



# Der Geldkomplex (El complejo de dinero)

## Der Geldkomplex (The Money Complex)

### Juan Rodríguez

**Producer** Juan Rodríguez. **Production company** Tajo abajo (Las Matas, Spain). **Director** Juan Rodríguez. **Screenplay** Eloy Enciso, Eduard Mont de Palol, Juan Rodríguez. **Director of photography** Roman Lechapelier. **Sound** Nicolas Tsabertidis. **Sound design** Nicolas Tsabertidis. **Editor** Eloy Enciso.

**Cast** Lola Rubio (Francisca), Gianfranco Poddighe (Henry), Rafael Lamata (Rafael), Eduard Mont de Palol (Lucas), Jorge Dutor (The Son), Katrin Memmer (The Bride), Pablo Herranz (The Idiot), Juan Rodríguez (Domingo), Cecilia Molano (Cecilia), Julia de Castro (Singer), Miguel Rodríguez (Musician).

DCP, colour. 76 min. Spanish, German.

**Premiere** 10 February 2015, Berlinale Forum

Rafael resides on his southern Spanish finca with his friends, a group of bohemian refuseniks, adventurers and leftover revolutionaries. They loaf about in style in the idyllic surroundings, playing around, drinking, chatting, reciting verse, posing and performing. Early on, Rafael's son shows up with his German fiancée, who soon runs off with Julio after some four-handed piano playing. Henry is on a relentless quest for new business ventures and is prospecting for gold in a secret mine; Franziska prefers to ignore the need to earn money; Lucas reads book after book about economics and culture. And then there's Domingo, who is supposed to relieve a certain Herr Müller of Düsseldorf of three million Euros.

This debut film is loosely based on Franziska zu Reventlow's 1916 anarchic novel of the same name and is directed with a lightness of touch and subtle feeling for comedy and the absurd. It is an impish tale about our brief appearances on life's stage and our struggle for the right to exist under the conditions of the current system. It is about 'love or money'. And about friendship.

*Hanna Keller*

## The camera knows more than we do

Everywhere in Europe, people are afraid of losing their riches, instead of doing something useful, or even joyful, with that wealth. Franziska zu Reventlow made the following proposal: 'Let's play that money game as if it were the only thing that really mattered'. We followed that suggestion, but soon realised that we were working with some kind of desperate happiness; a journey that seemed to lead to nothing but painful irony. But it also gave us the chance to work with masks, to perform a summer theatre, to create distance from a situation that it is not at all so far removed from our day-to-day lives. When a mask reveals the truth, that is where one of the doors that leads to reality can be found. We gain access to a truth, an emotion, through the mask.

The scenes in *Der Geldkomplex (El complejo de dinero)* have no centre. The film has no centre. Rather, it represents a flow of ideas that can't be reduced to a single meaning. The idea was that the camera should maintain a distance so that the aura of each of the actors is preserved. We did not shoot in the bedrooms. A close-up is a basic tool used to give a film psychological weight. Since this film is by no means dogmatic, we filmed some close-ups. Filmmaking is a hard job to do; maybe that's why it has failed. It's aggressive, or perhaps more correctly: it can be aggressive with reality. When fiction and representation are possible, then reality becomes content. The camera knows more than we do. A gathering of friends. Their enthusiasm lies in their freedom. The more freedom they have, the more enthusiasm they feel. And vice versa. The punishment for those who do not submit to the work ethic is to suffer from a money complex. Whatever it may be, it will always involve facing up to reality. Saying things directly at times, showing things as they really are. Slightly seriously and somewhat jokingly. Leisure in excess, but beyond that: a lack of experience. The anxiety of improvised takes. When do they start, when do they end? Cinema makes us stronger, more aware of our fragility, and more capable of coming to terms with it.

Juan Rodríguez

## "The film is a response to the overdose of 'confessionalism' in which we live"

*How did you come across the novel Der Geldkomplex ('The Money Complex') by Franziska zu Reventlow, and what fascinated you about the book?*

**Juan Rodríguez:** The Spanish translation of *Der Geldkomplex* was published in Spain in 2011. It had been unknown in Spain before then. Eduard Mont de Palol, the co-screenwriter on the film, and I were looking for a text we could use as a basis for a film. Right from the start, we thought it was much better to work from an already existing text than to make up the story and the characters ourselves. Eduard proposed *Under the Volcano* by Malcolm Lowry, and I suggested *The Sailor from Gibraltar* by Marguerite Duras – unaware that a film version already existed, directed by Tony Richardson. Fortunately, *Der Geldkomplex* appeared very early on in the search process. I read it and loved it. I passed it on to Eduard, who quickly wrote back to me confirming that we now had our starting-point. It's a magnificent epistolary novel full of multi-layered, eccentric comedy. From the very first line, the narrator's witty cynicism prevents any sort of illusion. It's wonderful to imagine where this attitude came from: perhaps the Paris Commune, which occurred in the same year in which Franziska was born? Perhaps it also

has to do with Nietzsche's jolliest side. In short, we had a whole range of possibilities that allowed for very subtle jesting about Franziska zu Reventlow's contemporary, Dr Freud from Vienna.

