse of both the moral and social order within a society as a whole. At the end of *Dawn* and *Land of the Dead* and at the beginning of *Day of the Dead*, money loses its importance as an item of exchange as well as a symbol of wealth. These three films consciously enact a total social, economic and political collapse. In this breakdown money as an essential tool and measure of value quickly loses all its qualities and functions.

Dawn and *Day of the Dead* show it not as destroyed, but as totally powerless and useless in a new world where the invasion of the zombies has brought down all of civilization’s institutions with their rules and regulations. In the three films money ultimately loses all exchange-value. Its lack of any use-value is emphasised: money is useless in the face of the zombie onslaught, useless for safeguarding life or warding off the devouring zombies from their relentless search for living human flesh. It does not work as a weapon, or as any kind of hedge against the zombies in this fight for survival. Dollar bills have been reduced to worthless notes of paper, ordinary paper.

In this connection, *Land of the Dead* goes even further than *Dawn* and *Day of the Dead* by showing the destruction of money in a climactic scene at the end of the film. The shots of blasted dollars blown aloft in the air, among the flames, demonstrates graphically with what ease long-hoarded cash profits can evaporate, stressing once more money’s fragility,

a measure of value that does not depend on its materiality, no matter how durable or solid it may seem. In the end and once again, the films play on money's paradox: it is worth a lot mainly because we give it value and believe in it; while, at the same time, in itself it is worthless, having no intrinsic use-value, since it is really only paper. Moreover, the representation of money not only signals the total breakdown of society, but also the collapse of money as representation of value. It has lost its function as either *pecunia* or *moneta*.

More generally, Waller remarks of post-*Night of the Living Dead* films that, generically (Waller 2000: 264):

Horror defines and redefines, clarifies and obscures the relationship between the human and the monstrous, the normal and the aberrant, the sane and the mad, the natural and the supernatural, the conscious and the unconscious, the daydream and the night-mare, the civilized and the primitive—slippery categories and tenuous oppositions indeed, but the very oppositions and categories that are so essential to our sense of life.

While both groupings of films examined in this chapter establish an opposition between the human, the normal, and the monstrous other, each grouping employs, in its representation of money and horror, the more specific categories cited above. The haunted house, the 'terrible place' film (Clover 1992: 30) uses the categories of 'the normal and the aberrant', 'the

sane and the mad' and, for *The Amityville Horror* at least, 'the natural and the supernatural'. Patty, Drake, Cathy and her children, are normal and sane, unlike Carter and George who are, or grow, aberrant and mad. George's madness results from the otherworldly power of the house, while Carter's is purely mundane. Carter's obsession with money is aberrant and mad from the beginning; and George, by no longer going to work and thus failing to earn money, leads himself and his family to the brink of bankruptcy.

By contrast, Drake and Patty's 'mad' investment in a house is seen as totally normal, a fact emphasised at the ending of the film in which the house, having lost its monstrous power as a money pit, becomes another profitable investment yielding one hundred fifty thousand dollars. Before, it was the 'mad' powers of the San Francisco house and the 'supernatural' ones of the Long Island house that endlessly absorbed the couple and the family's 'sane' money. Money seems to stand on the threshold of each category, a sort of link between two different worlds, that of family and normality, and that of bankruptcy and monstrosity.

The relationship between 'the civilized and the primitive', also at work in the Western and operative in its representation of money, can be applied to the representation of money in Romero's zombie films as well. Here 'normality is threatened by the Monster' (Wood *et al.* 1979: 14). Normality corresponds to 'the civilized' in which money bears a value and has a set of functions; while the monstrous, embodied in the rise of zombies, refers to 'the primitive', a kind of "wilderness", a category in

which money does not hold any value or function whatsoever. Money in the civilized world allows for exchange and is a mechanism of social cohesion, as opposed to the primitive world of the zombies where flesh consumption has replaced any form of social organisation.

The zombie films do not present a dead order of things so much as a radically different order, based on capitalism and its notion of conspicuous consumption, but without the use of its essential tool, money. Money is very much the product of civilisation, almost its “natural” device. The assumption that money seems natural is precisely what Romero challenges in *Dawn, Day* and *Land of the Dead*. The exchange of goods for money has transmogrified into a grotesque flesh consumption and therefore payment through a universal equivalent can now be dispensed with. This is true of all three films. In its finale, however, *Land of the Dead* opens new horizons for the zombies under the tutelage of Big Daddy who helps them remember and re-learn the use of objects and tools—guns, saws, knives and construction implements, but not money. One wonders whether Romero will introduce, in his next zombie film, *Diary of the Dead*, planned for 2007-2008, a new appreciation and use of money for the zombies now that they are slowly recovering their intelligence and realizing that flesh consumption is not “vital”.

CONCLUSION

One of the main paradoxes of money, that it is worth a great deal because we believe in it and simultaneously that it is worth little since it is only composed of paper or metal, offered an organisational problematic for understanding just how money is shown and operates in the four groupings of films under consideration in this thesis. This paradox, running concomitantly with the distinction between money as *moneta* and money as *pecunia*, led, in the course of the research, to a growing awareness of several recurrent patterns in the representation of money.

Whatever the film's origin or production date, the portrayal of money on screen tends to lead the story somewhere else; that is, the portrayal of money acts as a kind of punctuation point resulting in a shift in the action. Money shown usually presages a dark future. Money also appears with heavy "good" and "bad" moral connotations. These patterns play through all four chapters.

Central to the meaning of money, the paradox itself is particularly salient in cinema. Films allow a visual reflection on the overall tension between money as a convention and money as a symbol of value. Films on gold and gold mining in the American West emphasize the quality of gold as a palpable substance that takes the form of gold dust or nuggets. It seems indestructible but in the end, as dust, it can be dispersed as valueless fine particles or, as nuggets, can be shattered into meaningless fragments like so

much stone. In this, gold can be perceived as a valueless substance like money in general, which, outside a given political, economic and social system, is nothing more than that from which it is made. The paradox is raised to a climax in the last scene of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* where the concrete reality of gold dust and its amazing fragility and impermanence are at once highlighted by its nearly instantaneous disappearance, blown away by the wind. Extracted from the soil, gold here is returned to the earth, its source, thereby losing any potential monetary value.

