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# Argent, pouvoir et représentations

sous la direction de  
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## Sommaire

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Introduction .....	11
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### PERSPECTIVES HISTORIQUES ET ÉCONOMIQUES

“Neither a borrower nor a lender be”: Debts, Personality and Culture in American History .....	21
Rob KROES	
The Rise and Fall of Herbert Marcuse .....	37
Steve WHITFIELD	
Money and riches in the early liberal tradition: the roots of an all-encompassing money value and the correlation between money and power .....	53
Andrew IVES	
« A Set of Gamblers for Rulers » : Une certaine vision du premier Congrès des États-Unis .....	65
Sylvie SMOCZEK	
Stand or deliver? Nationalism and trade, two antagonists in the quest for European peace (1900-1914) .....	81
Flavien BARDET	
Dynamiques monétaires et représentations : la puissance américaine en question ? .....	95
Pierre ARNAUD	

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## DROIT, POUVOIRS ET INSTITUTIONS

- Les États-Unis sont-ils une ploutocratie :  
la Cour suprême face aux pouvoirs politique et économique .....121  
Anne DEYSINE
- The Paradox of American Democracy:  
Money and Politics in State Judicial Elections in the U.S. ....141  
Pawel LAIDLER
- Argent, pouvoir et représentation invisible :  
la pieuvre Koch/Kochtopus .....159  
Marie-Christine PAUWELS
- Représentation diplomatique des États-Unis :  
contraintes sécuritaire et financière .....173  
Raphaël RICAUD
- Femmes, argent et pouvoir aux États-Unis .....193  
Pierre-Marie LOIZEAU
- American Islamic Charities in an Age of Terrorism:  
The Holy Land Foundation as a Case Study .....207  
Lanouar BEN HAFSA

## L'IMPACT SOCIAL DE LA FINANCE

- Détroit, crise financière, crise urbaine : ancrage dans le territoire,  
pratiques alternatives et renaissance de la ville.  
Quels droits ? Quels pouvoirs ? .....231  
Laurence GERVAIS
- La paupérisation, ennemie redoutable de la démocratie .....247  
Jean-Philippe MELCHIOR
- The Politics of Financial Reform:  
How the U.S. Model of Securities Regulation Spread Overseas .....263  
Yves-Marie PÉRÉON

- Argent et pouvoir aux États-Unis :  
quelle place pour les pauvres ? .....275  
Taoufik DJEBALI
- Le Mexique après trente ans de politiques néolibérales :  
répartition de la richesse et pauvreté .....287  
Juan José CARRILLO NIETO

## ART, LITTÉRATURE ET THÉORIE

- Argent, marchandisation et déconstruction de la société  
de consommation dans les photomontages de Barbara Kruger .....307  
Eliane ELMALEH
- Pouvoirs de l'argent et mort du désir  
dans *Gone Girl* de Gillian Flynn .....327  
Redouane ABOUEDDAHAB
- This is Money and Power;  
or Thinking Materialism with James and Balzac .....347  
Erik RORABACK
- Los Angeles et l'opulence monétaire :  
nouveaux modes de représentation entre polarisation normative  
et démocratisation de l'indécence .....365  
Charles JOSEPH
- L'argent et le pouvoir dans la Bible :  
quelques réflexions d'ordre théologique .....385  
Jean-Marc CHADELAT

## Introduction

*Money is power, and power, ladies and gentlemen,  
is not self-sacrificing or democratic.*

Lewis H. Lapham

Un colloque international fut organisé à l'université Paris Ouest Nanterre les 21 et 22 novembre 2014 sur le thème de « Argent, Pouvoir et Représentations ». Le présent ouvrage résulte d'un processus de sélection et regroupe environ la moitié des communications de ce colloque dont l'ambition était de fédérer des travaux de type historique, politique, sociologique ou littéraire pour croiser les analyses des effets de l'argent sur le pouvoir et des effets de pouvoir dans divers domaines.

L'ouvrage présenté ici tient les promesses du colloque puisque des communications sur les États-Unis, la Grande-Bretagne ou le Mexique croisent des analyses portant sur la France. Des articles sur des productions littéraires ou les arts voisinent avec des chapitres sur l'économie, le droit, la science politique ou l'histoire.

Longtemps avant l'émergence du néolibéralisme, au début du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle, le sociologue allemand Georg Simmel dans sa *Philosophie des Geldes* (Philosophie de l'argent) défendait l'idée que l'argent était devenu Dieu en devenant « un but en soi » ; le culte de l'argent avait, disait-il, détrôné la religion organisée. Il proposait une approche de ce phénomène qui ne se réduirait pas à l'économie. John Kenneth Galbraith, quant à lui, se demandait en 1975 dans son livre *Money : Whence It Came, Where It Went* (titre français : *L'Argent*) : « Pourquoi est-ce que quelque chose d'intrinsèquement sans valeur, est de façon si évidente désirable ? »

Ce livre collectif permet de répondre en partie à la question et d'appréhender la double nature de l'argent, que l'on qualifie « d'équivalent universel », ainsi que ses relations avec le pouvoir. Dans toutes les démocraties libérales d'Europe et des Amériques, l'argent joue un rôle essentiel dans le jeu institutionnel et dans la vie culturelle. Il est la source de conflits mais il est aussi nécessaire dans toute entreprise collective. L'argent peut donc être vu comme le nerf de toute action politique ou culturelle dans un cadre démocratique ; tous les problèmes économiques ou politiques étant, pour partie, pris dans la dialectique du « trop ou pas assez d'argent ».

Ainsi les partis politiques ont besoin de financement pour contribuer à l'expression de la volonté du peuple mais des campagnes de plus en plus chères mettent en danger la démocratie elle-même en la réduisant aux financements oligarchiques. L'argent apparaît donc comme un pilier de la démocratie mais également comme un agent corrupteur de celle-ci. L'argent permet l'accession au pouvoir mais il est aussi un équivalent symbolique ou un signifiant du pouvoir. Il définit en grande partie ce que sont la richesse et la pauvreté et sert de convertisseur symbolique pour presque tous les conflits sociaux. Pour reprendre les mots de Marx qui datent des *Manuscrits* de 1844 : « Si l'argent est le lien qui me lie à la vie humaine, qui lie à moi la société et qui me lie à la nature et à l'homme, l'argent n'est-il pas le lien de tous les liens ? Ne peut-il pas dénouer et nouer tous les liens ? N'est-il non plus de ce fait le moyen universel de séparation ? »

Une réflexion sur l'argent et les pouvoirs implique un retour à des problématiques anciennes qui n'ont jamais quitté le débat politique européen ou américain, par exemple les problèmes de distribution et de répartition dans la société, de luttes de classes, d'investissements, de groupes d'intérêts, de luttes entre minorités et majorités. Il suffit de penser aux divers mouvements de révoltes contre l'impôt, aux débats tant européens qu'américains sur l'austérité, aux budgets militaires rapportés aux dépenses sociales : dans tous ces domaines, le problème de l'allocation des ressources et de l'accès inégal au pouvoir se pose. Les débats culturels ne peuvent exclure ni les considérations financières ni les représentations de la justice ou de l'égalité. Une approche philosophique vient souvent compléter des réflexions portant sur l'économie et les théories qui la sous-tendent.

