

# The New European Cinema of Precarity

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# PROJECT AIMS

- 1)** To analyze the poetics of the new European Cinema of Precarity (its genre and stylistic variations)
- 2)** To situate historically this cinema by drawing out the similarities and differences between contemporary films and earlier representations of precarity in European cinema
- 3)** To find out whether this cinema associates precarity with a particular social class or it represents precarity as an experience that cuts across classes, demanding that we rethink the concepts of 'class' and 'class struggle'?
- 4)** To explore where this cinema locates the possibility for social and political transformation—in a particular social class, in fighting for a particular good/cause, or in a particular political stance

## Structure

- What is neoliberalism?
- Paths of resistance to neoliberalism
- Feminism and neoliberalism
- Work
- Class
- Precarity
- 'The precariat'
- The new European cinema of precarity
- Precursors to the new European cinema of precarity
- Precarious lives: Cinematic Moments in the Historical Arc of Neoliberalism

# Neoliberalism is a politico-epistemological program rather than simply free-market fundamentalism.

Core ideas:

- (1) 'Free' markets do not occur naturally. They must be actively constructed through political organizing.
- (2) The political goal of neoliberals is not to destroy the state, but to take control of it, and to redefine its structure and function in order to create and maintain a market-friendly culture.
- (3) The most important virtue—more important than justice—is freedom, defined 'negatively' as “freedom to choose”, and most importantly, defined as the freedom of corporations to act as they please.

Wendy Brown (2003), “Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” *Theory & Event* 7, no.1, 40-46

William Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism: Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition* (2014)

Philip Mirowski, “The Political Movement that Dared not Speak its own Name: The Neoliberal Thought Collective Under Erasure,” Institute for New Economic Thinking, Working Paper No 23, Sept 2014, p. 22

# Stages of neoliberalism

- 1) Combative neoliberalism (1979-1989): the spread of neoliberalism; the *ideological* orientation of this first phase – the purpose was “to demolish non-capitalist avenues of political hope” i.e., neoliberalism emerged primarily as a defense against the resurgence of socialism and communism
- 2) Normative neoliberalism (1989-2008): “the neoliberal telos became a constructivist one of rendering market-based metrics and instruments the measure of all human worth, not only inside the market but, crucially, outside it as well”
- 3) Punitive neoliberalism (2008-present): “In contrast to the offensive against socialism, the ‘enemies’ targeted now are largely disempowered and internal to the neoliberal system itself. In some instances, such as those crippled by poverty, debt and collapsing social-safety nets, they have already been largely destroyed as an autonomous political force. Yet somehow this increases the urge to punish them further.”

William Davies, “The New Neoliberalism,” New Left Review, Sept/Oct 2016

# The current state of neoliberalism

- The death of neoliberalism (key historical moments: the 2002 US steel tariffs, 9/11, the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, the 2016 Brexit referendum, the rise of Trump and of the European far right, and the COVID-19 pandemic)
- The ‘Interregnum perspective’: *The Strange Non-death of Neoliberalism* (Colin Crouch, 2011) or ‘neoliberalism as living dead’ (Simon Springer, 2013).
- The ‘Mutation perspective’: neoliberalism doesn’t die but mutates and lives on; recently it has become connected to far-right forces and mutated into ‘neo-illiberalism’ signifying “the illiberal mutation and restoration of transatlantic neoliberalism, marked by brazen attacks on constitutional checks, balances and rights...executed by neoliberal elites...adopting nativist narratives and policies of the radical right” (Reijer Hendrikse, 2018).

## Critiques of neoliberalism

- \* Foucauldians (Wendy Brown, Maurizio Lazzarato)
- \* Marxists (David Harvey)
- \* Epochalists (attribute different political, economic, cultural and social phenomena e.g., globalization, financialization, deregulation, economic inequality, individualization, and entrepreneurialism to what they variously describe as the 'ideology', 'language', 'political philosophy', 'project', 'conspiracy' or 'rationality' of neoliberalism)

Carolyn Hardin (2014), "Finding the 'Neo' in Neoliberalism," *Cultural Studies*, 28:2, 199-221

## Foucauldians

- Neoliberalism is a political rationality that extends and disseminates market values to all institutions and social action.
- In contrast with the notorious laissez-faire of classical economic liberalism, neoliberalism does not conceive of either the market itself or rational economic behavior as purely natural. Both are constructed—organized by law and political institutions and requiring political intervention and orchestration. [...] This does not mean that the market is controlled by the state but precisely the opposite.
- The extension of economic rationality to formerly noneconomic domains and institutions reaches individual conduct. Neoliberalism normatively constructs and interpellates [...] individuals as rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for ‘self-care’ and configures morality as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences.