The value of gold, like that of other forms of money, is visually insisted upon as based on social convention. An insistence, likewise, on the exclusively social as well as semiotic dimensions of cash money appears in Romero's *Dawn, Day and Land of the Dead* especially with the banknotes floating aloft in the streets and in the mall, like worthless bits of paper bereft of use. Dollar bills, as basically promissory notes, still refer to money as sign, but have lost all function: they are no longer an index of value and are filmed as dead things alongside other dead objects.

Specific films or groupings of films, furthermore, address the economic, political and social situation as well as the anxieties of individuals as they relate to the value of money in a given place and time. All this depends on when a film is made and what the convention for the value of banknotes, cheques, gold or electronic money is at that time. In the context of the 1970s and 1980s, the terror in horror films in relation to money arises partly from the financial fears concerning the value of the

dollar and the situation of the US economy—the oil crisis of the 1970s and the ambiguous economic growth of the 1980s. Since the severance of the gold-exchange standard (1971), the dollar is no longer backed by gold, it ceases to guarantee ‘absent but potentially recoverable specie’ (Rotman 1987: 88), thus emphasising its lack of intrinsic value in a world of currencies floating against one another. The ‘absolute exclusion of gold from the economic code’ (96), as reflected in the three last chapters of the thesis with the disappearance of gold-backed money, shows what seems to be the loss of transcendental origins, the end of a grounding of money signs in some natural thing imagined to have a pre-monetary worth. In the context of the absence of an anteriority and therefore of an intrinsic iconic value, of ‘a fixed, unchangeable, intrinsic value’ (89), inconvertible money signs become defined in relation to each other.

The absence of an “anterior” thing – gold’ (88) to money, and more specifically to the dollar, explains perhaps investments in other “solid” things. In real-estate nightmare films, the house represents money invested in a supposedly solid and secure object—a comforting substitute for gold, but which itself comes into question as a valuable, or fixed, equivalent for money. House ownership, rather than leading to financial and family stability, becomes a move towards bankruptcy and family dissolution. Within the horror genre Romero’s zombie films not only show the total loss of money’s value and function, but also the collapse of the notion of ownership, one of the basic principles of a capitalist society. Without private property, the need for money itself vanishes.

These films reflect the concern of a specific period in connection with a given country. They are not dissimilar, in this process, from *Greed*, which was read as showing palpable gold as a way to address the anxieties linked to the end of the gold standard (suspended in the US with the outbreak of World War I and definitively abandoned in 1933) and the introduction of more impalpable money in the form of paper and base metal.

The lack of a concrete referent for money is likewise made present in neo-realist films. Cash is specifically shown in its paper form, as if to highlight a certain insecurity with respect to monetary value: the lira banknotes are often not worth more than the paper they are printed on. This is emphasised in recurrent shots in *Umberto D.*, for example, of fistfuls of messy banknotes which, like so much crumpled paper, are never enough to satisfy real need. Money is used in several neo-realist films as a universal equivalent for things that are emphasised in their use-value or in the relationship between their use-value and exchange-value; and, in this sense, the use-value of a given item stands in contrast to the paper out of which banknotes are fabricated and issued as the reflection of a specific nation. The national dimension of money as currency is addressed specifically in the use of money as connected with the restoration of post-war Italy as a nation.

Another dimension of the paradox of money is introduced with French films about high finance. Whether in *La Banquière*, *Le Sucre* or *L'Argent des autres*, money as capital is impalpable: large transactions and

profits are immaterial and only referred to in spoken numbers, written on boards, or visible on screens. The frightening immateriality of finance is contrasted to actual shots of French franc banknotes, as the profits at the Commodities Exchange in *Le Sucre* or the bribes in *La Banquière*, and of gold coins as Louis d'Or in *La Banquière* and in the animation film-within-a-film in *L'Argent des autres*. The materiality of the banknotes and coins seems to give a concrete existence to money. It also projects the central paradox of money on the tension between the immateriality and remoteness of financial transactions and the palpability, and therefore seemingly concrete value, of cash. The visibility of "real money", while referring to relatively smaller transactions than those of high finance, also signifies illegal operations since cash, paradoxically, leaves no trace.

In fact, in most of the films under consideration in this thesis, and in many other films besides, virtually every visible use of money is negative in an art form dependent on it and in a society obsessed with accumulating it. This is one of the other important paradoxes of the representation of money in film that appeared in the course of this research.

Money shown is often the signal that something bad is going to happen, something leading to destruction and death. Furthermore, when it is not totally evil, films tend to create a simplistic contrast between "good" and "bad" money. The division between "good" and "bad" money signals a further division between people and between values other than money (ethical or family values, for example) and functions importantly in the representation of money in the four groupings of films. This aspect stands

out in most of the films examined, and is particularly to the fore in Westerns on gold mining, in the connection of the lira to the nation in neo-realist films and in real-estate horror films.

Westerns, especially after *The Covered Wagon*, feature farmers and cowboys more than miners. One of the explanations for this imbalance is precisely the negative connotation of money here represented as gold. Gold, something taken from the earth, as opposed to crops that are made to grow, has led to the connotation of the miner himself as "bad", compared to the "good" farmer who raises a family and exploits the earth positively on a long-term basis.

In neo-realist films, on the one hand, and especially in *Roma città aperta*, money is essential to the Resistance and is therefore considered "good". On the other hand, drug-money is "bad" money, it signifies the corruption and degradation of individuals and through them that of the nation and its institutions. Money, in itself a neutral object, becomes an item employed in a higher cause and thereby acquires a positive status. Carried by a saintly priest, money is only reinforced in its positive connotations and contrasts directly with money as something negative.