Toutes les démocraties occidentales sont traversées par des débats sur la justice dans le domaine économique. Depuis la définition de la « vie

bonne » d'Aristote, les groupes exclus de celle-ci ont lutté pour y être inclus et donc pour changer la répartition des ressources afin d'avoir « leur part du gâteau ». La puissance des diverses nations ou, pour reprendre les termes de Paul Kennedy, leur « naissance et déclin » dépend de leur puissance économique et financière qui détermine aussi leurs représentations à l'étranger.

Cependant, comme Simmel l'indique, s'interroger sur l'argent et le pouvoir doit inclure une dimension philosophique. Elle est présente dans divers chapitres de ce livre. Le philosophe américain Michael Sandel a publié un ouvrage au titre programmatique : *What Money Can't Buy: the Moral Limits of Markets* (Titre français : *Ce que l'argent ne saurait acheter : les limites morales du marché*). L'argent ne peut pas tout donc mais il est au centre de nombreuses activités humaines. De nouvelles analyses de la société de consommation mettent l'accent sur les dimensions non monétaires de la « vie bonne » et des représentations du pouvoir qui s'éloignent de la métaphore du partage du gâteau. La sociologie de la pauvreté ou des comportements des classes dominantes ou élites fortunées prend des formes différentes mais voisines dans tous les pays européens ou des Amériques.

L'argent et son exhibition, la consommation ostentatoire, sont des signifiants de puissance que des sociologues comme Michel Pinçon et Monique Pinçon-Charlot étudient dans leur ouvrage intitulé : *L'Argent sans foi ni loi*. La culture de la célébrité ou le *star system* affectent tous les acteurs de la vie sociale ou politique dans le monde occidental.

Le monde de l'art est lui même traversé par la question de l'argent et de ses représentations, tant dans le fonctionnement des institutions artistiques que dans les thématiques abordées. L'art et l'argent sont dans un rapport ambigu et ambivalent qu'il convient de mettre à jour. L'art dans le monde globalisé propose des appréhensions de l'argent et du pouvoir qui sont elles-mêmes de portée internationale. Dans la littérature et au cinéma l'argent est souvent au centre des intrigues (*L'Argent* titre d'un film célèbre de Robert Bresson).

Dans cet ouvrage on pourra trouver une analyse historique et sociologique de la dette et de la formation d'un caractère américain, une autre portant sur l'histoire du libéralisme, un retour sur les théories d'Herbert Marcuse ainsi qu'une analyse des décisions de la Cour suprême des États-Unis. Dans le domaine des arts une théorisation de la marchandisation à partir de l'œuvre d'une artiste, des études qui portent sur une œuvre ou

un lieu. Les lieux de pouvoir ou de lutte de pouvoir sont également abordés sous l'angle de la sociologie urbaine ou des analyses économiques qui portent sur la prégnance du néolibéralisme dans divers pays. Les élections, le rôle des religions et l'influence de l'argent dans celles-ci sont étudiées en recourant à divers outils théoriques.

La lecture des divers chapitres de ce livre permet une navigation comparative et éclaire ainsi les enjeux de pouvoir et les fonctions de l'argent de façon complexe, voire contradictoire. Cet ouvrage constitue donc un dialogue interdisciplinaire dont les dimensions comparatistes sont révélées par la juxtaposition de contributions apparemment forts diverses mais unies par une recherche portant sur le même objet.

Perspectives historiques  
et économiques

l'ensemble du récit, et démontre la capacité de Flynn de percer les surfaces du semblant, grâce à un souci constant de vérité.

Ce roman « grand public » donne ainsi forme à des questions complexes qui lui préexistent mais qu'il sait s'approprier : comment dissocier la crise matrimoniale de la crise socioéconomique ? Est-ce possible ? Peut-on construire une vie propre à soi dans un système d'ensemble qui, structurellement, s'emploie à la défaire ou à l'orienter selon ses propres logiques marchandes et financières ? Donc le vrai problème n'est pas la platitude de la vie quotidienne qui témoigne du relâchement des efforts de séduction, la volonté de surprendre qui vient de la capacité de s'émerveiller à deux (dans son journal trompeur, Amy ne cesse de parler de ce manque d'effort de la part de Nick comme cause de leur malheur). Le problème n'est pas celui de l'amour ou de son manque, mais de la *mort sociale du désir*, c'est-à-dire de l'inexistence d'horizons de vie, de projets mobilisateurs en dehors du circuit prévu de la consommation et de la pragmatique de l'image ou de l'imaginaire ; *exercer la vie*, comme dirait Artaud, en acceptant de vivre dans ses interstices, en reconnaissant le rôle génératif de la contingence, de l'altérité de la vie elle-même, altérité au sens propre : en tant qu'elle est un *immaîtrisable*, non pas angoissant mais inspirant.

Rédouane ABOUDDAHAD,  
Université du Maine, Le Mans

## This is Money and Power; or Thinking Materialism with James and Balzac<sup>1</sup>

After a lifetime spent in trying to make two continents understand each other, in trying and only his thoughtful readers can have any conception of how he had tried, to make three nations intelligible one to another. I am tired of hearing pettiness talked about Henry James's style [...] Yet I have heard no word of the major James, of the hater of tyranny, book after early book against oppression, the domination of modern life, not worked out in the diagrams of Greek tragedy, not labelled "epos" or "Aeschylus". The outbursts in *The Tragic Muse*, the whole of *The Turn of the Screw*, human liberty, personal liberty, the rights of the individual against all sorts of intangible bondage!

Ezra Pound<sup>2</sup>

It is time to discard this misconception and misrecognition of Henry James's compositional work of which Ezra Pound writes. The historicity of our relation to a now hegemonic global capital should teach us to think as

1. An earlier version of this text was given as a presentation on a panel at an international conference, "Money, Power, Representations in the Americas and in Europe", Paris Ouest Nanterre, 20-22 November 2014. I wish to thank both J. Hillis Miller of UC-Irvine and Alison Finch from the University of Cambridge for reading an earlier version of this text, and for their valuable and helpful feedback. For the title of the present article, I take creative inspiration from David Foster Wallace's commencement address to Kenyon College in 2005 entitled "This is Water" for on some level the notions of un-power and un-money that the study espouses are something like liquid notions in their abstractness and yet also paradoxical simplicity and basic actuality in the construction of the everyday. Wallace has also authored a text named, *This is Water: Some thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life*, 2009.

