

“Finance Is a Gun”: Capitalism and the Gangster Film

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Abstract: *This essay uses a diachronic method of analysis to compare depictions of American capitalism in three gangster films: The Godfather (1972), Goodfellas (1990), and The Departed (2006). It argues that gangster films, which feature corrupt underworld economic actors, reflect the shift in American capitalism from post-WWII Keynesianism to modern neoliberalism. The strategies that fictional gangsters use to gain power and the values of Mafia families are compared with either Keynesianism (The Godfather), neoliberalism (The Departed), or both (Goodfellas). As a result, it finds that gangster films, as period pieces, both critique corruption and reflect the evolution of American capitalism in the twentieth century.*

Keywords: gangster films, The Godfather, Goodfellas, The Departed, Keynesianism, neoliberalism, capitalism.

Since its emergence in the Prohibition Era, the gangster film has developed into one of the most recognizable crime genres on the silver screen. The most famous works of the genre, which feature criminals and outlaws as central protagonists, are seldom just entertainment: they serve as mirrors held before American society and reflect the dark underbelly of America’s relationship with capitalism. To investigate how gangster films have represented the evolution and corruption of twentieth-century American capitalism, this essay will use a diachronic method of analysis. It will compare the films *The Godfather* (set from 1945-1955), *Goodfellas* (set from 1955-1980), and *The Departed* (set in 2005) with the characteristics of the political economy governing their respective time periods to illustrate how gangster films act as windows into the past as well as critiques of the present.

Gangster films commonly take place in recent history, often maintaining a relationship with factuality by basing scripts on

the lives and autobiographies of underworld actors. According to scholar George Larke-Walsh, the genre has depicted the past, rather than present, gangster since its origin in the 1930s. In the classical era of the gangster film, filmmakers turned to the legend of the post-World War I gangster to comment on the dark side of “individual enterprise” in Jazz Age American society, which became relevant in the insecure world of the Depression.¹ In his analysis of the gangster genre, Larke-Walsh splits the postclassical revival of the gangster film into four cycles: 1972 to 1976, 1983 to 1988, 1990 to 1999, and 1999 to 2007.² To Larke-Walsh, gangster films contain commonalities depending on their release date, regardless of the period in which the film takes place. For instance, Larke-Walsh links films like *The Godfather* (1972) with an “emphasis on period detail” and prominent depictions of Sicilian culture and lore, while films like *Goodfellas* (1990) rely on improvisation, profanity, documentary-style filmmaking, and depictions of extreme violence.³ This essay departs from Larke Walsh’s cyclical method by analyzing gangster films based on the years when the films take place to investigate how they comment on the corruption of American capitalism by the criminal underworld, treating gangster films as period pieces which strive to represent historical realities even in fiction. While a cyclical conception of the genre is best employed to understand the evolution of the aesthetics and themes common in gangster films, breaking the strict separation between the postclassical revival films is necessary to study the transition between the post-World War II political economy and the beginnings of neoliberalism as it is represented on film through the criminal underworld.

To analyze critiques of capitalism present in gangster films taking place after World War II and before the 1970s, it is necessary to explore the characteristics and values inherent in the postwar political economy. In the aftermath of the catastrophic Great Depression and World War II, the American political economy underwent drastic changes as the nation sought to re-

build after decades of unprecedented crisis. According to Jason Scott Smith's analysis of what he dubs "the New Deal Order," the American government left the laissez-faire approach to the economy behind and embarked on a new era of an active state involved in societal welfare and economic development.⁴ To Smith, this new order, characterized by "the rise of organized labor, the creation of social security, and the first steps toward creating a more robust social safety net," defined the 1940s and 1950s.⁵ The "New Deal Order" was the system the Corleone family confronted, and corrupted, in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972).

Arguably the most well-known film of the gangster genre, *The Godfather* (1972) follows the story of a New York Mafia family as power transitions from Don Vito Corleone to his youngest son, Michael. The storyline unfolds over a decade, beginning with Michael Corleone's return from the Second World War in 1945 and ending with his assumption of the role of Don in 1955. As a family deeply embedded in the criminal underworld, the Corleones must navigate the postwar economic system, a system built on ties between "society, the state, and the market," as they seek to protect their family's interests.⁶ The Corleones maintain criminal, symbiotic relationships between organized labor and political authorities to advance their family's needs, but they must also confront violence as their pursuit of individual priorities contradicts the desires of their larger underworld community.