*What were the greatest challenges in transforming the novel into a script?*

The most significant difference with respect to the novel is that we turned the Alpine sanatorium into a country estate in southern Spain, where instead of a director of the clinic we have the owner of the large estate, and instead of a drunk and disorderly patient – in the novel it's a Russian baron – there's a son with the same characteristics.

The reflections on property and inheritance, which are so important within the novel, are almost taken for granted in the film, so to speak. But there was never a script. The basis of the work with the actors was a description of each character of no more than two pages. And we also had a series of scenes written in the manner of: 'Francisca talks to Rafael about her marriage as they stroll beneath the acacias', or 'The son accompanies Henry to the mine'. Those scenes were used to organise the work, the day-to-day filming. I wouldn't say that we improvised in our work with the actors, rather that we approached the representation of the characters in a playful manner. There is a certain energy present through which each actor relates to his character. There is a gradual process of assimilation – or projection – and the time comes when you have to go on stage and you let the character come forth.

This adaptation process, or creation of our own system, took some time – the first two weeks, more or less. We followed a completely anti-psychological approach, which has a lot to do with the type of staging that I wanted to research: the type that doesn't dictate the spectator's vision, but respects their freedom as an observer.

Otherwise, I don't think it was difficult at all to understand and represent these characters, who maintain such a morbid relationship with the world of work and the world of money. In this sense, I'd say the film is realistic, and to some extent a collective self-portrait.

*How did you put your ensemble together?*

The actors are friends of mine; the majority have professional training in contemporary dance or performance. They are used to being on stage in a particular way: always intent on making clear that space exists and that it is 'occupied' by objects. I had no intention of taking on the usual dynamics of filming which, especially in fiction, are very hierarchically structured. I think it is legitimate to speak of a democratisation of creation. That may require the order of priorities to be inverted: not looking to make a 'good film' at all costs, but to find a way of committing ourselves to work where we can bring together our experiences in life. In other words, to not separate work from life; to not have money or ambition as a catalyst, but rather a humane organisation of time and work. So we had the theme, the characters, a proposal for the staging, Roman Lechapelier as director of photography and Nicolas Tsabertidis as sound engineer, and five weeks to work freely. Gradually, we began to harmonise with one another as we became immersed in the cinema trade.

*The characters seem to put the 'public' before the 'private'.*

You could say that the 'superficial' prevails over the 'profound', which refers to a certain concept of cinema. I think the famous

'obsessive worlds' of film directors are a journalistic cliché. At the same time, you could say that *Der Geldkomplex (El complejo de dinero)* is a response to the overdose of a kind of 'confessionalism' in which we live. What is private is instantly made public – or should I say publicised? – on Facebook, etc. Hanging on to modesty, resisting the display of feelings, are things that are sorely missed. It is as if the pendulum had swung from classical nineteenth-century repression (Victorian, Lutheran or Roman Catholic; they each have their own charms) to the current proliferation where we feel entitled to do or say whatever we please because 'That's how I feel'. The characters in *Der Geldkomplex (El complejo de dinero)* are able to maintain dignity in a situation in which it is by no means easy to do.

Given the sensory overload we are faced with at present, it is difficult to find the serenity necessary to avoid being swept along with it. Stepping aside might be a good idea in this respect.

*In the second half of the film, there is a song that all of your remaining characters sing together. Which song do they sing, and what is the meaning behind this sequence?*

It is a traditional Mexican farewell song. I think the meaning behind it is exactly what the film narrates: all the characters gather around the father to say farewell to his son who is leaving the estate, jilted after discovering that his girlfriend has run off with his friend. The reversal of values is also apparent: in the film it is more natural for the father to continue to offer abode to his helpless friends than to dismiss them from his home in order to satisfy or comfort his son, who seemingly has even greater problems to solve. Perhaps no one has yet diagnosed him with a money complex, and he is therefore unaware that he suffers from one.

*What is the meaning of nature and landscape in the film?*

We were working from an approach to cinema that accepts its artificiality. In that sense, nature is another character, which is not too present at the start of the film but gradually gains prominence. I think the contrast between the representations by the actors, in which some kind of distancing intercedes, and the replication of what is 'real' as captured by the film technique, has great expressive strength and complexity. The concept of nature in the film can be understood through Henry, the 'fanciful entrepreneur' gold prospector who sets out into the fields with his tools, like a painter, and comes back home empty-handed, perhaps with the sole satisfaction of having spent a pleasant day outdoors. However, he is capable of imagining that there might be something in those stones. He builds a plaster-cast model, puts something gold on top and then a blue ribbon. Without harming anyone, without destroying the world.

*Interview: Ansgar Vogt, January 2015*



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Juan Rodríguez was born in Madrid, Spain, in 1971. After studying film, he completed a degree in History. He then ran the art gallery La verde oliva in Granada. In 2008, he started the Tajo abajo production company, and made his first short film, *A la sierra de Armenia / To Armenia's Mountains*. He co-founded the Institute of Illiterate Art in 2013, along with a group of choreographers and performers. *Der Geldkomplex* is his first full-length feature film.

#### Films

2008: *A la sierra de Armenia / To Armenia's Mountains* (12 min.).  
2010: *Hoja sin árbol / Leaf, Treeless* (25 min.). 2011: *Hoja sin árbol (II) / Leaf, Treeless (II)* (25 min.). 2015: *Der Geldkomplex (El complejo de dinero) / Der Geldkomplex (The Money Complex)*.