2. POUND Ezra, "Henry James" in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ELIOT T.S. (dir.), New York, New Directions, 1918, p. 296.



much. There is a sense in which a lot of the best qualities of James's prose work continue to go under-appreciated in a larger scale view of things. Therefore, this scholarly article presents a theoretical reading of the fascinating phenomena of those basic and yet complex things, coordinates, and operations in our experience of the everyday, to wit, cruelty, money and power, or of what is posited to be radical materialism in a limited capitalist understanding of matters; this aim will be demonstrated through a critical-conceptual analysis on, and in the provocative light of, selected writings by the American author James, and in his key paper model the French author Honoré de Balzac's writings, with special reference to his novel, *Eugénie Grandet* (1833). For the problem of money and power is deeper than it may appear for the highly reified interpretive tacks of James's and Balzac's work. The present article will take as its point of reference and departure the present author's 2007 scholarly study on *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power: James, Balzac and Critical Theory* in order to formulate a special rule or law of money capital and of power, and by extension of radical materialism itself for human being and experience. Conceptualizing the notions un-money, un-power, and un-cruelty that are inspired by, or borrow from, some recent French writing will accomplish this aim. These unorthodox and heretical ideas give us a crucially important ideological and textual space for thinking an open cultural field for daring and imaginative conceptual work.

Against received doxa, the theory constructed and articulated here argues for an understanding of materialism and of capital that would be most radical when it is predicated on something that builds on the life-asserting, radically creative, paradoxical, non-manipulative, non-hegemonic, cooperative, non-violent, and emancipator notions and real presences of "un-power" or "non-power", ideas first deployed from the subversive and radical-creative writings of the French writers Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Maurice Blanchot. These ideas teach us to think that in its most significant and attractive alternative forms, materialism and capital are about assuming their own substantive and symbolic non-existences or basis in "nothing" so called, which in the final tally is the most powerful and true chthonic form of force and of agency. This of course is not easily understood in a profit economy with a coded cognition of the notion of "profit" and so by extension of "nothing". This all takes place in an ontological reality that is as contemporary quantum physics teaches us to know incomplete, and so we may well ask, is therefore in need of completion à la

Slavoj Žižek's "the basic axiom of today's materialism is for me the *ontological incompleteness of reality*".<sup>3</sup> As such, writings by James and his dialectical other Balzac, give us the creative opportunity and aesthetic space *to think afresh* the categories of wealth, money and power for another ontological order and of how these notions may be defined in a new understanding of what constitutes each for our current twenty-first century period of time, and of its cognition of notional possibilities of the important concept of capital.

Our creative and paradoxical notions then of un-power and of un-money more precisely point definitionally in the direction of a third thing beyond an anti-power and anti-money or a pro-power and pro-money critical understanding and practical operation. This third thing precisely involves a new way of seeing the world and wealth and also by extension a new vision of subjectivity and of community. Emancipatory and useful un-power and un-money are concepts not only for progressive intellectuals, radicals and subversives who see a representation and a reification of money and power as a kind of horrible cancer that only get in the way of attaining non-cruel non-violence, but are concepts that merit a larger audience in the public interpretation of things; hence these ideas and social facts and processes are in dire need of a true democratization with regard to their reception and cognition. What is more, these two foregoing radical concepts are a deconstruction, which is to say an undoing, of the two establishment violent concepts of the ideological template of money and power and of the mediation they effect for forms of cruelty and by extension domination. Accordingly, James's art constitutes a dissentient and encouraging agent for society's reformation and for the innovation of another ideological space. The fictional works of James and Balzac share these large-scale concerns.

An argument was made in *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power* against the functioning of the cult of a love of money and power as canonically understood and to how it cultivates a sensibility that condones if not out and out provides ideological structures for forms of domination and of violence of a bad kind. As such a certain feminization of society was endorsed in the foregoing study. The aforementioned text also argued that any kind of weighty financialization of power as hitherto conceived must be disarticula-

3. ŽIŽEK Slavoj and MILBANK John, "The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?", in *Short Circuits*, DAVIS Creston (dir.), Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 2009, p. 240.

ted with our exploratory notions of un-power, un-money, and un-capital<sup>4</sup>. James deconstructs Balzac with his increasing emphasis from his early to his middle to his late style on the paradoxical force of un-power that leads to non-violence.

Yet even more exactly, the argument here is that what is needful is to change the very meaning of, disposition toward, and sensibility constructed by, the notions of *wealth and power* to the messianic ones of un-wealth and of un-power in order to begin to redefine the notions themselves for our late capitalist globalizing constellation of the economic. For example, perhaps wealth and power are really about having agency, freedom, and time to do what one truly wants to do and to cultivate. And thus in this way power, luxury, and wealth would not be tethered to the order of objects or to things narrowly conceived. By changing our consciousness thus with new concepts for new definitions, we can change the conditions of possibility for altering and for transforming the world in which we think and live. Thus too issues of the commons would arrive on the forestage in our experience of sociality, for we would be more disposed toward their very presence all around us in our experience of the everyday. When Žižek writes for example that “a truly radical materialism [...] confers upon “immaterial” phenomena a specific positive nonbeing<sup>5</sup>” it teaches us to think that ideas such as non-power or un-power can have a “positive nonbeing” in actuality and in their instantiation; in the same book Žižek proposes “a saving of the subject through a nihilistic materialism<sup>6</sup>”. This article then unpacks the implications of these kinds of critical

4. In this context, here is one reading from Gerardo Del Guercio from CUNY (Hunter College): “*The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power: James, Balzac and Critical Theory* successfully presents new ways of discussing late-nineteenth and twentieth century conceptions of power and wealth as “un-money”, “non-power”, “un-capital”, and “non-capital” in a way that these terms are germane in a twenty-first century context. Erik S. Roraback has shed new light on theories and texts that experts typically question why they are still important in the postmodern world. Roraback’s answer to this question is that the parallel between wealth and power is one that must be dismantled in order to achieve non-violence.” DEL GUERCIO Gerardo, review of *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power: James, Balzac and Critical Theory* by Erik S. RORABACK, *GRAAT On-line* 16, February 2015, [http://www.graat.fr/review\\_roraback.htm](http://www.graat.fr/review_roraback.htm).

5. ŽIŽEK Slavoj and MILBANK John, “The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?,” *op. cit.*, p. 100.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

understandings *vis-à-vis* texts by James, by Balzac, and by the author’s own earlier and abovementioned critical study and theoretical forays.

As one reads in *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power*:

the first intellectual-historical references to “nonpower” and to “unpower” of which I am aware occur in a co-authored text (1979) by the Strasbourg School thinkers Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1940-2007) and Jean-Luc Nancy (1940-present), wherein they write: “if the limit of psychoanalysis is that of the subject, the same limit, insofar as it traces the contour of the political, is that of power. Power is neither the last question nor the first instance. With the question of the non-subject, that of a non-power or of an *unpower* necessarily arises”.