In *The Godfather* (1972), the Corleone family's dealings with political elites, organized labor, the police, the press, and even the entertainment industry illustrates how the New Deal era's strong institutions could be corrupted by the pursuit of capital gains. The postwar economic model was marked by strong ties between government institutions, market forces, and American society. The Corleone family must operate within the cracks of each pillar of this system as an underworld actor in order to succeed. A key element of the Keynesian model are government

institutions capable of regulating the market; thus, underworld actors like the Corleones and other New York Mafia families must infiltrate these institutions in order to seek profits in illegal industries, including prostitution, gambling, and narcotics. While gangsters operating within the neoliberal order, like *The Departed's* Frank Costello, may operate as individuals, families like the Corleones must make strategic friendships within the Keynesian system in order to exist. According to Fabián Orán Llarena's investigation of the relationship between politics, economics, and the gangster film, the Corleones survive in part due to their network of powerful alliances, including with government and state authorities.⁷ Don Vito's connections to the political sphere are well-known; during the wedding sequence celebrating the marriage of his daughter, the Corleone family receives gifts from judges and senators to celebrate the event.⁸ Though the postwar period theoretically demanded stronger government regulation of market activities, families such as the Corleones could provide material incentives to corrupt state officials willing to look the other way. The Corleones, part family and part business, subvert the government regulations on the market associated with the postwar era by "buy[ing] more police and political power" to meet illicit demands and reap substantial profits.⁹ While bribery and influence over authorities is not unique to the criminal underground, in *The Godfather*, the Corleone family employs bribes and cultivates alliances with corrupt officials as a tactic of maintaining power in a postwar system characterized by increased government and institutional presence in American society.

However, the Corleones are not merely beholden to those with political power. They must also form transactional relationships among the community they operate in as a means to maintain power. In *The Godfather*, Vito Corleone forms relationships both organized labor and vulnerable civilians as his foot soldiers, ensuring that the broader community will not resist his authority. While the strength of organized labor in the postwar

period was designed to provide workers with greater leverage against their employers, a right that was lacking in the earlier Progressive Era, the Corleones find ways to corrupt these arrangements to forward their own interests.¹⁰ For instance, the Corleone family attempts to strong-arm a movie producer, Jack Woltz, into casting one of Vito's godsons in an upcoming war film. Tom Hagen, the Corleone family's consigliere, attempts to sway Woltz into accepting the deal by noting that the production company was about to deal with union problems that the Corleone family "could make [...] disappear."¹¹ While the purpose of organized labor is to provide workers with the ability to negotiate preferable wages, hours, and labor conditions, the Corleone family uses their influence over unions to stunt business for those who oppose their family's deals. Though the Corleones' partnership with unions serves as a source of additional profits for workers, the power the family holds over organized labor ultimately places the interests of the Corleones above the workers themselves.

The Corleones also subvert the postwar connections between the American people and their government by playing an outside-the-law role in the lives of civilians and creating transactional alliances with ordinary people as another method of keeping their power in New York City. The film's opening scene illustrates how the Corleone family penetrates the lives of New Yorkers as Bonasera, an Italian immigrant who wanted to avoid dealing with the Corleone family, is forced to seek Vito's help after the authorities fail to deliver justice for his daughter. To keep hold of civilians like Bonasera, who appeal to the family in an act of desperation, Vito agrees to bring justice in exchange for loyalty and the promise of a future favor. While civilians like Bonasera may appeal to Vito to act as an agent of vigilante justice, Vito only grants favors to those who seek his "friendship," or rather, who acknowledge his power and agree to enter into a transactional relationship whereby Vito may use them to do his bidding in the future. He employs language of

familial ties and friendship, repeatedly requesting that people like Bonasera call him *godfather*, to mask the bloodshed and corruption that comes with dealing with the Corleone family. Vito feigns a position of morality while engendering fear of retaliation among civilians, cementing his borderline untouchable status in New York.¹² Like his connections to the political sphere, Don Vito's transactional relationships with New Yorkers living in his territory bolster his power. In exchange for serving as an outside-the-law force who can bring justice to those ignored by America's justice system, Vito receives an army of foot soldiers he can call on at any point to do him a favor. This army is transactionally obligated to meet his needs to survive.