Wendy Brown, (2003) “Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” *Theory & Event* 7, no.1, 40-46

Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (2015)



## Marxists

- Neoliberalism is not a new economic theory or organization of world power but rather a variant of a very old concept: it is the current version of the dominant ideology that serves the class in power.
- Neoliberalization is “a vehicle for the restoration of class power though the new elite class is managers and financiers rather than owners of the means of production” (Harvey 31).
- For neoliberals, “the political distinction of significance is not right versus left, or Communism versus Fascism, but rather totalitarianism versus liberalism, or collectivism versus individualism. (Biebricher 18).

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005)

Thomas Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism* (2019)

## Social and Cultural Histories of Neoliberalism

- Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999): shows that from the mid-70s onwards capitalism abandoned the hierarchical Fordist work structure and developed a new network-based form of organization founded on employee initiative, autonomy, and freedom in the workplace
- Deborah Lupton, *The Quantified Self* (2016): analyzes the political and social dimensions of self-tracking, and the concepts of selfhood underpinning it
- Phoebe V. Moore, *The Quantified Self in Precarity: Work, Technology and What Counts* (2019): demonstrates that the push to render the autonomic self 'self-tracking', 'self-monitoring' and 'self-surveying' leads to increased rates of subjective and objective precarity
- David Hancock (2016), "Neoconservatism, bohemia and the moral economy of neoliberalism," *Journal for Cultural Research*, 20:2, 101-121 – analyzes the ways in which aspects of bohemia have been incorporated in the construction of neoliberalism's moral economy: "Through a celebration of the heroic entrepreneur neoliberalism's moral economy is based upon a celebration of risk, an embrace of chance and an overturning of bourgeois morality. The spiritual satisfaction of life on the edge offered to the neoliberal subject acts as a form of seduction and mirrors the creative freedom offered through bohemia. Neoliberalism's gift, however, comes at a price, the edgy existence is coupled with removal of social safety nets and increasing insecurity and precariatization" (118).

# Resisting neoliberalism

- To resist neoliberalism is to oppose: positivism, quantification and measurement, economization, capitalization and assetization, utilitarianism, managerialism, entrepreneurialism, 'creativity', happiness, and 'self-improvement'.
- What can neoliberalism *not* understand: egalitarian and anti-authoritarian ethic, the non-denumerable (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005), silence (Fleming 2013), and refusal.
- Resisting neoliberalism is predicated on "visibilizing factual orderings of neoliberal rationalities," demonstrating that they are constructed rather than natural, value-laden rather than 'neutral'.
- Capitalist Realism can only be threatened if it is shown to be in some way inconsistent or untenable [...] Emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a 'natural order', must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency (Fisher 16).

Dimitris Soudias, 2021 MACBA symposium *A Neoliberal Counterrevolution?*

Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* (2009)

## Resisting neoliberalism: Silence as Refusal

- Fleming discusses various revolts—including the Occupy Movement—that were striking because of the silence of those involved.
- When pressed to communicate the program motivating their behavior, no representative or leader emerged to speak, no charter was delivered...only a taciturn withdrawal from the machinery of dialogue was evident (Fleming 628-629).
- Here silence does not signify an inability to communicate but rather a choice not to talk to power, a refusal “to be recognized”, “to enter into the discursive mirror game that is now governing so much liberal discourse” (629).

Peter Fleming, “Common as Silence” (2013), *Ephemera* 13, no. 3: 627-640.

# Rethinking 'work' under neoliberalism

- Work “has assumed a ‘gaseous’ form, rendering obsolete traditional divisions like work time/free time, public/private or fixed/variable capital” (Fleming, 637). Privatization, deregulation and financialization have led to the ‘uberization’ of ‘precarious non-subjects.’
- Fleming identifies desertion, death, sleep, and illness as potential sites of ideological refusal of “the neoliberal work mythology” i.e., the intersecting trends toward individuation, flexibilization, casualization, internalized discipline, and managerialism.
- “Unlike preceding eras of capitalist accumulation, labor’s lament is just as likely to be heard among perversely salaried bankers as it is with lowly call center workers. [...] And this shifts the nature of its power and the co-ordinates of its social refusal: ‘Historical conflict no longer opposes two massive molar heaps, two classes – the exploited and the exploiters, the dominant and the dominated, managers and workers – among which, in every individual case, one could differentiate. The frontline no longer cuts through the middle of society; it runs through the middle of each of us.’”