So, one can see here that the fictional nature of the subject and by extension that of the object too enters into this order of being of inquiry. These sorts of ideas may be developed in relation to the writings of James and Balzac on the grand topic area too of money, power, and representation.

To sum up some of the highlights of *Late Capital and Power*, it is necessary to underline that the work also places key emphasis on the idea and construction of forms of cruelty that link up with money and power in James and Balzac and that often go disavowed in criticism. Also non-violence reaches a kind of summit in the works of James’s late-style. One example of this would be Strether’s status at the end of *The Ambassadors*, for the insubstantial nature of identity precisely is what is well underway in James even before more wild forms of desubjectification reach new levels of attainment in the works of the high modernists and after down to post-modernists such as Thomas Pynchon and after. This is a difficult concept to grasp and to solve, namely, how an insubstantial form of identity would map on to a future-oriented and valid form of being, but the problem persists as a question provoked by James’s compositional work that is preoccupied with un-power and non-capital.

As for the perhaps strange and even radically paradoxical idea of un-power as a heterodox form of great power in one of its authentic because true and effective forms: “The second reference to un-power (to “*non-pou-*

7. See LACOUÉ-LABARTHE Philippe and NANCY Jean-Luc, “La panique politique” in *Retreating the Political*, SURPRENANT Céline, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 6 ; In RORABACK Erik, *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

voir”), of which I know, surfaces in the French author/critic-recluse Maurice Blanchot (1907-2003) when he notes in 1980 that it belongs to the outside<sup>8</sup>.”

This also means for Blanchot the “neutral” (which describes the act of writing), the “unmanifest” or the negative (for the present scholar a paradoxically secular kind of sacral unthought); with rare exception, academe has thus far ignored this progressive if not visionary and prophetic concept. It is our hypothesis that in Balzac and in James power is destructive, obstructive, productive, and despite all of this, necessary to not only reject as conformist, inegalitarian, non-instrumental and criminalized power, but to relaunch instead as a dynamically becoming and so egalitarian non-conformist, non-criminal authentically secular protesting and revolting un-power: i.e., as a becoming-absent power, which following the meaning that Blanchot has given this notion of absent power” in his major late-style fragmentary work, *L'Écriture du désastre / The Writing of the Disaster* denotes not an absence of power, but instead a hyper secular absent power. It is the union of these dynamical movements that negates even while it preserves un-power as something in the end that escapes the dialectic, and that belongs therefore to what again Blanchot terms the outside, the neutral, the neuter, the negative, or the unthought; in a word, a type of secularity after false sacrality in order to rescue the latter in due course<sup>9</sup>.

The representational and reified nature of North American academic power has indeed not to the best of my knowledge incorporated or adumbrated our chosen band of leading-edge avant-gardist concepts, but that is not to say that one key world market both of the terror and of the emancipatory potential of money and power would necessarily be the first place to find our radical notions of un-money and un-power given pride of place. Now it perhaps should be added, given certain capitalist requirements for black and white positivity, that Blanchot is a notoriously difficult writer to understand.

And to point out further for the present theoretical intervention, both Balzac's and James's work with language also ask for what Blanchot calls “un-knowledge” (“*non-savoir*”) when he narrates in *The Writing of the Disaster* “un-knowledge is not a lack of knowledge; it is not even knowledge

8. BLANCHOT, Maurice, *The Writing of the Disaster*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 8-9.

9. RORABACK Erik, *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power: James, Balzac and Critical Theory*, op. cit., p. 5.

of the lack but rather that which is hidden by knowledge and ignorance alike: the neutral, the un-manifest<sup>10</sup>.”

Here un-power is similarly a form of un-knowledge about power. Un-capital, un-violence and un-cruelty are the present author's terms, and likewise display a form of liberating un-knowledge about hegemonic capital, violence and cruelty. Un-cruelty, un-power and un-capital exceed the oppositional and overly metaphysical reductionist logic and too simple antithetical terms of dichotomized anti-cruelty/cruelty, anti-capital/capital and anti-power/power. As such, they try to accomplish what Badiou explicitly claims we need to do if it is true that, as he asseverates, “philosophy has not known until quite recently how to think *in level terms with capital*”<sup>11</sup>.

So it could be the case that the academic and interrogative value of our concepts of un-power and of un-money for giving new space for producing knowledge are able to find some concordance with thinking “in level terms with capital” precisely because they constitute wonderful forms of Blanchotian “un-knowledge” or “*non-savoir*” that pulse through the content, the sense, the texture, and the tone of James's and Balzac's writings<sup>12</sup>. The protagonists who populate, and the ideological worlds represented by, fictional writings by James and by Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*, teach disproportionately that to think on equal heights with wealth would allow us to combat an ideological culture committed to and fraught with the violence of limited ideas of money, cruelty, and power. For what we need is our avant-gardist notions of un-money and un-power for a kind of radical rethinking about the commons and not about a positivistic program of the same, for a redefinition of true luxury, power, and wealth that would be more cooperative, just, and rational.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

11. BADIOU Alain, “Manifesto for Philosophy”, in *Intersections: Philosophy and Critical Theory*, MADARASZ Norman (dir.), Albany, SUNY Press, 1999, p. 56.

12. One recent study of James that could if we had more space here to pursue it further for its salience with our target concepts, would be by JÖTTKANDT Sigi, *Acting Beautifully: Henry James and the Ethical Aesthetic*, Albany, SUNY Press, 2005. The tome's focus on the offbase selection procedures of such leading edge female characters from *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and “The Altar of the Dead” would throw interesting light on un-money, on un-power and on un-cruelty.

What is more, a theory of un-money and un-power not only works, but thrives in James's and in corners of Balzac's compositional work and aesthetic universe. By extension, the problem of the representation of money and power in James and in Balzac needs these sorts of notions above-noted in order both to combat the ascendant sickness and to do justice to the arguments that our target texts present. For the interrelation between money and power remains a major area of unclarity. Both authors anatomize the formation of the spectacle society that takes the cake in the weird regime of today's ideological and social universe in our incubating global society that needs such counter-cultural ideas as un-power, un-knowledge, and un-capital. I argue in order to effect a real gain in critical and in general sensibility.

In a word, money and power may be sublated through the mediating agencies and bridge figures of un-money and un-power that may help us to find a way out of the deadlocks in which we now find ourselves. Ideas matter and they offer us a fruitful perspective from which to observe things. And further Žižek clarifies that: "Materialism [...] a position which accepts the ultimate void of reality [...] there is no "substantial reality", that the only "substance" of the multiplicity is void<sup>13</sup>." Again this is precisely the case in the aesthetic universes authored by Balzac and by James in which true radical materialism would be a more universal thing that also understands the othering of subjectivity. Interestingly too, Žižek gives a meaning to belief here with his idea of un-belief that accords to what we are trying to communicate in *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power: James, Balzac and Critical Theory* with respect to the notions of un-power and of un-capital. Here is Žižek in a crucial passage that throws illuminating insight on our vanguard concepts of un-money and un-power "what if, in a kind of negation of negation, true atheism were to return to belief (faith?), asserting it without reference to God—only atheists can truly believe; the only true belief is belief without any support in the authority of some presupposed figure of the "big Other.""