While Don Vito's cunning and strategic relationships between government institutions and New Yorkers illustrate the corruption of the Keynesian system, Don Vito himself emerges as a complex character who embodies the contradictions of the era he lives in. In comparison to his son, Michael, Don Vito arguably represents both the corruption of postwar society in pursuit of personal gain and the maintenance of values that place family over profit. According to scholar Phoebe Poon, previous classics of the genre, set in the dog-eat-dog Prohibition Era, cast the gangster as a hyper-individualistic, profit-motivated criminal.¹³ In contrast, Don Vito Corleone in *The Godfather* is motivated to protect the family unit. When the ailing Vito speaks to Michael, who has emerged as his most likely successor, Vito expresses his disappointment at his son's future in the underworld. To Vito, his own involvement in the Mafia was a form of providing for his family that he does not regret for himself but hoped his sons would be able to avoid. Vito conceptualized the underground as a way for him to advance socially, garnering enough wealth and power along the way so his children could become legitimate members of society. Vito shares with Michael his dream of seeing his son become "Senator Corleone," a powerful man who got his position honorably.¹⁴ While Vito's decisions ultimately bring death to those closest to him, his fight

to preserve his family's unity and integrity serves to humanize him, though he is a criminal. Poon asserts that, in the first *Godfather* film:

Don Vito is not portrayed as a ruthless businessman with intimidating resources of wealth and political power but as a loving father whose ultimate desire (at least for his youngest son) is not criminal. He operates in the Mafia only to protect his dignity and that of his family from 'big shots' or *pezzovante* (powerful men in "legitimate" politics and government).¹⁵

Vito's deeply human, though flawed, qualities represent the values of the period he lives in. According to scholars like Jason Scott Smith, the postwar New Deal era is often described as a moment of great opportunity, collective advancement, and economic growth.¹⁶ At his best, Don Vito's goal of his family's welfare over profit (even if it ends in failure) fits within the idealized version of the New Deal and postwar periods, as he embodies the pursuit of financial security while maintaining a "code of honor" and self-restraint so as to not jeopardize his family unit or greater community.¹⁷ However, at their worst, the Corleones also illustrate how the era's invigorated unions and welfare state could be corrupted by the promise of profit from collaborating with organized crime. In analyzing films like *The Godfather* with an eye to the period, the Corleone family's vices and virtues become logical responses to the institutions the criminal underworld needed to confront and corrupt to maintain their power.

At the same time, Poon and other scholars have remarked that *The Godfather's* focus on family responded to contemporary desires for "communal unity" during the politically, socially, and economically turbulent 1970s.¹⁸ According to Barbara Keys, Jack Davies, and Elliot Bannan, the 1970s "was a traumatic decade, marked by the ignominious end to the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal and the resignation of a president, and the first OPEC oil shock," along with economic stagflation that rat-

tled the United States after the equally eventful 1960s.¹⁹ Keys, Davies, and Bannan have found that both contemporary views and historical interpretations of the 1970s are largely negative, concluding that society had become “an unsightly amalgam of malaise, decline, and self-centeredness,” particularly in the United States.²⁰ Economically, the 1970s saw the end of the New Deal era as both liberal and conservative leadership effectively ended their partnerships with the United States working class, allowing trade unions to weaken and promoting “free trade policies” in their stead.²¹ The ground for a Reagan victory in 1980 had been clearly laid in the 1970s, as the era saw “the decline in real wages, widening inequalities in the distribution of wealth, the weakening of organised labor, the unfettering of the market, and mounting attacks on government intervention in the economy,” which brought the New Deal economic order crashing down.²² According to Poon, contemporary dissatisfactions are manifested in *The Godfather* through its nostalgic emphasis on “traditional values [...] suggesting that the Family unit may pose an even more honorable organization than the White House administrations that spawned the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal.”²³ As America underwent the transition between Keynesianism and neoliberalism during the turbulent 1970s, *The Godfather's* emphasis on family provided a nostalgic look back to an older time.