In the world of money depicted in the French films on high finance, money used by the main protagonists is "good" while "bad" money is that used by other bankers, politicians and judges who, by association, are "bad" themselves. Emma in *La Banquière*, for example, the newcomer in banking, is perceived as embodying "good" capital and the victim of the banker Vanister who embodies old capital and uses it in his "bad"

manipulations against her. Shots of cash or cheques, material presentations of money, often signify illegality or presage a “bad” future, from the financial loss announced in the close-up of banknotes in *Le Sucre* to financial bankruptcy in *La Banquière*, corruption, and even death. Traditional banks are typically shown as monumental buildings, and yet cavernous spaces, where “bad” things are portended. This aspect is accentuated visually by the long shots of the Banque Miremant’s large and obscure interiors in *L’Argent des autres* or in Vanister’s bank in *La Banquière*, as opposed to the more transparent and well-lit offices of newer financial players.

Some films establish a basic opposition between the need for money and wanting too much of it, reproducing in this way the “good” versus “bad” dichotomy of money. In films set in the American West, gold employed in setting up a ranch or starting a family is “good”; gold used for its own sake in a capitalist context is “bad” and will lead to a protagonist’s ruin. Gold creates “bad” feelings, desires and such emotions and behaviours as jealousy, greed, and unbridled individualism, all of which can lead to betrayal, theft, and even to murder and ignominious death. This is the case with Dobbs in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, Coy LaHood in *Pale Rider* or the gold hunters in *MacKenna’s Gold*. “Bad” money also leads to “bad” death in horror films. Carter’s evil money manipulations in *Pacific Heights* and the biker gang’s excessive behaviour towards money in *Dawn of the Dead*, result in their terrible death: Carter impaled on a jagged

pipe he has left hanging in his own flat; the bikers devoured by zombies in a grotesque bath of blood and flesh.

The notion of “good” and “bad” money and its consequences cuts across the divide between *pecunia* as monetary belongings invested with feelings and *moneta* as money that is purely a tool of exchange. When *moneta* turns into *pecunia* and is no longer neutral, as in the cash used to save the nation in *Roma città aperta*, it can then assume positive or negative connotations and, in this, highlight values that are themselves perceived as being good or bad.

Gold, a substance that carries in itself its own worth. can function both as a tool of exchange and as a part of one’s capital. This latter understanding carries the emotional weight of gold as one’s personal possession, *pecunia*. The sudden discovery of so much “palpable” in-hand riches can easily become the object of dream and fantasy. Gold seems to be possessed of a kind of supernatural or otherworldly power in its emotive force over people. The kind of magical reality of gold is emphasised in the way it is shot and lit to make it shine and glitter, as in, for example, the scene featuring a shower of gold in *Paint Your Wagon*. Gold, exerting a compulsive influence over human beings, to possess them as it were, emerges in many films on the American frontier as a kind of sinister, “bad” force central to the storyline and the characterization of the protagonists.

While money as the capital of high finance, in its immateriality, is a rather neutral thing, money shown, money made palpable, in this way, whether gold, cash or cheques, functions in all four groupings of films as a

dynamic in setting up a rather sharp dichotomy between “good” and “bad”—good and bad money, good and bad values, good and bad people.

Moreover, the opposition just mentioned reflects the tension, the ambiguous relation between cinema as a capital-driven medium and the negative representation of money on screen. Highlighting, on the one hand, money’s intrinsic lack of value, cinema, on the other, seems to present money as endowed with special evil powers. Many of the films with relatively high production budgets that are cited in this thesis, insist on the “bad” dimension of money. This dynamic stands in contrast to money’s function as a neutral measure of value and tool of exchange and plays itself out in different ways: films on gold often attribute otherworldly powers to gold that comes to carry in itself a “curse”, as Dobbs reflects in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*; French films on high-finance, by creating an aura of mystery and an almost magical dimension of financial operations, keep money at a remove; while horror films build a direct link between money and death. In these films money, despite its intrinsic worthlessness, is animated by a life of its own like a fetish, and is profoundly bad.

As a fetish, money is essentially and *par excellence* an artifice: it is an abstraction that does not refer directly to a product or to the value of the work put into the creation of a product. Money is, however, ‘something made: it is produced. It is the production of desire, namely the desire of presence’ (Nancy 2001: 7). Gold, banknotes or credit cards are basically inanimate objects that, in many of the films studied here, operate through the belief that they carry special, magical powers beyond their existence as

objects. As crystallisations of the monetary abstraction, they are fetishes. Nancy points out that 'the fetish is the *being-there* of a desire, an expectation, an imminence, a power and its presentiment, a force interred in the form and exhumed by it' (6). Many of these films (and especially the ones from the three chapters mentioned above) employ the dimensions of 'fascination' and 'luster' (6) inherent in fetish, to make money a kind of idol with its own powers, usually negative; and this despite its essential lack of value or even of meaning.

Neo-realist films appear to be an exception in this landscape. Perhaps this is because these films are so concerned with demonstrating the low cost of their production on screen and also perhaps because of the attention they pay to other aspects of human life. It seems that it is the protagonists who decide whether to use the object-money for good or bad purposes, rather than money itself.

The film *L'Argent* (1983), too, although not examined in this thesis, represents money visually, and emphatically uses the sound of banknotes being counted in order to insist on how "bad" a thing money is indeed. The line "Argent, Dieu visible" ("Money, God visible") could apply to many other films here in relation to the dichotomy they establish between "good" and "bad" money and "good" and "bad" values. In *L'Argent*, paper money repeatedly shown and in close-up, is operative in signalling violence and death to come. Here more than in many films, "bad" events result from some mysterious power inherent in money itself. It is as if the five-hundred franc banknotes, like 'inanimate objects ... stand out as protagonists'

(Krakauer 1997: 45). The fake banknotes seem endowed with some kind of evil supernatural force of their own. The “bad” dimension of the banknotes is reinforced by their counterfeit character and therefore, a fortiori, worse than “authentic” money as a “real” symbol of value.

In most films under consideration in this thesis, moreover, it is often close-ups of money that draw attention to its “bad” character and function as a turning point in the story. As in *L'Argent*, the close-ups explicitly highlight the evil character of money. The close-ups also work implicitly to deepen the sense of money as worthless.