While the positive statement "I believe in God" can be negated as "I don't believe in God," we can also imagine a kind of "infinite" negation, not so much "I believe in un-God" (which would be closer to negative theology), but, rather, something like "un-belief,"—the pure form of

13. ŽIŽEK Slavoj and MILBANK John, "The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?," *op. cit.*, p. 97.

belief deprived of its substantialization—"unbelief" is still the form of belief, like the undead who, as the living dead, remain dead<sup>14</sup>.

Un-power too would have the same function in relation to power, and un-money in relation to money. It would help to restore the ideas of money and power to another potential content from what has heretofore been obfuscated. Un-power and un-money too are mediations of the life of the spirit that is so important for the expression of the void. These are the deep lessons to be learnt from *Eugénie Grandet* and fictions by James; it is a critical misunderstanding to think that these prose texts are more interested in money and power than in their true variants that the present study espouses. Something new must emerge out of the official academic discourses and academic hermeneutics of money and power for that apparatus too is part and parcel of the objective structures of domination. The monetized systems of James and Balzac studies are a part of this financial dynamic with regard to the business of literary and cultural studies and needs to be taken into account, and so given too its full measure. True political goodness would require a creative and practical mobilization and deployment of our advocated for notions, and aspiring to be paradoxical provocations, of un-money and un-power.

In like fashion to the idea that "nothing is totally unstable" so too is the circulation of paper money ever in tumult with regard to its value and remit in Balzac; as critic John Vernon notes, "paper is always unstable in Balzac; bank notes and notes of hand are continually discounted and devalued<sup>15</sup>". As against Balzac, in James one rarely sees paper money or gold. Yet late-style James deepens and expands Balzac in its critique of money and power as un-money and un-power when paradoxically they are at their most powerful. Notably, Leo Bersani argues that "Balzac himself may very well have been dazzled by his powers of absorption. The more his work grew, the more clearly he saw its coherence, and his belief in the materiality of will was undoubtedly confirmed by the less magical but perhaps not less impressive spectacle of a compositional victory over a potentially chaotic variety<sup>16</sup>." To this I add that maybe this could also be a model for how to

14. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

15. VERNON John, *Money and Fiction: Literary Realism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1984, p. 78.

16. BERSANI Leo, *Balzac to Beckett: Center and Circumference in French Fiction*, New York, Oxford, 1970, p. 24.

make money more cooperative and othered as un-money, which would cut open a new non hypostatized space for community and for being.

It is the function of the literary text to help us to mobilize our faculties of imagination precisely to complete reality. Works by James and Balzac both aid and abet this critical operation of inaugurating the new or the novel. The preoccupation with the representation of money and power in James and Balzac itself serves as a kind of partial allegorization of the processes of capital and power in the ideological space and practical reality of capitalism during their era down to our own under big and now digital money. As artists, James and Balzac too may be fairly said two of the most cutting edge anatomizers of the commodity form in the ideological universe of the long nineteenth century. Not only this, both anticipate some of the leading edge structures of our current era of digital and big finance in the early twenty-first century.

For example, when one considers Monsieur Grandet, who exults over his gold in his attic in *Eugénie Grandet*, it indexes an immense reference to capital in the book. Not only this, the role of significant objects in these two respective aesthetic universes of James and of Balzac's work in novel writing anticipates what McKenzie Wark writes of in a recent work: "The true celebrities of the spectacle are not its subjects but its objects<sup>17</sup>". This points to the hollowness and superficiality of manifestations of an inauthentic, stunted, and thwarted form of money and of capital as embodied in the commodity form as reified object. Artistic worlds by James and Balzac both understood this economic and social fact, and this constitutes a truism that Balzac well understood in his anatomizing of gold capital in *Eugénie Grandet*. Monsieur Grandet towers up on this cultural landscape. As Balzac wrote of Grandet: "There, incarnate in a single man, revealed in the expression of a single face, did there not stand the only god that anyone believes in nowadays—Money, in all its power<sup>18</sup>?" Indeed, this also finds a voice in what Georg Lukács has written:

Balzac depicted the original accumulation of capital in the ideological sphere, while his successors [...] already depicted as an accomplished fact that all human values were included in the commodity structure of capitalism [...] Balzac depicts the last great struggle against the capita-

17. WARK McKenzie, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages Out Of The 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, London, Verso Books, 2013, p. 6.

18. BALZAC Honoré de, *Eugénie Grandet*, London, Penguin, 1955, p. 183.

list degradation of man, while his successors paint an already degraded capitalist world<sup>19</sup>.

This well articulates too the different stages of modern culture with regard to the basic antagonism of class lines and economic conflicts. The representation of money and power are all-important then in this Balzac narrative of *Eugénie Grandet*. As Monsieur Grandet avers: "in sober truth crowns live and breed like men: they come and go and sweat and bring in wages<sup>20</sup>", which discloses monetary being as a living being. And what is more, all of Grandet's perceptions about gold hinge on symbolic fictions in the social order that pass for an accurate representation of reality for this ideological and social universe of Balzac's novel.

So what of James's creative rewriting of Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* in *Washington Square*? Dr Sloper monetizes Catherine Sloper his daughter's subjectivity time and again, which is akin to Grandet, who "brooded over her [Eugénie] as if she had been gold<sup>21</sup>." In fact, many of the characters who populate the Jamesian text may be seen as commodity fetishists who learn to love objects more than subjects, though this proves not the case for the majority of his protagonists who learn to renounce such object fetishism for instead the freedom-giving value ideals precisely of un-cruelty, un-money, and un-power that serve as so many indices of moral-ethical commitment, of dedication, and even of sacrifice. In this way, James forms an alliance with the later twentieth-century theoretician and strategist Guy Debord, the latter of whom once wrote, "I do not know why I am called a third rate Mephistopheles' by people who are incapable of figuring out that they have been serving a third rate society, and have received in return third rate rewards... Or is it perhaps precisely because of this that they say such things<sup>22</sup>." We could if we had more space continue to remark more striking parallels between *Eugénie Grandet* and *Washington Square*. To the best of my knowledge, the most detailed and sustained study in the critical literature

19. LUKÁCS Georg, *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki and others*, London: Hillway, 1950, p. 63-64; original in *Balzac und der Französische Realismus*, Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1952, p. 64.

20. BALZAC, *Eugénie Grandet*, op. cit., p. 192.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

22. Quoted in WARK McKenzie, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages Out Of The 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, op. cit., p. 15.



of these two novels in their conjunction appears in *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power*.