Beginning in the same year *The Godfather's* timeline ended, Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990) reflects the cultural and economic consequences of the decline of the Keynesian economic model and the rise of neoliberalism through the biography of gangster Henry Hill. Stretching from 1955 to 1980, *Goodfellas* records the transition between the two forms of capitalism. In the film's early sequences, *Goodfellas* shares common threads with *The Godfather* by showing corrupt ties between the Lucchese family, who Henry works for, the police, and organized labor in Henry's earliest years as a gangster. However, the film's later sequences share commonalities with the neoliberal world of *The*

Departed through its depictions of unregulated individual pursuit of profit and security at the expense of personal relationships. In this manner, *Goodfellas* serves as a bridge between the two eras, commenting on the dark side of capitalism both in the postwar period and on the cusp of the Reagan era.

Like the Corleone family, the Lucchese family forms alliances with the New York Police Department (NYPD), workers, and union members throughout the 1950s and 1960s to operate their illegal businesses. In a sequence set in 1955, members of the Lucchese family provide alcohol and gifts to the local police in exchange for relative silence about their illegal activities.²⁴ Jimmy Conway, an associate of the Lucchese family and known thief, provides parts of his hauls to the local police, such as high-quality cigarettes. According to Henry, the Lucchese family's ties to the NYPD effectively prevented gangsters from receiving jail time for their activities, remarking that "when the cops assigned an army to stop Jimmy, what did he do? He made them partners."²⁵ Explicit financial relationships between the Luccheses and the New York Police Department continued well into the 1960s, as Henry's wife, Karen Hill, frequently observed him paying off the police during superficial searches. In a voiceover, Karen tells viewers, "There was always a little harassment. They always wanted to talk to Henry about this or that. They'd come in with their subpoenas and warrants and make me sign. But mostly they were just looking for a handout, a few bucks to keep things quiet no matter what they found."²⁶ The Lucchese family, like the Corleones, enters strategic relationships with authority figures like policemen to operate in New York during the 1950s and 1960s.

In a similar vein, Jimmy Conway involves workers in his criminal activities, particularly robberies, to expedite the process and prevent any suspicion from coming to him. In a sequence set in the 1950s, Conway pays off truck drivers, using a combination of material incentives and fear, to take some or all of the product in their trucks to resell for profit. Jimmy forms

alliances with truck drivers, who “tipp[ed] him off about really good loads, and of course everybody got a piece.”²⁷ Later in the film, Jimmy also collaborates with airport workers to rob cargo from airplanes, including an Air France flight robbery reaping over four hundred thousand dollars in profits for those involved.²⁸ The Lucchese family’s worker allies regularly tell them about what cargo to steal, and if anyone refused to cooperate with the family, caporegime Paulie Cicero “had his union people scare them with a strike,” allowing them to continue making profits.²⁹ Like the Corleones, the Luccheses find collaborating with organized labor using bribery particularly fortuitous as they receive a large team of partners in exchange for pay.

Owing to *Goodfellas*’ wide-stretching timeline, the film also captures a transitional period between Keynesianism and neoliberalism. The sequences set in the 1970s contain cultural similarities with the postwar period, even as neoliberalism was beginning to take hold in the United States. For instance, Paulie possesses a strong degree of influence over Henry’s behavior, even in his personal life. When Henry moves into his mistress’ apartment, both Paulie and Jimmy tell him he must move back in with his wife and keep his family unit together.³⁰ This is both to prevent her from giving out information about the Lucchese family and because of the Catholic values against divorce that hold sway in the Mafia. The continuation of economic practices characteristic of the postwar period can also be observed in the 1970s, particularly during Henry’s incarceration. While Paulie, Henry, and other members of the Lucchese family are in prison for an assault, they continue relying on their system of strategic bribes to receive better food and treatment than ordinary prisoners, even receiving steaks, lobsters, alcohol, and prescription drugs that Henry both uses and deals on the inside.³¹