## RETHINKING WORK cont.

**Maurizio Ferraris** - In opposition to “the philosophical tradition” (i.e., “Marx”), which “is partial to reading labour in terms of toil and alienation, what we are witnessing, rather than the disappearance of work, is a dissemination, a shift in the places and relationships of work, and the transformation of work into “activities”, where work as a whole proves to be a subspecies of a more complex action of mobilization” (86).

- work (the traditional concept of work over the past two centuries as a fixed, repetitive, and highly organized activity)
- mobilization (functions that have never really been considered work, but which are so today, if we assume work to be defined as the production of value)

**Guy Standing** – We must disaggregate work that is **not** labor into:

- care work (done mainly by women looking after children, the home etc.)
- reproductive work (including training, retraining and preparing oneself for labor or other work)
- waiting-for-labor (important as a form of time use in developing countries)
- work-for-labor (unremunerated but exploited activity, on or off workplaces)
- work-for-debt

Maurizio Ferraris, “From Work to Mobilization,” in *Law, Labor and the Humanities*, ed. Tiziano Toracca and Angela Condello (Routledge, 2019), ch. 6

Guy Standing, “Understanding the Precariat through Labor and Work,” *Development and Change: Forum 2014*, vol 45, issue 5 (Sept 2014): 963-980.

## Rethinking 'Class'

- The 'image' of the working class has undergone dramatic changes as a result of the deindustrialization of the West.
- The old image of blue-collar, manual male workers (the coal miner or the autoworker) has been replaced by one that is feminized and white collar (the call center employee, the shop assistant).

Sarah Attfield, *Class on Screen: The Global Working Class in Contemporary Cinema*, p.5

- While in Marx the working class is a well-defined entity, scholars are increasingly calling into question essentialist/stratification definitions of class, drawing mainly on the work of Pierre Bourdieu.
- The classification of people can never be contained within objective systems of measurement but is always the outcome of struggles over and against these systems of classifications as they are lived in practice. Class is a relational concept, and social classes only emerge through struggles against exploitation and inequality (479).

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984 [1979])

## Feminism and neoliberalism

Any critical conversation about contemporary labor cannot afford to ignore the crucial role women's work assumes in a neoliberal regime of power that increasingly derives its profits from the kind of skills often associated with femininity, namely "flexibility and adaptability" (Barbara Menzel, *Women at Work in Twenty-First-Century European Cinema*, 5).

The financial crisis, unemployment, austerity, and the migration crisis have motivated feminists to rethink Marxist-inflected feminist approaches to labor. Feminist scholars argue that the independence that feminism sought for women was appropriated in the growth of contract labor and eventually the gig economy.



# Feminism and neoliberalism

- Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker, ed. *Gendering the Recession* (2014) - explores the privatization of the recession in recent genre films in order to critique postfeminist culture's tendency to hold individual women, rather than structures of gender hierarchy, responsible for gendered inequality and injustice.
- In an era in which "accounts of economic decline frequently privilege male subjectivity (through such buzzwords as "mancession" and invitations to "man up")" Negra and Tasker draw attention to "the renewal of long-established tropes of masculinity in "crisis" and the discursive trope of failing males and coping females, which predates the recession" (22).
- Examining the recessionary 'chick flick' (e.g., *Julie and Julia*; *Eat Pray Love*) vs the corporate male melodrama (e.g., *The Company Men*, *Up in the Air*) they conclude:  
"The recessionary chick flick broadly downplays the significance and consequences of female unemployment (sometimes sketching female work struggles as significant only insofar as they correlate with relationship problems) [whereas] the corporate melodrama presents male redundancy in dramatic terms, both as a tragic scenario and as an opportunity for personal reinvention" (359).

## Precarity

Originally signifying a social condition linked to poverty, precarity has come to refer to the rise in flexible and precarious forms of labour, the growth of the knowledge economy, the reduction of welfare state provisions, the suppression of unions, and the association of migration with illegality.