So, James and Balzac give us the idea, as Wark notes in a different purely theoretical context, “that critical practice needs to take three steps backwards in order to take four steps forward<sup>23</sup>.” This is true if we are to engage the ideas of un-money, un-power and un-cruelty, which are all about taking our time to really reflect deeply about and so to profoundly rethink and revisit these matters. This also hints at what Wark declares the case, “the unending struggle of peoples to present themselves to history rather than be represented by the state or the commodity<sup>24</sup>.” This would be in order brutally to contest the paradigm of the representation and reification of money and power that dominates the ideological space of the era from 1833 when *Eugénie Grandet* was published to the present. Interestingly, one spirit of Balzac and James both as cultural elites may be seen too as system complicitous with State power insofar as, “the state comes to believe its own disinformation<sup>25</sup>” just as did James the conservative in so many regards, and Balzac the political conservative and upholder of church and family values. The state informed academy (university) too may be thought about in certain contexts at least in similar terms. And yet the truly stunning paradox remains that another homology may be found with Žižek’s idea that, “true revolutionaries are always reflected conservatives<sup>26</sup>”, for this accords to the respective subject positions of Balzac and of James. Both had conservative propensities in their biographical lives, and yet the politics of money and power that one may extract from their compositional work is decidedly liberal if not out and out revolutionary; this is one reason why James is such a hot topic for progressive theorists of the critical human sciences and Balzac too has been listed on the same bowling team as many a radical leftist including famously Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx (the latter of whom it is well attested wished to write a volume length study of Balzac). So, it remains a truism of literary criticism that many a radical leftist critic has seen in Balzac and in James a kindred spirit with whom to think for his or her own ruminations, hypotheses, and even speculations.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

26. ŽIŽEK Slavoj, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, London, Verso Books, 2012, p. 139.

James and Balzac both ask for what Wark declares is needful nowadays “a different kind of social practice for expressing the encounter of desire and necessity, outside of power as representation and desire as the commodity form<sup>27</sup>”. Our categories of un-money, un-power and un-cruelty inform the logic of these statements. Currently each functions basically outside of the order of representation of the current practical and ideological regime. Hence, in our formulation, to seek to delineate things “outside of power as representation and desire as the commodity form” may be said what the artistic worlds by James and Balzac inch toward and suggest. We are now in a situation in which for Wark, “the workers sacrifice their bodies; the bourgeois their souls<sup>28</sup>.” In Balzac’s fictional universe this is the case for instance in the posthumously published novel *Les Paysans* (1855), and in James’s fiction the lattermost quality is highlighted time and again and the former facet in *The Princess Casamassima* (1886). In James, we find precisely what Wark argues, namely “the sacred is the place and time [...] for the giving up of something of this world of particular things to the world of the totality, imagined as that which is universal and eternal. If once the place of the sacred was the church, now it was the café or art Salon<sup>29</sup>.” What Balzac and James convincingly demonstrate is that the sacred is in the exciting incipience of the pursuit of money and power that permutates in James precisely to saying no to a representational and reified money and power in order to cultivate one’s soul or intellect for a more capacious stance on things with regard to the semantic space of wealth and power so that they pass over into un-money (or un-wealth) and un-power that would in turn construct conditions of possibility for forms and situations of un-cruelty.

Both James and Balzac, in their allegorical and fictional critique of money and power in one’s experience of the everyday, in their functioning, and in the social status they bestow on individual subject agents in society, herald the contemporary critique of the Guy Debord-style and beyond, society of the spectacle. As McKenzie Wark claims: “Now that critical theory has become hypocritical theory, the Situationist International keeps washing up

27. WARK McKenzie, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages Out Of The 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, op. cit., p. 47.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

29. WARK McKenzie, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages Out Of The 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, op. cit., p. 58.

on these shores like shipwrecked luggage<sup>30</sup>. The same could be said for the corpus of texts by Balzac and James for their would be radical interpreters who are willing to make arguments that might alter angles of vision via speculative and theoretical work of a bold and incisive kind with clear values for insurrectional and overmastering forms of money and power.

In James and Balzac then what we get is a representation of the world that fictionally is of uncommon truth in the order of culture, but that at the same time is precisely a world that has been falsified and evacuated of its true symbolic substance and authenticity; for it is rather a phony order of a constipated view of power and hollow and reductive forms of representation controlled by big capital and its reifying interests and values that prevails. Not only this, pigeon-holing habits of mind scarcely allow for the kind of hard indefatigable work that would be that of thinking in the creative space generously offered by our sovereign notions of un-money, un-power and un-cruelty. It is the mediating function of these notions that constitute the true radicality of the atypical choices that many a Henry James protagonist makes at the end of his narratives, witness the forgiving and generous and so cooperative nature of Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors* or of Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl* for two simple examples.

What is the overall salvational scheme here? For Jean Baudrillard from his early style study on *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, "it is a class logic which imposes salvation by objects"<sup>31</sup>. Consumption in the worlds of James and Balzac mediate a kind of communication indicated by tiny gestures and sartorial choices and so on in the micropolitics of everyday life. Relations are usually consumerist ones in the work of our two chosen novelists for reifiable goods mediate human relationships. The spectacle of things in Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* and in James makes consumer goods demigods that their protagonists must upend with overmastering un-money, un-power, or un-cruelty.

As elucidated in *Late Capital and Power*, James's vast oeuvre displays both a structure of repetition and an ongoing dialectical and historical development with regard to the gradual completion of the notions of money,

30. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

31. BAUDRILLARD Jean, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Los Angeles, Sage Publications, 1998, p. 60; original in BAUDRILLARD Jean, *La Société de consommation : ses mythes, ses structures*, Paris, Gallimard, 1983, p. 78.

capital, power, cruelty into iterations of their true because open to experimentation, change and revisiting to get them right the second or after time in their *variants* of un-money, un-capital, un-power, and un-cruelty. Thus:

Catherine braves omnipotent capital, power and cruelty for moral-socially effective and secular, yet understandably under-developed if not entirely impotent forms of extra-capital, non-power and counter-cruelty ; Hyacinth falls by the wayside in finding irresistible the feeble aesthetic appeal of the individual mission of suicide in a corrupt and cynical power-loving world; Strether's potent mode of revolting being radiates charitable non-power and counter-cruelty, tenebrous and impersonal Milly creates on some level extra-capital, non-power and counter-cruelty efficaciously, and Maggie becomes the very negating, oppositional, positive refusing and resisting secular process and activity of non-power, extra-capital and counter-cruelty<sup>32</sup>.