The economic and cultural environment in which Henry Hill operates begins to undergo significant changes during and after he serves jail time from 1974 to 1978. While Henry’s work

for the Lucchese family provided his family with economic benefits in exchange for loyalty before his time in jail, Paulie and the family fail to serve as a financial safety net for Karen while Henry is in prison. In prison, Henry finds himself without a support network, as it would risk another member of the family returning to jail on Henry's behalf. To make up for the lack of support, Henry deals drugs in jail so they will no longer have to rely financially on the Luccheses.³² Forced to turn to more individualistic means of seeking profit, Henry's loyalty to Paulie and the Lucchese family unit diminishes substantially. After Henry's release, he ignores Paulie's demands that he stop dealing narcotics as he no longer cares about Paulie's regulations after being isolated from the benefit of belonging to the Lucchese family in his time of need. Henry's transformation into an individual dealer who subverts the control of the larger Lucchese family unit to make substantial profits reflects the new neoliberal entrepreneur type who relies primarily on himself to advance in society. Henry's individualism also carries over into his personal relationships with the Luccheses. Both Karen and Henry begin to suspect that their lives are in danger and that they may be killed for their unreliability, vulnerability, and lifetime of knowledge.³³ The Hill family becomes increasingly isolated until they ultimately can have no contact with the outside world while in the Witness Protection Program.³⁴ To save himself from returning to prison and from being murdered by the Luccheses for disloyalty, Henry opts to testify against Paulie and Jimmy, his former mentors.³⁵ The slow disintegration of Henry's economic and personal ties to the Lucchese family in *Goodfellas* stands to represent the broader economic and cultural turn toward hyper-individualism, entrepreneurship, and social atomization in the neoliberal period.

In addition to Henry's dramatic transformation throughout the film, Jimmy Conway too begins to reflect neoliberal values like hyper-individualism. After being released on parole, Jimmy plans and executes the Lufthansa Heist in 1978.³⁶ Unlike

previous robberies using members of the Lucchese family, Jimmy responds to the heist by questioning the loyalty of everyone involved and assuming he will be exposed by one of his collaborators. As a result, Jimmy murders all of his collaborators but Henry. As Henry describes in a voiceover:

Jimmy was cutting every link between himself and the robbery, but it had nothing to do with me. I gave Jimmy the tip, and he gave me some Christmas money. From then on, I kept my mouth shut. I knew Jimmy. He had the cash. It was his. I know he kicked some money upstairs to Paulie, but that was it. It made him sick to have to turn money over to the guys who stole it. He'd rather whack 'em.³⁷

According to Henry, not only did Jimmy fail to trust his collaborators, but he would rather have them murdered than share the six million dollar profit with them.³⁸ Jimmy, who once instructed a young Henry that the two greatest lessons in life are "never rat on your friends, and always keep your mouth shut" becomes, like Henry, a representative of the new age's focus on the individual and profit above personal loyalties.³⁹ In this way, *Goodfellas* captures the shift in the American economic, social, and cultural environment that gangsters and their families must navigate to pursue their underworld interests, ending in a world more like that of *The Departed* (2006) than *The Godfather*.

Gangster films that take place after the 1980s, such as *The Departed*, reflect the neoliberal Washington Consensus established during the 1990s rather than the New Deal era of mid-twentieth-century narratives. To understand how capitalism is critiqued in *The Departed*, it is necessary to look to Fabián Orán Llarena's study of neoliberalism and the gangster film. In his work, "Of Godfathers and Markets: The Politics of (the) American Gangster," Orán Llarena defines neoliberalism as:

The hegemonic form of capitalism at the expense of the postwar Keynesian-Fordist synthesis. Neoliberalism can be said to encourage the following elements: a populist

lexicon whereby freedom is tantamount to deregulated markets and low taxation; the libertarian repackaging of the Calvinist self-reliant individual into the entrepreneur type; [...] the emancipation of large corporations from the constraints of the nation-state and the resulting process of globalization; [...] and the enshrining of innovation, investment, and risk-taking.⁴⁰