While the representation of money is not necessarily a central feature in most films, the moments of emphasis on money, usually in close shots or isolated shots, highlight the main paradox of money. The shots that closely focus on images of money, as paper, metal, or electronic money and even as gold, draw attention to the artificiality and fragility of the whole system of money as a universal, unalterable and guaranteed symbol and measure of value. These images seem over and over again to remind the viewer that while money is worth a lot it is still only paper, bits of metal or numbers on a screen, as emphasised in a film like *Plata quemada* (*Burnt Money* 2000) where scenes filmed entirely in close-up show large quantities of Argentinean peso notes set afire and burning like any other paper. This fragility and instability of the money system perhaps explain why money is shown in close-up only at strategic moments, to signify important events. It may very well be that it is too uncomfortable to dwell indefinitely on pieces of paper or bits of metal as so many prompts and

reminders of money's intrinsic worthlessness. It may also be a way to bring to the viewer's attention that, like a fetish, money is an object, a tool of exchange whose meaning and very existence depend primarily on the belief in its value, both pecuniary and as a convenient political, economic and social tool.

Detailed Filmography

CHAPTER TWO: GOLD IN THE AMERICAN WEST

Barbary Coast. Dir. Howard Hawks, Prod. Samuel Goldwyn, Howard Hawks, USA, 1935, 90 min.

Main cast: Miriam Hopkins (Mary Rutledge, also known as Swan), Edward G. Robinson (Louis Chamalis), Joel McCrea (Jim Carmichael), Walter Brennan (Old Atrocity), Frank Craven (Colonel Marcus Aurelius Cobb).

MacKenna's Gold. Dir. J. Lee Thomson, Prod. Highroad, Carl Foreman, USA, 1969, 128 min.

Main cast: Gregory Peck (MacKenna), Omar Sharif (Colorado), Telly Savalas (Sergeant Tibbs), Camilla Sparv (Inga), Keenan Wynn (Sanchez).

Paint Your Wagon. Dir. Joshua Logan, Prod. Alan Jay Lerner, Malpasso, USA, 1969, 166 min.

Main cast: Lee Marvin (Ben Rumson), Clint Eastwood (Pardner), Jean Seberg (Elizabeth), Harve Presnell (Rotten Luck Willie), Ray Walston (Mad Jack Duncan), Tom Ligon (Horton Fenty), Alan Dexter (Parson).

Pale Rider. Dir. Clint Eastwood, Prod. Malpasso, USA, 1985, 115 min.

Main cast: Clint Eastwood (Preacher), Michael Moriarty (Hull), Carrie Snodgrass (Sarah Wheeler), Christopher Penn (Josh LaHood), Richard Dysart (Coy LaHood).

Treasure of the Sierra Madre, The. Dir. John Huston, Prod. Warner Bros., USA, 1948, 124 min.

Main cast: Humphrey Bogart (Fred C. Dobbs), Walter Huston (Howard), Tim Holt (Curtin), Bruce Bennett (Cody), Barton MacLane (Pat McCormick).

CHAPTER THREE: PAPER MONEY IN NEO-REALIST FILMS

Il cammino della speranza (The Road to Hope). Dir. Pietro Germi, Prod. Lux, Italy, 1950, 105 min.

Raf Vallone (Saro Cammarata), Elena Varza (Barbara Spadaro), Saro Urzi (Ciccio Ingaggiatore), Franco Navarra (Vanni), Liliana Lattanzi (Rosa).

Ladri di biciclette (Bicycle Thieves). Dir. Vittorio de Sica, Prod. PDS, ENIC, Italy, 1948, 90 min.

Main cast: Lamberto Maggiorani (Antonio Ricci), Lianella Carell (Maria Ricci), Enzo Staiola (Bruno Ricci), Elena Altieri (The Lady), Gino Saltamarenda (The Thief), Gino Saltamerenda (Bajocco).

Roma città aperta (Rome Open City). Dir. Roberto Rossellini, Prod. Minerva, Italy, 1945, 101 min.

Main cast : Aldo Fabrizi (Don Pietro), Anna Magnani (Pina), Marcello Pagliero (Giorgio Manfredi), Maria Michi (Marina), Harry Feist (Bergmann).

Senza pietà (Without Pity). Dir. Alberto Lattuada, Prod. Lux, Italy, 1948, 94 min.

Main cast : Carla Del Poggio (Angela), John Kitzmiller (Jerry), Folco Lulli (Giacomo), Giuletta Massina (Marcella), Otello Fava (Dumb Man).

La terra trema (The Earth Trembles). Dir. Luchino Visconti, Prod. Universal Film, Italy, 1948, 160 min.

Main cast : Antonio Arcidiacono ('Ntoni), Giuseppe Arcidiacono (Cola), Antonio Micale (Vanni), Salvatore Vicari (Alfio), Giovanni Greco (Grandfather).

Umberto D. Dir. Vittorio de Sica, Prod. Dear Films, Italy, 1951, 89 min.

Main cast : Carlo Battisti (Umberto D. Ferrari), Maria Pia Casilio (Maria), Lina Gannari (Landlady), Memmo Carotenuto (man in hospital).

CHAPTER FOUR: HIGH FINANCE IN FRENCH CINEMA

L'Argent des autres (Other People's Money). Dir. Christian de Chalonges, Prod. Fildebroc, FR3 Cinéma, SFP Cinéma, Les Films de la tour, France, 1978, 105 min.

Main cast: Jean-Louis Trintignant (Henri Rainier), Claude Brasseur (Chevalier d'Aven), Michel Serrault (Miremant), Catherine Deneuve (Cécile).

La Banquière (The Woman Banker). Dir. Francis Girod, Prod. Partners Production, FR3 Cinéma, SFP Cinéma, France, 1980, 130 min.

Main cast: Romy Schneider (Emma Eckhert), Jean-Louis Trintignant (Horace Vanister), Jean-Claude Brialy (Paul Cisterne), Daniel Mesguich (Rémy Lecoudray).