In other words, with respect to the conceptual and textual movements in James's writings, James proves the great despiser of domination, as Ezra Pound invited us to know at the beginning of this article. From the same James and Balzac volume we read, "cruelty, capital and power are limited operations, whereas un-cruelty, un-capital and un-power are unlimited operations [...]. The foregoing three concepts have some kind of eternity to them. The realistic inner core of James's fiction concerns itself with this compass"<sup>33</sup>. In this way, our notions are precisely the notional possibilities for authentic and genuine forms of cruelty, capital, and power that would have some concordance with an ethic of non self-destructiveness, much as money and power themselves seem time and again to spell out an ethic of self-destructiveness for those who take them as the highest value ideals. I continue to quote from the end of *Late Capital and Power in extenso*:

Thus the present book's basic thesis that James's art, buttressed by Balzac's model and example in his efforts in composition, becomes increasingly amenable to the dialectical analysis and presentation of efficacious forms of iconoclastic and progressive non-power, counter-cruelty and extra-capital. The authentically sacred remains to return as new innovation [...] the concepts of revolt for such a rejuvenation of counter-cruelty, extra-capital and non-power are one modest place to start textually and

32. RORABACK Erik, *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power*, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

micro-politically; they might serve a negative task of a desacralization of the blasphemously contemporary and sacral values, ideals and social pressures exerted by traditional cruelty, capital and power and the former aforementioned progressive notions may also spur on a positive task of renewing and refreshing our conceptualities and dramatically changing and so transforming our traditional 'complacent-conservative' and hegemonic semantics of cruelty, power, and capital. To be thus hard wired would be one step toward a tangible harmonizing of authentic extra-money and true non-power beyond the visionary shelf life of the Jamesian and Balzacian page. For as Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* broadcasts: "Still in the bowl is left a lump of gold"<sup>34</sup>.

So these ideas and concepts for a true culture of revolt recur time and again in James's aesthetic universe thanks in part too to the problematic bequeathed by Balzac. Our new concepts are nice examples of iterability in James and in Balzac. I realize that I am sticking my neck out here by quoting from Joyce's most masterful masterpiece, but I find certain affinities between the female protagonists of *The Golden Bowl* and of *Finnegans Wake* (Maggie Verver and ALP or Anna Livia Plurabelle), who themselves spell out the subaltern practical reality that Guercio suggested in a footnote above that *Late Capital and Power* communicated. Not only this, in a further nuance I wrote that "non-power here would be a kind of expiatory violence as an extra-dialectical or even "extra-sublatable" [Jean-Luc Nancy's term] blend of power and anti-power. Extra-money and counter-cruelty would also be extra-dialectical or "extra-sublatable", blends of money and anti-money, and cruelty and anti-cruelty"<sup>35</sup>. Thus as was given emphasis in the same tome:

*Crucially, we are thus keenly interested in some extra-cruel, extra-capital, extra-monetary or extra-power secular phenomena that would inform some new faculty or faculties yet to be discovered by the work of the human mind and the human imagination. Doubtless these all touch on something authentically sacral because authentically secular in contemporary terms, insofar as each are pitted against that which corresponds to the falsely sacral materialistic side of the powers that be: to wit, cruelty, money/capital and power*<sup>36</sup>.

34. JOYCE James, *Finnegans Wake*, New York, Penguin, 1999, p. 164.

35. RORABACK Erik, *The Dialectics of Late Capital and Power*, op. cit., p. 9.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 9-10.

In Žižek's latest and second book, his trilogy dedicated to the notional possibility, if not the out and out comic idea of dialectical materialism, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*, he writes of something that maps neatly onto our theory of un-money and un-power as the non or extra-sublatable and dialectical truth and *core of money and power*:

One should look for a non-dialecticizable moment of the dialectical process: [...] the aspect of the process which cannot be dialecticized is its very motor, the repetitive "death drive" as the basic form of what Hegel calls "negativity" [...] what Freud was aiming at with his notion of the death drive [...] is the "non-dialectical" core of Hegelian negativity, the pure drive to repeat without any movement of sublation (idealization) [...] the dialectical movement is fighting its own abyssal ground, its own core; in other words, the ultimate gesture of reconciliation is to recognize in this threatening excess of negativity the core of the subject itself<sup>37</sup>.

It is then our duty to give these literary texts by Balzac and James their meaning as agents of counterpower un-power and countermoney un-money in a world dominated by the limited representation of the cult and religion of money and power that operates too as a kind of fetish and a mediating agency of so many of the developments in our ongoing modernity that have occurred in the wake of their compositional work from the 1820s to the 1910s.

So, in the light of what we may learn from work by Balzac and James, should we follow our obligations in the service of capitalist growth and expansion, or should we embrace the invisible power and so chthonic revolution of un-power and the invisible money of un-money? By implication, is there anything therefore truly practical about the philosophy of capitalist money and wealth? Is it fear or ideology or a bit of both that motivates love of money and power in current conditions? If so, then what about courage motivating us for non-hegemonic and intelligent un-money and un-power if true goodness is the construction of un-money and un-power with which to contest our ongoing capitalist authoritarianism? We need to find the coordinates of the struggle with research in this direction. In our ideological fantasy space we still remain in the thrall of money and power for understandable reasons, and yet this cult of expansion requires contestation for a

37. ŽIŽEK Slavoj, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*, London, Verso Books, 2014, p. 89.



new form of human community and for a more accurate picture of what money and power truly are.

So where does this all lead us? Neither Balzac nor James reveal their final battle strategies or prescriptions on the violent ideological and social battlefields of their fiction, for instead they allow their readers to decide that strategic intention and net effect as a kind of open chance for the interpreter to construct. In this light, the present article recollects what Slavoj Žižek reminds us of namely: "Recall Walter Benjamin's notion of revolution as redemption through repetition of the past<sup>38</sup>." For we are as readers always trying to get the books by James and Balzac right the second or third or even tenth or one hundredth time around as reader-agents, if Benjamin's idea of "revolution as redemption through redemption of the past" contains substance. The dialectical paradox of what I hazard to call the un-power and un-cruelty of history is to have fidelity to the old, hence too this notion. As an intellectual strategy, this is actually a way too to displace the power structure of the managerial class that sometimes comes to dominate knowledge work in the corporate university.

The major discovery of this article then is that it is high time that the subversive and cooperative concepts adumbrated of un-cruelty, un-money and un-power receive the attention that they deserve in our Jamesing and Balzacing of matters; we need still to polish these subversive notions and revisit them for the problem of cruelty, money and power is so much more complicated than what it is usually taken to be in representations of this complex dynamic. This is why our novel concepts are worth persevering with to highlight the true tension in our societies: class lines, relations to money, and the obsession with the cult of power and of its untrammelled growth in a profit economy. On the basis of our theoretical arguments developed here, priceless discoveries would be the finding of new forms of *un-cruelty*, *un-power* and *un-money* for a genuine sense and space of spirit-opening life and community. These concepts too may articulate new mediations of money and power that would multiply openings of what is possible for future variants of thinking a real radical materialism for conditions of possibility for another relation to capital.