Elements of neoliberal ideology, such as globalization and entrepreneurship, find a home in Frank Costello from *The Departed*. Frank does not own casinos, infiltrate unions, or run a prostitution ring as traditional gangsters do. He deals in microprocessors, which are highly profitable pieces of “military technology” that can be used in weapons of mass destruction.⁴¹ Frank operates within the globalized economy to make his millions. While the Corleones and the Luccheses profited from strategic alliances with corrupt members of their local community, Frank sells technology to members of the Chinese government, who need to outfit weapons of war.⁴² Though Frank makes use of a few henchmen, he keeps the majority of the profits for himself. Billy Costigan, an undercover cop charged with infiltrating Costello’s crew, says that Frank “doesn’t pay much” and that the Irish Mob is a “feudal enterprise” with Frank acting as the prosperous lord using the labor of his vassals for his own gain.⁴³

Rather than rely on a system of economic reciprocity and alliances, as seen in gangster films set in the postwar period, Frank and the Irish Mob employ duplicity and double-crossing to remain in operation as a criminal enterprise. Frank grooms a young Colin Sullivan, who came from a struggling family, to be a member of the Irish Mob by offering Colin an opportunity to “earn a little extra money” for his family by working for him.⁴⁴ As an adult, Colin becomes a detective in the Massachusetts State Police to protect Frank.⁴⁵ He directly infiltrates the Special Investigations Unit, joining a team whose job it is to “smash or marginally disrupt organized crime” in Boston.⁴⁶ Colin’s duplicity, rather than bribery and alliance-making, helps Frank

and the Irish Mob avoid arrests. In one instance, Colin helps the Irish Mob escape a raid from the Massachusetts police by allowing a detained member of the Mob to call Frank's right-hand man and warn him.⁴⁷ Similarly, Colin gains enough influence in the police department to receive a "surveillance sub-unit" under his control that is supposed to find the "rat" in the state police (when he himself is the rat), and he uses his power to try to find the undercover cop who has infiltrated Costello's crew instead.⁴⁸

Despite Colin's willingness to infiltrate the police and keep Frank from facing scrutiny, Colin is ultimately more concerned with protecting himself than remaining loyal to Frank and the Irish Mob. One reason for this is the complete absence of loyalty, trust, and respect among all characters in the film: Timothy Delahunt, one of Costello's men, is revealed to be an undercover Boston cop; Frank himself is a "protected FBI informant,"; and Sergeant Dignam exploits his power over Billy as the only person who knows he is an undercover cop to force him to continue working even as his mental health declines.⁴⁹ After discovering that Frank was in conversation with the FBI and could potentially incriminate Colin to save himself, Colin collaborates with Billy to get Costello killed, all the while convincing Costello that he is still working for him.⁵⁰ However, the hyper-individualistic Colin, after learning Costello recorded all conversations to provide them as evidence to the FBI, purges anyone who ever knew he was involved with the Irish Mob.⁵¹ After the case is over and Frank is dead, Colin realizes that Billy has discovered that he was Costello's rat because evidence he kept on his desk was askew after they met in his office. In response, Colin deletes Billy's file at the police department, erasing any record of his involvement as an informant and making him vulnerable to arrest.⁵² Barrigan, another cop who served as a rat for Costello, later kills Costigan for having tapes and evidence from Costello's lawyer which incriminated Colin and the other informants for the Irish Mob. According to Barrigan,

Costello planned to expose Colin and his other moles in the Massachusetts Police Department to the FBI.⁵³ While Barrigan promises to protect Colin, he kills Barrigan rather than allowing another person to live who knew his connections to the Irish Mob.⁵⁴ The ultimate irony is that in spite of all the bloodshed to protect himself, Colin is killed by Sergeant Dignam, who had been looking for the rat in the police department.⁵⁵ Colin, along with all other characters in *The Departed*, thus follow the neo-liberal dogma that declares the individual is “the only relevant and wholly accountable actor.”⁵⁶