‘Precarity’ vs ‘poverty’:

- Poverty is economic destitution, where people are completely dependent on the state, charity networks, and criminal rings for their livelihood. Precarity, however, is the social condition marked by flexible employment and fluctuating income (Foti 11)
- While the precariat is the class of people whose lives are precarious because they have little or no job security, *the logic of precarity* pervades the entirety of society.

Alex Foti, *General Theory of the Precariat: Great Recession, Revolution, Reaction* (Amsterdam: Institute of Networked Culture, 2017)

# The Precariat

The restructuring of global and national economies in the last 40 years has produced **a new global class characterised by chronic insecurity, 'the precariat'**.

The precariat includes: 'illegal immigrants', fast-food workers, Uber and Lyft drivers, migrant workers, farm laborers, seasonal workers, house cleaners, nannies, domestic workers, hotel workers, tech workers, adjunct professors, etc.

## **The seven classes that make up the class structure of contemporary capitalist societies:**

- the elite or plutocracy (the ruling class in the classical Marxist sense)
- the salariat (people in stable full-time employment)
- proficians (those with bundles of skills they can market, earning high incomes on contract as consultants or independent workers)
- the old "core" working class (proletariat), defined by its reliance on mass labor, reliance on wage income, absence of control of the means of production, and habituation to stable labor that corresponds to its skills
- **the precariat**
- the unemployed
- the lumpen-precariat (or "underclass"), a detached group of socially ill misfits living off the dregs of society

## **3 groups of precarious workers:**

- 'Atavists' are former working-class members who have lost their access to secure or meaningful work and, thus, have lost their 'past'.
- 'Nostalgics' are migrants and ethnic minority members who have left their home countries and, unable to find meaningful work in their new countries, lack a 'present'.
- 'Progressives' are educated members of the precariat who do not have access to a career path, thus also lacking a 'future'.

## Critiques of Guy Standing

- *Ben Scully, "Precarity North and South: A Southern Critique of Guy Standing," Global Labour Journal, Vol 7. No. 2 (2016), 160-173 & Clara Han, "Precarity, Precariousness, and Vulnerability," Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol.47 (2018), 331-343.*

Standing defines precarity only in relation to insecure work, making it a historically specific phenomenon traceable back to the post-1970s period as a product of market-driven globalization. However, as postcolonial and feminist scholars remind us, many workers—notably **women and people of color**—have for a long time been excluded from the Fordist regime of labour security.

- *Constantin Manolchev, "Breaking up the 'precariat': Personalisation, differentiation and deindividuation in precarious work groups"*

Challenges the theoretical validity of the 'precariat' framework, which **tries to bring together highly disparate groups under the same denominator**, while failing to show where the boundaries between the precariat and other, non-precarious groups lie. On the basis of semi-structured interviews with workers from groups within the precariat spectrum (cleaners, care workers, migrants, agricultural workers etc.) Manolchev argues that **cohesion within and between these groups of people is overstated**, and worker collectivization far from apparent.

- *Erik Olin Wright, "Is the Precariat a Class?"*

Contends that the material interests of people in **the precariat and in the working class** are **not** sufficiently opposed to each other for these to constitute **two distinct classes**.

# The new European Cinema of Precarity

- In *Cruel Optimism* (2011) Lauren Berlant analyzes films that dramatize the attrition of social fantasies like upward mobility, job security, meritocracy, political and social equality, and identifies an emergent aesthetics that she calls ‘the cinema of precarity’.
- Originally referring “to lives mired in poverty” the term ‘*précarité*’, only became attached to employment in the 1980s when neoliberal restructuring in the guise of flexible labor was becoming a byword in national and transnational corporate politics.
- Berlant locates this shift in the term’s meaning “from limited structure to pervasive life environment” in the 1990s and after, marking the emergence of a ‘cinema of precarity’, which builds upon the legacy of 1930s and 1940s Hollywood melodramas and postwar Italian neorealism.
- Berlant focuses on French and Francophone cinema but suggests that this is a global style which combines politics, melodrama and new forms of realism that can be described as restrained and understated, pervaded by a sense of fatigue and impasse.
- This global style is evident in the films of the Dardennes, Hooman Bahrani, Cristian Mungiu, Fatih Akin, Jiǎ Zhāngkē, Kelly Reichardt, Mike White, Courtney Hunt, Debra Granik and many others.