Demonlover. Dir. Olivier Assayas, Prod. Elizabeth Films, M6 Films, Citizen Films, France, 2001, 130 min.

Main cast: Connie Nielsen (Dianne de Monx), Charles Berling (Hervé Le Millinec), Chloë Sevigny (Elise Lipsky), Gina Gershon (Elaine Si Gibril), Dominique Reymond (Karen).

Mille milliards de dollars (A Thousand Billion Dollars). Dir. Henri Verneuil, Prod. Films A2, V. Films, SFP Cinéma, France, 1981, 132 min.

Main cast: Patrick Dewaere (Paul Kerjean), Mel Ferrer (Cornelius A. Woeagen), Caroline Cellier (Hélène Kerjean), Anny Duperey (Laura Weber).

Le Sucre (Sugar). Dir. Jacques Rouffio, Prod. Cinéproductions, SFP Cinéma, Gaumont, France, 1978.

Main Cast: Jean Carmet (Adrien Courtois), Gérard Depardieu (Renaud d'Homécourt de la Vibraye, also called Raoul), Michel Piccoli (Grezillo), Roger Hanin (Karbaoui).

CHAPTER FIVE: MONEY AND HORROR

Amityville Horror, The. Dir. Stuart Rosenberg, Prod. American International Pictures (AIP), Cinema 77, Professional Films, USA, 1979, 117 min.

Main cast: James Brolin (Georges Lutz), Margot Kidder (Kathleen Lutz), Rod Steiger (Father Delaney), Don Stroud (Father Bolen), John Larch (Father Nuncio).

Dawn of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero, Prod. Laurel Group, USA, 1978, 139 min.

Main cast: David Emg (Stephen Andrews), Ken Foree (Peter Washington), Scott H. Reiniger (Roger DeMarco), Gaylen Ross (Francine), David Crawford (Dr. Foster).

Day of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero, Prod. Laurel Communications, USA, 1985, 101 min.

Main cast: Lori Cardille (Sarah), Terry Alexander (John), Joseph Pilato (Capt. Rhodes), Antone DiLeo Jr. (Miguel), Richard Liberty (Dr. Logan).

Land of the Dead. Dir. George A. Romero, Prod. Atmosphere Entertainment, Aurora Entertainment, Exception Wild Bunch, Laurel Entertainment, Romero-Grunwald Productions, USA/France, 2005, 93 min.

Main cast: Simon Baker (Riley), John Leguizamo (Cholo), Dennis Hopper (Kaufman), Asia Argento (Slack), Robert Joy (Charlie).

Night of the Living Dead. Dir. George A. Romero, Prod. Image Ten, Laurel Group, Market Square Productions, Off Color Films, USA, 1968, 96 min.

Main cast: Duane Jones (Ben), Judith O'Dea (Barbara), Russel Streiner (Johny), Karl Hardman (Harry Cooper), Marilyn Eastman (Helen Cooper).

Pacific Heights. Dir. John Schlesinger, Prod. Morgan Creek, USA, 1990, 102 min.

Main cast: Melanie Griffith (Patty Palmer), Matthew Modine (Drake Goodman), Michael Keaton (Carter Hayes), Mako (Toshio Watanabe), Nobu Mc Carthy (Mira Watanabe).

General Filmography

- Abenteuer eines Zehnmarkscheines, Die* (*The Adventures of a Ten Mark Note*) (Bethold Viertel, Germany, 1926)
- After Hours* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1985)
- Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (*Aguirre, the Wrath of God*) (Werner Herzog, West Germany/Peru/Mexico, 1972)
- americano in vacanza, Un* (*An American on Holiday*, aka *A Yank in Rome*) (Luigi Zampa, Italy, 1945)
- Amityville 2: The Possession* (Damiano Damiani, USA, 1982)
- Amityville 3 – D* (Richard Fleischer, USA, 1983)
- Amityville 4: The Evil Escapes* (Sandor Stern, USA, 1989)
- Amityville 1992: It's About Time* (Tony Randel, USA, 1992)
- Amityville: A New Generation* (John Murlowski, USA, 1992)
- Amityville Curse, The* (Tom Berry, USA/Canada, 1990)
- Amityville Dollhouse* (Steve White, USA, 1996)
- Amityville Horror, The* (Stuart Rosenberg, USA, 1979)
- Amityville Horror, The* (Andrew Douglas, USA, 2005)
- Amityville: Horror or Hoax?* (Daniel Farrands, USA, 2000 [TV Documentary])
- Amityville: The Haunting* (Daniel Farrands, USA, 2000 [TV Documentary])
- À Nous deux, madame la vie* (René Guissart and Yves Mirande, France, 1936)
- Antoine et Antoinette* (Jacques Becker, France, 1947)
- Argent, L' (Money)* (Marcel L'Herbier, France, 1928)
- Argent, L' (Money)* (Robert Bresson, France, 1983)
- Argent, L' (Money)* (Jacques Rouffio, France, 1988 [TV])
- Argent des autres, L' (Other People's Money)* (Christian de Chalonges, France, 1978)

Asphalt Jungle (John Huston, USA, 1950)

Association de malfaiteurs (Gangsters' Partnership) (Claude Zidi, France, 1986)

Associé, L' (The Associate) (René Gainville, France, 1979)

Au Hasard Balthazar (Robert Bresson, France, 1965)

Avec le sourire (With a Smile) (Maurice Tourneur, France, 1936)

Baccara (Yves Mirande and Leonide Moguy, France, 1935)

Bad Influence (Curtis Hanson, USA, 1990)

Bande à part (Band of Outsiders) (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1964)

bandito, Il (The Bandit) (Alberto Lattuada, Italy, 1946)

Banque Némó, La (The Nemo Bank) (Marguerite Viel, France, 1934)

Banqueroute (Bankruptcy) (Antoine Desrosières, France, 2000)

Banquière, La (The Woman Banker) (Francis Girod, France, 1980)

Barbary Coast (Howard Hawks, USA, 1935)

Bat Whispers, The (Roland West, USA, 1930)