The transition from the New Deal era to neoliberalism in gangster films comes not only with a change of business practices, but of values as well. The key difference between the values of pre-1980s timelines (*The Godfather* and *Goodfellas*) versus post-1980s timelines (*The Departed*) is the relationship between the collective, whether it be a crime family or the community at large, and the individual. In *The Godfather*, the Corleones as individuals and as a family unit cannot behave with total impunity as the underworld community and the city of New York place certain limitations on the family. While Don Vito may have sought to avoid the drug trade, the violent reaction from the other crime families jeopardizes the safety of the Corleones and of ordinary New Yorkers caught in the crossfire, bringing Vito to accept a truce and a regulated drug market. To run their lucrative family business, the Corleones must rely on in-group loyalty, support from the underworld community, and allies in the political, labor, and cultural spheres.⁵⁷ And though the Corleones live in a “dog-eat-dog world where anything goes in the name of business” as described by Edward LiPuma, the Corleones maintain a value system based on familial respect which, along with community accountability, serves as a ceiling on their behavior, even in a highly corrupt underworld.⁵⁸ In sharp contrast, there is no concept of loyalty in *The Departed*. Unlike *The Godfather*, wherein gangs cultivate a sense of familial identity, the Irish Mob in *The Departed* simply exists to maximize

illegal profits for Costello. Relying on and trusting others, the backbone principle of the Corleone family, is absent in *The Departed*. All that remains is protecting oneself by any means necessary; yet for all the betrayals nearly all the characters make to protect themselves, not one character can save themselves from death at the hands of those they had deceived. *Goodfellas* serves as a bridge between the two worlds, as characters like Henry Hill and Jimmy Conway undergo significant changes that correspond to the shifting values from the mid-to late-twentieth century.

Like any art form, film evolves in tandem with the world around it, responding to societal changes and reflecting them on screen. The gangster film is no exception. Though each of the three films studied in this analysis critiques capitalism, the directors handle the same theme differently depending on when the story takes place. *The Godfather*, beginning just after World War II, reflects an entirely different world than the neoliberal era of *The Departed*. Any analysis of the genre, therefore, must be acutely aware of when the film purportedly takes place, bearing the differences between the New Deal economic order and the Washington Consensus in mind. In doing so, we are left with a greater understanding of what the gangster genre critiques and how directors critique it.

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Endnotes

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25. *Goodfellas*, 13:20-13:29.
26. *Goodfellas*, 50:00-50:14.
27. *Goodfellas*, 12:33-13:09.
28. *Goodfellas*, 18:27-19:43, 35:21.
29. *Goodfellas*, 15:24-16:26.
30. *Goodfellas*, 1:16:11-1:17:50.
31. *Goodfellas*, 1:20:09-1:22:18.
32. *Goodfellas*, 1:24:39-1:25:38.
33. *Goodfellas*, 2:09:00-2:12:21.
34. *Goodfellas*, 2:15:55.
35. *Goodfellas*, 2:17:31-2:18:24.
36. *Goodfellas*, 1:33:07-1:33:20.
37. *Goodfellas*, 1:47:51-1:49:00.
38. *Goodfellas*, 1:38:01-1:38:08.
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44. *The Departed*, 3:08-3:51.
45. *The Departed*, 5:01-5:22, 8:42.
46. *The Departed*, 12:10-12:30.
47. *The Departed*, 49:24-50:29.
48. *The Departed*, 43:55-44:55, 1:12:34.
49. *The Departed*, 55:11-55:47, 1:16:07-1:16:11, 1:57:51.
50. *The Departed*, 2:00:45-2:05:17.
51. *The Departed*, 2:15:33-2:16:06.
52. *The Departed*, 2:09:30-2:11:29.
53. *The Departed*, 2:15:44, 2:18:27, 2:20:24-2:20:28.
54. *The Departed*, 2:20:52.
55. *The Departed*, 2:24:20.
56. Orán Llarena, "Of Godfathers and Markets," 66.
57. LiPuma, "The Mafia Mystique," 6-8.
58. LiPuma, "The Mafia Mystique," 7.

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