- The new European cinema of precarity is distinguished by a wide range of genre and stylistic responses to the precarity of life under neoliberalism, from allegorical (White God, Happy as Lazzaro, Transit), through experimental (Bait), from black comedies (Glory, My Piece of the Pie) to social dramas (La loi du marche, At War), from work musicals (The Nothing Factory) to corporate psycho-thrillers (Early One Morning), suggesting that traditional forms of social realism are no longer sufficient to capture the complexity of Europe's socio-political and moral crisis.
- In the cinema of precarity, 'precarity' extends beyond the expression of an economic condition to indicate an entire 'affective environment', a sense of individualised insecurity, and the loss of social and existential status. [Recall that Neoliberalism is a politico-epistemological program rather than simply free-market fundamentalism]
- The cinema of precarity often investigates "new potential conditions of solidarity emerging from subjects not with similar historical identities or social locations but with similar adjustment styles to the pressures of the emergent new ordinariness" (Berlant 202) – i.e., new lines of solidarity cut across class, race, gender, ethnicity

In line with Berlant's expanded use of the term 'precarity', my project does not focus exclusively on precarity as a social condition (Alex Foti) or a social class (Guy Standing's 'precariat').

Instead, it explores the logic of precarity that pervades the entirety of society, the ways in which neoliberalism, understood as a political philosophy rather than simply market fundamentalism, has led to the profound destruction of social bonds and to the production of economic, social, and political precarity, vulnerability and insecurity.

I understand neoliberalism, following Stehle and Weber, as describing "this particular aspect of capitalism, in which our lives are thoroughly saturated by market logic, which leads to an emphasis on hyperindividualism, self-maximization, potential, direction, goals, and increasing capacity" (11-12).

Maria Stehle and Beverly Weber, *Precarious Intimacies: The Politics of Touch in Contemporary Western European Cinema* (2020)

## Precursors to the new European cinema of precarity

- **Late 1920s-early 1930s British documentaries** celebrating working-class life (John Grierson, Paul Rotha, Humphrey Jennings, Harry Watt and Basil Wright)
- **1930s Depression era French films - especially 'poetic realist' films**
- **Post-war Italian Neorealism (1943-1952)** – working class characters, real locations, documentary style, long takes, a strong sense of class solidarity and Christian humanist values
- **1930s and 1940s classical Hollywood melodramas** (suffering protagonists dealing with conflicts between personal desires and relationships (with family, lovers, friends, coworkers) and mounting social pressures; difficult choices between duty and love; a sense of entrapment, frustration, futility, and impasse)
- **British New Wave films of the 1950s and 1960s**, particularly '**kitchen sink**' films: e.g., Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (Karel Reisz, 1960), The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner (Tony Richardson, 1962), This Sporting Life (Lindsay Anderson, 1963)
  - emphasis on landscape (underscores working-class characters are defined and limited by their environment)
  - settings outside London, in the industrial north and midlands
  - characters defined by their social class—an immediate source for this was the “Angry Young Men” literary movement, which viewed youthful rebellion through the prism of Britain’s class system
  - tensions between old and new concepts of the working class: between the working class as internally united and as a class consisting of individuals pursuing their own consumerist desires
  - **French New Realism**



## Depression era socially committed French cinema (1930s)

- the economic crisis caused by the **Great Depression**
- the rise of **Hitler** in Germany
- the growth of violent **far-right leagues** in France (nationalist, militarist, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist)
- the victory of the **Popular Front** (Front Populaire), an alliance of left-wing parties (the French Communist Party, the French socialist party, and the progressive Radical-Socialist Party) in the 1936 elections. **Popular Front's achievements:** workers' right to strike and the right to collective bargaining; two weeks of paid annual leave; 40-hour work week; increase in unemployment allowances
- **The French Left** takes an active interest in the cinema as a vehicle for promoting their ideological cause:

### 1) The Cinematographic Service of the Socialist Federation (1935)

- the Service made films emphasizing the fascist threat and the need to support the Popular Front; the films were rented to Socialist groups throughout France for projection at Party meetings
- the Service maintained a circulating library of films focused on contemporary social and economic problems, and promoting working-class solidarity [e.g., Slatan Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe or Who Owns the World* (1932), King Vidor's *Our Daily Bread* (1934), C.W. Pabst's *Comradeship* (1931)]

2) *La vie est à nous* (1936), a Communist party propaganda film made by a directors' collective headed by Jean Renoir [the film was produced through crowdfunding at a mass Party meeting] - promoted the idea of transforming social conditions through collective action

**Ciné-Liberté**, a co-operative film group sponsored by the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) - opposed politically motivated censorship and the standard commercial films of the period; produced documentaries about the lives of workers and workers' strikes. Ciné-Liberté branches formed around workers and syndicates (e.g., the Builders Syndicate, the Railway Workers syndicate) and in cafes in working-class districts of Paris.