Bat, The (Roland West, USA, 1926)

Bend of the River (Anthony Mann, USA, 1952)

Big One, The (Michael Moore, USA, 1998)

Birds, The (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1963)

Blue Velvet (David Lynch, USA, 1986)

Boiler Room (Ben Younger, USA, 2000)

Bowling for Columbine (Michael Moore, USA, 2002)

Broncho Billy and the Claim Jumpers (Broncho Billy Anderson, USA, 1915)

Caccia tragica (The Tragic Hunt) (Giuseppe de Santis, Italy, 1948)

California Gold Rush (R.G. Springsteen, USA, 1946)

California Gold Rush (Jack B. Hively, USA, 1981 [TV])

California in '49 (Jacques Jaccard, USA, 1924),

cammino della speranza, Il (The Road to Hope) (Pietro Germi, Italy, 1950)

Canadian Bacon (Michael Moore, USA, 1995)

Carrie (Brian de Palma, USA, 1976)

Cat and the Canary, The (Paul Leni, USA, 1927)

Cat and the Canary, The (Elliott Nugent, USA, 1939)

Cat and the Canary, The (Radley Metzger, USA, 1979)

Ces Messieurs de la Santé (Pierre Colombier, France, 1933)

Christmas in July (Preston Sturges, USA, 1941)

Chute de la maison Usher, La (The Fall of the House of Usher) (Jean Epstein, France, 1928)

Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, USA, 1941)

città si difende, La (The City Defends Herself, aka Four Ways Out) (Pietro Germi, Italy, 1951)

Corporation, The (Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, USA, 2003)

Coup de foudre (At First Sight) (Diane Kurys, France, 1983)

Covered Wagon, The (James Cruze, USA, 1923)

Crossroads (Walter Hill, USA, 1986)

Da Vinci Code, The (Ron Howard, USA, 2006)

David Golder (Julien Duvivier, France, 1930)

Dawn of the Dead (George A. Romero, USA, 1978)

Dawn of the Dead (Zack Snyder, USA, 2004)

Day of the Dead (George A. Romero, USA, 1985)

Days of '49 (Jacques Jaccard and Jay Marchant, USA, 1924)

Demonlover (Olivier Assayas, France, 2001)

Dernier domicile connu (Last Known Address) (José Giovanni, France, 1969)

Dernier milliardaire, Le (The Last Billionaire) (René Clair, France, 1934)

Desert Greed (aka Greed of Gold) (Jacques Jaccard, USA, 1926)

Desperately Seeking Susan (Susan Seidelman, USA, 1985)

Diary of the Dead (George A. Romero, USA [in production])

Due soldi di speranza (Two Pennies of Hope) (Renato Castellani, Italy, 1952)

Enron: the Smartest Guys in the Room (Alex Gibney, USA, 2005)

État de grâce, L' (State of Grace) (Jacques Rouffio, France, 1986)

Étrange affaire, Une (A Strange Affair) (Pierre Granier-Deferre, France, 1981)

Exorcist, The (William Friedkin, USA, 1973)

Fahrenheit 9/11 (Michael Moore, USA, 2004)

Faites sauter la banque (Rob the Bank) (Jean Girault, France, 1963)

Fall of the House of Usher, The (Melville Webber, USA, 1928)

Fall of the House of Usher, The (Curtis Harrington, USA, 1942)

Fall of the House of Usher, The (Ivan Barnett, USA, 1949)

Fall of the House of Usher, The (Robert Esson, USA, 1958 [TV])

Fall of the House of Usher, The (James L. Conway, USA, 1978)

Fall of the House of Usher, The (Stephen Lord, USA, 1982)

Fall of the House of Usher, The (Alan Birkinshaw, South Africa, 1988)

Far Country, The (Anthony Mann, USA, 1954)

Fast Food Nation (Richard Linklater, USA, 2006)

Fatal Attraction (Adrian Lyne, USA, 1987)

Faustrecht der Freiheit (Fox and his Friends) (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, West Germany, 1975)

Femme douce, Une (A Gentle Woman) (Robert Bresson, France, 1968)

Flaming Forties, The (Tom Forman, USA, 1924)

Fog, The (John Carpenter, USA, 1980)

Fortune (Henri Colpi, France/Switzerland, 1969 [TV])

Franc, Le (Djibril Diop Manbety, Senegal/Switzerland, France, 1994)

Fuga in Francia (Flight into France) (Mario Soldati, Italy, 1948)

Future of Food, The (Deborah Koons, USA, 2004)

General Sutter (Benny Fasnacht, Switzerland, 1999)

Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford (Frank Borzage, USA, 1921)

Glory (Edward Zwick, USA, 1989)

Gold and Glitter (D. W. Griffith, USA, 1912)

Gold Diggers, The (Sally Potter, UK, 1983)

Gold Diggers of 1933 (Mervyn LeRoy, USA, 1933)

Gold in New Frisco (Paul Verhoeven, Germany, 1939)

Gold is Not All (D. W. Griffith, USA, 1910)

Gold is Where You Find It (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1938)

Gold Madness (Robert T. Thornby, USA, 1923)