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38. ŽIŽEK Slavoj, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, op. cit., p. 464.

## Los Angeles et l'opulence monétaire : nouveaux modes de représentation entre polarisation normative et démocratisation de l'indécence

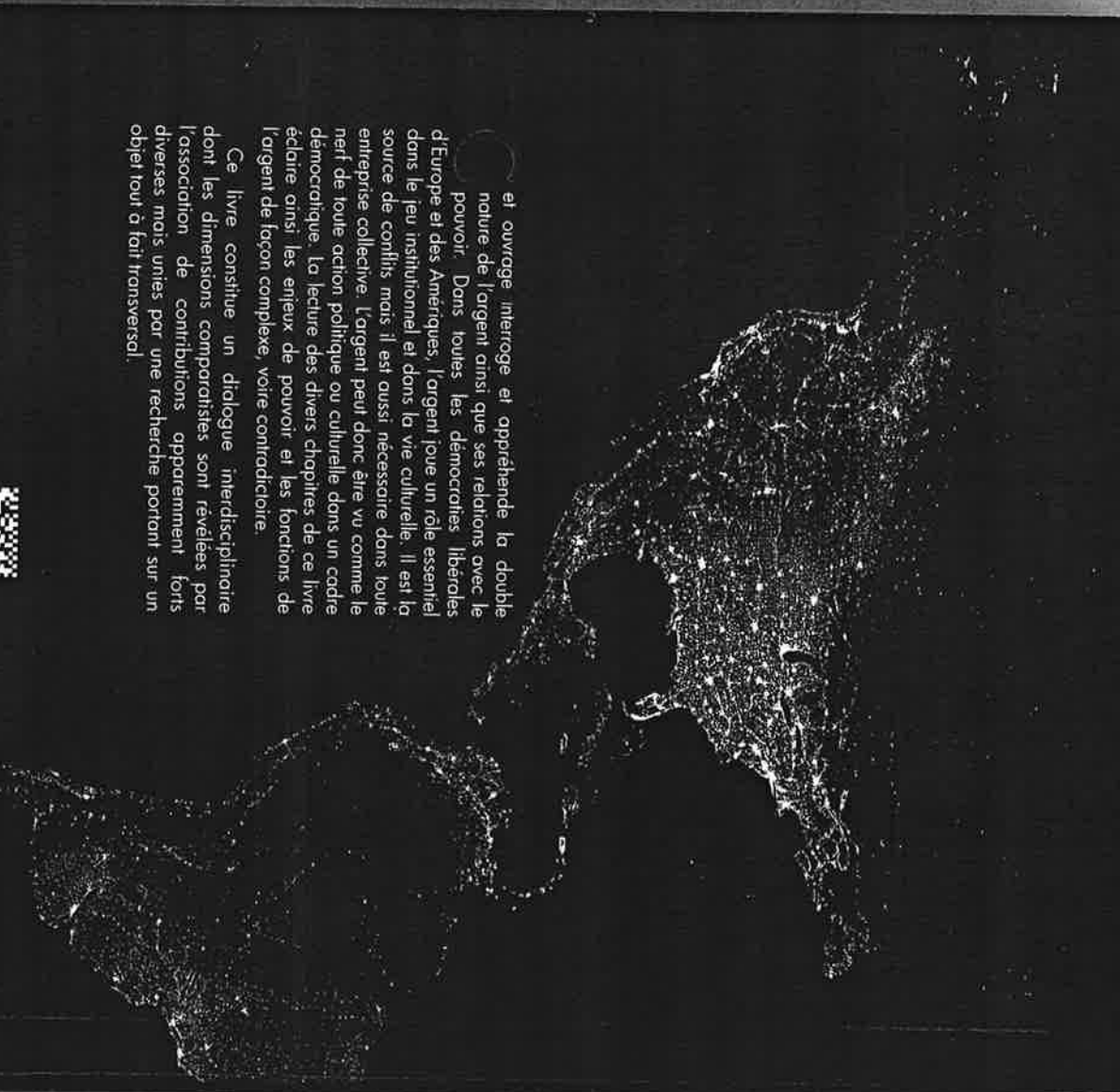
Dès ses origines, la ville de Los Angeles a placé argent, pouvoir et représentation au cœur même des valeurs sur lesquelles elle s'est développée. Bien avant les dérives d'un système de représentation globalisé, motivé entre autre par l'industrie audiovisuelle implantée sur ce même territoire, Los Angeles forge son image autour de ces notions dans le seul but de s'appropriier enfin un territoire qui, lors de son annexion officielle en 1847, est un espace étranger. Avec l'appui des quelques médias de l'époque, ceux que l'on appelle désormais les « boosters » créent de toute pièce une image de la ville afin d'y attirer les migrants de l'est, américains ou non. S'appuyant sur l'atout principal de la ville, à savoir le climat, ils inventent la « ville jardin » où l'alliance parfaite entre commodités de l'urbain et idéal pastoral. Las des villes centrifuges de l'est, de nombreux migrants viennent alors vers ce nouvel Eden afin de goûter aux plaisirs d'une vie urbaine en maison individuelle avec jardin luxuriant. La première représentation de la ville est alors lancée, largement étayée par plusieurs récits romanesques projetant l'histoire hispanique originelle en un mythe romantique par excellence servant de toile de fond idyllique à ces nouveaux arrivants. L'histoire n'est plus hostile et devient ainsi dès la moitié des années 1860 engageante, chaleureuse. À Los Angeles, la ville n'est alors plus uniquement source de représentation mais devient une ville *en* représentation puisque ce sont ces images de la ville qui la créent, qui la façonnent, dans une dynamique éminemment capitaliste et contrôlée par les institutions au pouvoir, officielles et officieuses.

L'objectif de cet article est d'identifier les stratégies mais aussi le statut qu'occupent aujourd'hui ces trois notions clés constitutives de Los Angeles, non tant dans la ville que dans l'idée de la ville, son imaginaire et donc, sa représentation. Le pouvoir majeur qu'exerce désormais Los Angeles est un pouvoir d'influence et/ou de séduction qui s'effectue par l'intermédiaire

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et ouvrage interroge et appréhende la double nature de l'argent ainsi que ses relations avec le pouvoir. Dans toutes les démocraties libérales d'Europe et des Amériques, l'argent joue un rôle essentiel dans le jeu institutionnel et dans la vie culturelle. Il est la source de conflits mais il est aussi nécessaire dans toute entreprise collective. L'argent peut donc être vu comme le nerf de toute action politique ou culturelle dans un cadre démocratique. La lecture des divers chapitres de ce livre éclaire ainsi les enjeux de pouvoir et les fonctions de l'argent de façon complexe, voire contradictoire.

Ce livre constitue un dialogue interdisciplinaire dont les dimensions comparatistes sont révélées par l'association de contributions apparemment fort diverses mais unies par une recherche portant sur un objet tout à fait transversal.



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