- Starting in 1935 films begin exploring social problems like unemployment (Duvivier, *La belle équipe*, 1936), migrant workers (Renoir, *Toni*, 1935), exploitation and class conflict (Renoir, *The crime of M. Lange*, 1935), the plight of the aged (Duvivier, *La fin de jour*, 1939), social disintegration (Renoir, *The rules of the game*, 1939), focusing on the previously neglected working class.
- The worker/proletarian hero in socially committed cinema: romanticized (especially in the films of Marcel Carne, on which he collaborated with poet Jacques Prevert) or realistic (especially in the films of Jean Renoir, whose actors and crews often lived for some time in the social milieu the film was supposed to portray in order to experience it first-hand)
- Despite the worker's generally positive image, in many films the worker protagonists end up committing murder and/or suicide, their anti-social behavior revealing a profound sense of social alienation and political impotence.
- Dissolution of the Popular Front in autumn 1938 (factors: internal dissensions related to the Spanish Civil War, the shaky coalition of Socialists and Radicals, the persistent effects of the Depression)

## French Poetic Realism (1930s-1940s)

- combines aspects of documentary-type realism (focus on everyday life, real locations, mostly urban milieus) with a stylized ('poetic') approach to cinematography (expressionistic lighting, long takes, staging in depth, emphasis on evocative settings and atmosphere over action)
- focus on characters living on the margins of society (unemployed members of the working class, petty criminals, etc.)
- influenced by Émile Zola's topical stories about labor unrest, prostitution, and the rise of consumer society
- left leaning
- pessimism and fatalism (the legacy of Zola's naturalism/determinism)
- influenced: film noir (confining spaces, street life, crime, atmospheric exterior scenes, doomed love), Italian neorealism (working class characters, plots revolving around social problems), and the French New Wave

# Poetic Realism - Representative Films

Jean Vigo: *L'Atlante* (1934)

Marcel Carné: *Le Quai des brumes* (1938), *Hôtel du nord* (1938), *Le Jour se lève* (1939), *Children of Paradise* (1945)

Jean Renoir: *La Chienne* (1931), *The Lower Depths* (Renoir, 1936), *The Crime of Monsieur Lange* (1936), *La Grande Illusion* (1937), *La Bête humaine* (1938), *The Rules of the Game* (1939)

Julien Duvivier: *Au bonheur de dames* (1930), *David Golder* (1931), *La Bandera* (1935), *La belle équipe* (1936), *Pépé le Moko* (1937)

## French 'New Realism' (post-1995): The Return of the Social in French cinema

- the dissolution of the totalizing framework of a class-based struggle
- the fragmentation of the old work- and class-centered unitary social question into diverse social questions, partly due to the victory of capitalism and the splitting-off of the assorted *sans papiers*, *marginalized*, *précaires* and *exclus* from the remainder of a more traditionally conceived working class, and partly due to the post-1968 addition of race, gender and sexuality to the list of oppressions and exclusions

The fragmentation of the social is reflected in a growing diversity of themes, stories and issues:

1) narratives of exclusion and explosion (*La Haine*)

2) narratives of return (reaffirm the centrality of class and labor and reconnect with past struggles (*Ressources humaines*))

3) narratives of mobility: characters break out of fixed identities (*Drôle de Félix*, *Bye-Bye*)

- a yet unformulated politics that still tries to tie together diverse, local resistances no longer mediated by the radical universalizing discourses of class-based struggle
- The films oppose neoliberalism without proposing a counter utopian project

## French New Realism cont.

Franck Garbarz's tripartite typology of New Realist films:

- *films-constat*: documentary-style films focusing on issues such as unemployment and insecurity (e.g., Laetitia Masson's *En avoir ou pas* (1995) and Pascale Ferran's *L'Âge des possibles* (1996))
- *films signaux d'alarme*: show the potentially explosive consequences of the dissolution of social bonds (e.g., Pierre Jolivet's *Fred* (1997) and Dumont's *La Vie de Jésus* (1997))
- *films de la solidarité*: e.g., films by Robert Guédiguian and Manuel Poirier

Belgian philosopher Michel Feher on the changed position of the Left:

- the Left, with often backward-looking or nostalgic battle cries, takes on a defensive or a critical (rather than a propositional) stance
- the Left's interventions, lacking an overarching, long-term utopian project, are often urgent, immediate and specific
- the very lack of a sharply defined utopia opens up space for the federation of diverse oppositions (which is none the less problematic, given the difficulty of including gay and feminist struggles without subordinating them to a class-centered logic)

Martin O'Shaughnessy, "Post-1995 French cinema: Return of the Social, Return of the Political?" *Modern & Contemporary France* Vol. 11, No. 2, 2003, pp. 189–203

## Depression era films versus Post-1990s films of precarity

### **La chienne (Jean Renoir, 1931)**

Portrays a middle-aged cashier's fall from a middle-class, unhappily conventional life to a life on the street because of his unrequited love for a young prostitute, who exploits him for money, with which she tries in vain to win the heart of her cynical pimp. The protagonist's *déclassement*—his 'fall' from middle-class status—is not presented as a tragedy but as a source of liberation from social conventions.

### **David Golder (Julien Duvivier, 1931)**

Depicts a businessman's material and emotional impoverishment when he finds out, after he is financially ruined, that his wife and daughter never loved him. Shows how capitalist logic perverts personal human relationships into just another kind of business transaction. The businessman eventually comes to terms with his financial ruin and appreciates the simplicity and authenticity of his spartan bachelor life.

### **The Tramp: Boudu saved from drowning (Jean Renoir, 1932)**

A bourgeois bookseller rescues a tramp, Boudu, from a suicidal plunge into the Seine, and dedicates himself to reforming him—unsuccessfully—into a 'proper' middle-class man. In the end, Boudu goes back to his old vagrant ways.

### **The Lower Depths (Jean Renoir, 1936)**

Focuses on the relationship between a petty thief and a high-ranking government official ('the Baron') who, after gambling away his fortune, moves into the flophouse where the thief lives. The Baron reacts to his *déclassement* with bemusement rather than despair, experiencing his new precarious existence as liberating and more authentic than his previous middle-class life.

- A few early films of precarity—e.g., *Dernier été* (Robert Guédiguian, 1981), *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (Leos Carax, 1991) and *Western* (Manuel Poirier, 1997)—recall films like *La chienne*, *Boudu Saved from Drowning*, and *The Lower Depths* by treating precarity in terms of a conflict between freedom and bourgeois conventions, depicting falling out of the social order as liberating rather than degrading.
- Post-1990s films of precarity, however, no longer romanticize the precarious existence of a drifter; instead, they present the loss of employment and social status as a devastating experience equivalent to falling out of society altogether, depriving one's life of meaning, and losing one's sense of identity (often in the form of a psychotic break).



## ALTERNATIVES TO CAPITALISM/NEOLIBERALISM

### Depression era films

If the films envision an alternative realm 'outside' capitalism it is either **romantic love** or **working-class solidarity / male camaraderie** but in most films both of these end in failure.

Duvivier's *La Belle équipe* (1936) traces the disintegration of 5 unemployed friends' fraternal solidarity, mostly because of a proto-femme fatale

Renoir's *La Bête Humaine* (1938), in which a train engineer tortured by a genetic disease falls in love with a proto-femme fatale married woman, who asks him to help her get rid of her husband, ends with the protagonist killing his lover and committing suicide

Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* (1939) ends with the murder of the only character whose romantic feelings are genuine

Carné's *Le jour se lève* (1939) ends with the working-class protagonist killing the man exploiting the protagonist's romantic interest, and then committing suicide

### Post-1990s cinema of precarity

Romantic love does not play such an important role: if the protagonist is romantically involved at all, their romantic partner is either secondary to the story or contributes to the protagonist's conflict rather than providing a possible way out of it. **Working-class solidarity** is constantly under threat.