Gold Prospectors, The (Pathé Frères, France, 1909)
Gold Rush, The (Charles Chaplin, USA, 1925)
Gold Seekers, The (D.W. Griffiths, USA, 1910)
Gone with the Wind (Victor Fleming, USA, 1939)
Greed (Eric von Stroheim, USA, 1924)
Guerre des polices, La (The Police War) (Robin Davis, France, 1979)
Hand that Rocks the Cradle, The (Curtis Hanson, USA, 1992)
Hang 'Em High (Clint Eastwood, USA, 1968)
Haunted House, The (prod. S. Lubin, USA, 1899)
Haunted House (Segundo de Chomón, France, 1906)
Haunted House of Horror, The (Michael Armstrong, UK, 1969)
Haunted Spooks (Alfred J. Goulding and Hal Roach, USA, 1920)
Haunting, The (Robert Wise, USA, 1963)
Heaven's Gate (Michael Cimino, USA, 1980)
Heroes for Sale (William A. Wellman, USA, 1933)
Herrgottsgrenadiere, Die (aka Goldene Gletscher) (Anton Kutte, Switzerland/Germany, 1932)
Hills Have Eyes, The (Wes Craven, USA, 1977)
Hold-up (Alexandre Aracdy, France, 1985)
Honey Pot, The (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, USA, 1965)
House, The (Steve Miner, USA, 1986)
House 2: The Second Story (Ethan Wiley, USA, 1987)
House 4: Home Deadly Home (Lewis Abernathy, USA, 1991)
House in Nightmare Park, The (Peter Sykes, UK, 1973)
House of Dies Drear, The (Allan Goldstein, USA, 1984[TV])
House of Fear, The (Roy William Neill, USA, 1945)
House of the Black Death, The (Harold Daniels and Reginald LeBorg, USA, 1965)
House of the Living Dead (Ray Austin, South Africa, 1973)
House of the Long Shadows (Pete Walker, UK, 1982)
House of Usher (Roger Corman, USA, 1960)
House of Usher (Hayley Cloake, USA, 2005)

House on Haunted Hill (William Castle, USA, 1959)

House on Tombstone Hill, The (James Riffel, USA, 1992)

House that Bled Death, The (Tom Clegg and Francis Megahy, UK, 1981)

House where Evil Dwells (Kevin Connor, USA/Japan, 1982)

House, The (Steve Miner, USA, 1986)

Hundimiento de la casa Usher, El (Revenge in the House of Usher) (Jesús Franco, Spain, 1983)

I love \$ (Johan van der Keuken, The Netherlands, 1986)

If I Had a Million (Lubitsch, Cruze, Seiter, Humberstone *et al.*, USA, 1932)

Imprécateur, L' (The Accuser) (Jean-Louis Bertucelli, France/Suisse, 1977)

Into the Night (John Landis, USA, 1985)

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, USA, 1956)

It's Alive (Larry Cohen, USA, 1974)

Ivresse du pouvoir, L' (A Comedy of Power) (Claude Chabrol, France, 2006)

Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern (Hunting Tales From Lower Bavaria) (Peter Fleischmann, West Germany, 1969)

Jud Süß (Jew Süss) (Veit Harlan, Germany, 1940)

Juge Fayard dit le shériff, Le (Judge Fayard Called the Sheriff) (Yves Boisset, France, 1976)

Kaiser von Kalifornien, Der (The Emperor from California) (Luis Trenker, Germany, 1936)

Key Largo (John Huston, USA, 1948)

Killing, The (Stanley Kubrick, USA, 1956)

King Kong (Peter Jackson, USA, 2005)

Ladri di biciclette (Bicycle Thieves) (Vittorio de Sica, Italy, 1948)

Lady from Shanghai, The (Orson Welles, USA, 1949)

Land of the Dead (George A. Romero, USA, 2005)

Last House on the Left, The (Wes Craven, USA, 1972)

Last Seduction, The (John Dahl, USA, 1994)

Laurel-Hardy Murder Case, The (James Parrott, USA, 1930)

Lights Out (Arch Oboler, 1949 [TV series]),
Lost in America (Albert Brooks, USA, 1985)
Luck of Roaring Camp, The (Edwin S. Porter, USA, 1909)
Luck of Roaring Camp, The (Floyd France, USA, 1917)
Luck of Roaring Camp, The (I. Willat, USA, 1937)
MacKenna's Gold (J. Lee Thomson, USA, 1969)
Madame Claude (Just Jaeckin, France, 1977)
Magnificent Ambersons, The (Orson Welles, USA, 1942)
Maltese Falcon, The (John Huston, USA, 1941)
Manon (Henri-Georges Clouzot, France, 1949)
Mike's Murder (James Bridges, USA, 1984)
Mille milliards de dollars (A Thousand Billion Dollars) (Henri Verneuil, France, 1981)
Million Pound Note, The (Ronald Neame, UK, 1953)
Million, Le (The Million) (René Clair, France, 1931)
Millions (Dany Boyle, UK/USA, 2004)
Miracle of Money, The (Hobart Henley, USA, 1921)
Miracolo a Milano (Miracle in Milan) (Vittorio de Sica, Italy, 1951)
Moi y'en a vouloir des sous (Me, I Want to Have Dough) (Jean Yanne, France, 1973)
Money! Money! Money! (Tom Forman, USA, 1923)
Monsieur Verdoux (Charles Chaplin, USA, 1947)
Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (Frank Capra, USA, 1936)
My Darling Clementine (John Ford, USA, 1946)
Naked Spur, The (Anthony Mann, USA, 1953)
Napoli milionaria (Naples Millionaire) (Eduardo de Filippo, Italy, 1950)
Network (Sidney Lumet, USA, 1976)
Night of the Hunter, The (Charles Laughton, USA, 1955)
Night of the Living Dead (George A. Romero, USA, 1968)
notti di Cabiria, Le (Nights of Cabiria) (Federico Fellini, Italy, 1957)
Nouveaux maîtres, Les (The New Masters) (Paul Nivoix, France, 1949)
Nouveaux riches, Les (The New Rich) (André Berthomieu, France, 1938)

