

The wild side of greed shown in *Wall Street*

Wall Street
 Twentieth Century Fox
 Whittemud Crossing, Cinema 6,
 Plaza, Capilano

review by Elaine Ostry

Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* is a miracle of timing, arriving not long after the insider trading scandal and the stock market crash. It comes at a time when the materialism of yuppie life is at its height, and *Wall Street* questions the validity of this lifestyle in an entertaining and effective way.

The hero of the film is Bud Fox, a young stockbroker who wants to work with Gordon Gekko, the experienced and sophisticated tycoon. Gekko has amassed his wealth with the aid of inside information, which is, of course, illegal. It does not take long — about a minute at most — for young Fox to fall from his state of innocence.

Soon Fox is "on a roll", and the film shows the intoxicating whirl of living rich — and on the edge. Fox buys an expensive Manhattan apartment, fills it with terribly ugly (if expensive) art, and finds himself a lover. He starts to wear a pair of shades.

"You want a friend, buy a dog."

This heady existence of Bud's clashes with the values of his father, who works with his hands and represents his airline union members. Bud Fox acts on some information his father tells him about the union and convinces Gekko to buy up the airline and make it efficient.

However, there is a series of betrayals leading to the collapse of Fox's world of

wealth. Fox is suddenly forced to judge himself and his lifestyle. For he, like the audience, has become so caught up in the excitement of living well that he has forgotten that it has been the result of illegal acts. Yes, Bud, even guys in Guccis get handcuffed.

The greatest aspect of the film is the screenplay, which features snappy one-liners, dramatic situations, and a fast pace. The characters are well-developed and interesting.

Michael Douglas easily outshines his fellow actors as Mr. Gekko. He looks evil, and he delivers his lines with a snarl that says this is not a man easily fooled. Douglas conveys the character of a greedy, ruthless man with great energy. His desire for more and more wealth shines about him like a halo. Only money really matters to this man; not even hunger: "Lunch?! Are you kidding? Lunch is for wimps." He is also above friendship: "You want a friend, buy a dog." And how about this insult? "When I find the guy who leaked this, I'll rip his eyeballs out and suck out his skull."

Amazingly, Douglas portrays this character without making him an absolute stereotype. Gekko can smile, too, and show a certain charm. Towards the end, Douglas shows that even Gekko cannot remain totally unemotional about stock or immune to the bonds of friendship.

Charlie Sheen as Bud Fox, however, fails to match Douglas' performance. Sheen looks good in a sharp Italian-made suit, of course, and has a certain charismatic appeal. Yet he doesn't seem intelligent enough to be a stockbroker. He doesn't seem to understand the lines he is saying. When he gazes at the computer screen, one senses that his only thought is "What in the world is this?" Sheen fails to engage the sympathy of the audience. When he delivers the rather clichéd line of "Where am I?", one feels like replying: "on a balcony overlooking Manhattan."



Don't trust a man named Gekko: he's bound to be slimy.

Martin Sheen, on the contrary, is thoroughly convincing as the elder Mr. Fox. He looks like a real worker, and he conveys the rugged integrity of his character very effectively. One can sense — and sympathize with — his helplessness in the world of high finance.

Daryl Hannah breaks away from her previous roles in her portrayal of Darien Taylor, who is essentially a high-class whore. For once, Hannah plays a pragmatic character with a sharp edge of greed, one who is loyal to whoever has the money to spare. Hannah manages to create this character well, although she is given few lines to do so.

Stone's direction is skillful and interesting, particularly the opening scenes showing New Yorkers on their way to work. There

are, however, simply too many shots of the sun rising over the city's skyscrapers.

Stone makes a strong statement in this film about the American dream. Money does not bring happiness in this film, only insecurity. "The main thing about money," comments Fox's boss, "is that it makes you do what you shouldn't." The opposition of the immorality of Gekko and the morality of the senior Fox is clear. "I don't create, I own," states Gekko; Mr. Fox advises Bud to "create, instead of living off the buying and selling of others." Middle class values are shown to be morally superior to those of the tycoon.

Altogether, the corrosive greed depicted in *Wall Street* is enough to make you drop out and form a commune. It is an entertaining and enlightening picture of the fascinating power of greed.

SAVE MONEY ON TEXTBOOKS!

The Edmonton Book Store has a wide selection of current university texts for all courses.

Buying quality used texts can save you from 30% to 50% of University book store prices!

We are conveniently located just off campus on 109 Street. Parking at the door.

We also pay cash for your books and texts.

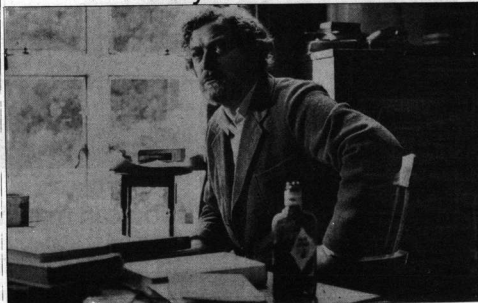
The Edmonton Book Store
 8530 — 109 Street
 433-1781

Open seven days a week

Looking for an outlet for your creative ideas?

ENTER The Gateway's Literary Contest

Three categories to choose from:
Short Poem Long Poem Short Story
 Contact Sherri or Elaine at
 The Gateway for more information



Hmm... what can I write for The Gateway contest?