Nugget of Gold, A (Lubin Manufacturing Co., USA, 1909),
Old Dark House, The (James Whale, USA, 1932)
Old Dark House, The (William Castle, UK, 1963)
Omen, The (Richard Donner, UK/USA, 1976)
On a volé la cuisse de Jupiter (Someone stole Jupiter's Thigh) (Philippe de Broca, France, 1980)
One Exciting Night (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1922),
onorevole Angelina, L' (The Honourable Angelina) (Luigi Zampa, Italy, 1948)
Our Daily Bread (King Vidor, USA, 1934)
Outcasts of Poker Flat, The (John Ford, USA, 1919)
Outcasts of Poker Flat, The (Christy Cabanne, USA, 1937)
Outcasts of Poker Flat, The (Joseph M. Newman, USA, 1952)
Pacific Heights (John Schlesinger, USA, 1990)
Paint Your Wagon (Joshua Logan, USA, 1969)
Paisà (Paisan) (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1946)
Pale Rider (Clint Eastwood, USA, 1985)
Panning in Dakota (John C. H. Grabill, USA, 1889)
Passion of Christ, The (Mel Gibson, USA, 2004)
Pickpocket (Robert Bresson, France, 1959)
Plata quemada (Burnt Money) (Marcelo Piñeyro, Argentina/France/Spain/Uruguay, 2000)
Plötzliche Reichtum der armen Leute von Kombach, Der (The Sudden Wealth of the Poor People of Kombach) (Volker Schlöndorff, West Germany, 1971)
Point Blank (John Boorman, USA, 1967)
Poison Ivy (Katt Shea Ruben, USA, 1992)
Poltergeist (Tobe Hooper, USA, 1982)
Prix du danger, Le (The Prize of Peril) (Yves Boisset, France, 1982)
Profit & Nothing But! Or Impolite Thoughts on the Class Struggle (Raoul Peck, France/Belgium/Haiti, 2001)
Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960)

Quatrième pouvoir, Le (The Fourth Power) (Serge Leroy, France, 1985)

Quella villa accanto al cimitero (House by the Cemetery) (Lucio Fulci, Italy, 1981)

Quick Millions (Rowland Brown, USA, 1931)

Ride the High Country (Sam Peckinpah, USA, 1961)

Riso amaro (Bitter Rice) (Giuseppe de Santis, Italy, 1948)

Rive droite, rive gauche (Right Bank, Left Bank) (Philippe Labro, France, 1984)

River of no Return, The (Otto Preminger, USA, 1954)

Roger and Me (Michael Moore, USA, 1989)

Rogue Trader (James Dearden, UK, 1999)

Rollover (Alan J. Pakula, USA, 1981)

Roma città aperta (Rome Open City) (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1945)

Roma città libera (Rome Free City) (Marcello Pagliero, Italy, 1946)

Rosemary's Baby (Roman Polanski, USA, 1968)

Royal Hunt of the Sun, The (Irving Lerner, USA/UK, 1969)

Scarface (Howard Hawks, USA, 1932)

Scarface (Brian de Palma, USA, 1983)

Scuscià (Shoeshine) (Vittorio de Sica, Italy, 1946)

Secret of my Success, The (Herbert Ross, USA, 1987)

Senza pietà (Without Pity) (Alberto Lattuada, Italy, 1948)

Shane (George Stevens, USA, 1953)

She Must be Seeing Things (Sheila McLaughlin, USA, 1987)

Shining, The (Stanley Kubrick, UK/USA, 1980)

Shivers (David Cronenberg, USA, 1975)

Silver City (John Sayles, USA, 2004)

Single White Female (Barbet Schroeder, USA, 1992)

Sirène du Mississipi, La (Mississippi Mermaid) (François Truffaut, France, 1969)

Something Wild (Jonathan Demme, USA, 1986)

Sotto il sole di Roma (Under the Sun of Rome) (Renato Castellani, Italy, 1948)

Sucre, Le (Sugar) (Jacques Rouffio, France, 1978)
Stavisky (Alain Resnais, France, 1973)
Stilte Rond Christine M., De (A Question of Silence) (Marleen Gorris, The Netherlands, 1982)
Supersize Me (Morgan Spurlock, USA, 2004)
Suspiria (Dario Argento, Italy/West Germany, 1977)
Sutter's Gold (James Cruze, USA, 1936)
Take, The (Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein, Canada, 2004)
Tales of Mystery and Imagination (Kim Mills, UK, 1966 [TV])
Temp, The (Tom Holland, USA, 1993)
Tendre poulet (Dear Detective) (Philippe de Broca, France, 1977)
Tenebrae (Dario Argento, Italy, 1982)
Tennessee's Partner (George Melford, USA, 1916)
Tennessee's Partner (Allan Dwan, USA, 1954)
terra trema, La (The Earth Trembles) (Luchino Visconti, Italy, 1948)
Terror in the Haunted House (Harold Daniels, USA, 1958)
Terror, The (Roy Del Ruth, USA, 1928)
Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The (Tobe Hooper, USA, 1974)
That Certain Thing (Frank Capra, USA, 1928)
Tide of Empire (Allan Dwan, USA, 1929)
Titanic (James Cameron, USA, 1997)
Tombolo paradiso nero (Tombolo Black Paradise) (Giorgio Ferroni, Italy, 1947)
Tout feu, tout flamme (All Fired Up) (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, France, 1982)
Trading Places (John Landis, USA, 1983)
Tramp in the Haunted House (American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., USA, 1900)
tre volti della paura, I (The Three Faces of Fear) (Mario Bava, Italy/France, 1963)
Treasure of the Sierra Madre, The (John Huston, USA, 1948)
Tunnel, Le (The Tunnel) (Bernhardt, France, 1933)
Umberto D. (Vittorio de Sica, Italy, 1951)

Uninvited, The (Lewis Allen, USA, 1944)
Usher (Curtis Harrington, USA, 2002).
Vengeance d'une blonde, La (Revenge of a Blonde) (Jeannot Swarc, France, 1994)
Violence des échanges en milieu tempéré (aka Work Hard Play Hard) (Jean-Marc Moutout, France, 2003)
Wal Mart: The High Cost of Low Price (Robert Greenwald, USA, 2005)
Wall Street (Oliver Stone, USA, 1987)
Way Out West (James W. Horne, USA, 1937)
Wedding March, The (Erich von Stroheim, USA, 1928)
Working Girl (Mike Nichols, USA, 1988)
Yes Men, The (Dana Ollman, Sarah Price and Chris Smith, USA, 2003)
Young Mr. Lincoln (John Ford, USA, 1939)
Zabriskie Point (Michelangelo Antonioni, USA, 1970)
Zanik domu Usheru (House of Usher) (Jan Svankmajer, Czechoslovakia, 1981)
Ziemia Obiecana (The Promised Land) (Andrzej Wajda, Poland, 1974)

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