# Crime

## Depression era films

Crime happens within a social setting, and we generally see other characters' reaction to it:

- *The Lower Depths* – we witness Pepel's murder of slum landlord Kostylev and the response of the flophouse inhabitants, who collectively take the blame to protect Pepel
- *Le jour se lève* – we witness the reaction of neighbors, friends, and strangers to the crime, and the police investigation
- *La Bête Humaine* – we witness the protagonist's friend's reaction to his confession of murdering his lover, as well as to his suicide
- *The Rules of the Game* – we witness the murder and the other characters' reactions to it

## Post-1990s films of precarity

Murder and/or suicide happen either off screen (Mrs. Anselmi in *La Loi de Marché*, Vincent in *L'emploi du temps*), or very abruptly (Gregoire in *Father of My Children*, Laurent in *En guerre*, Paul in *Early One Morning*) without allowing us to witness other characters' reaction to it. Characters' crises are often presented as internal, isolated (and isolating), rather than part of a larger social context.

## Female Types

### Depression era films

- 1) the innocent young woman whose love the male protagonist seeks as a last chance to extricate him from his nihilistic despair and the 'rotten' world in which he lives
- 2) the manipulative proto-femme fatale, who either destroys the man emotionally, spiritually and/or financially, and/or represents an obstacle to working-class solidarity

### The new European Cinema of Precarity

Women play mostly subordinate roles, either functioning as the male protagonist's voice of conscience (*Work Hard, Play Hard*) or providing moral and emotional support (*Time Out, The Measure of a Man*).

Films exploring a female protagonist's experience of precarity depict the loss of employment and social status as demoralizing and anxiety-producing rather than as a potential source of freedom, as is the case with films featuring male protagonists.

**Female protagonists:** Birgit Möller's *Valerie* (2006), Cyril Mennegun's *Louise Wimmer* (2011), Francesca Comencini's *Mi piace lavorare: Mobbing* (2004), Cedric Klapisch's *My Piece of the Pie* (2011), the Dardenne brothers' *Two Days, One Night* (2014), etc.

**Male protagonists:** *La chienne* (1931), *Boudu Saved from Drowning* (1932), *The Lower Depths* (1936), Laurent Cantet's *Time Out* (2001), Fernando León de Aranoa's *Mondays in the Sun* (2002), Demian Sabini's *Rooftops* (2011), etc.

## Stylistic differences

- 1930s poetic realist films: heightened aestheticism anticipating film noir (chiaroscuro lighting, dramatic shadows, deep focus cinematography, rain and fog)
- The new European cinema of precarity—a minimalist, understated form of realism pervaded by a sense of fatigue and impasse rather than tragedy and doom (as in 1930s films)
- The proto-noir legacy of poetic realism continues mostly in contemporary films focusing on white-collar protagonists, while those focused on working-class protagonists generally follow the tradition of social realism

## Parallels between specific films

**Au bonheur de dames** (Julien Duvivier, 1930) and **En guerre / At War** (Stéphane Brizé, 2018)

***Au bonheur de dames*** - depicts the demolition of businesses and families in the face of capitalist progress

- ‘Progress’ is responsible, not capitalists; resistance to ‘Progress’ (capitalism) is unthinkable, one must learn to adapt to it
- Capitalist values are internalized even by people hostile to them (the working-class female protagonist eventually shares her capitalist lover’s dream)

### **En guerre**

- ‘The Market’ is responsible, not neoliberals
- Neoliberal ways of thinking are internalized and accepted as ‘natural’: in *Par ici la sortie* (2004), Jean-Marc Moutot’s documentary about the reception of his film *Work Hard, Play Hard* (2003), audience members are aware of the unethical choice the protagonist makes (firing 80 workers) but are reluctant to judge him, because “he didn’t have a choice,” “life is like that”

## Parallels between specific films (cont.)

*Le jour se lève* (Marcel Carne, 1939) and Jean-Marc Moutot's *Early One Morning* (2011)

- **Le jour se lève**

A foundry worker kills a manipulative man exploiting the worker's romantic interest, barricades himself in his room, where he recalls—in three extended flashbacks—the events that led him to commit this crime as he waits for the police to arrest him, committing suicide just before they do.

- ***Early One Morning***

A manager kills his boss, barricades himself in his office, where he recalls—in several extended flashback sequences—the events that led him to commit this crime as he waits for the police to arrest him, eventually killing himself just before they do.

## Precarious lives: Cinematic Moments in the Historical Arc of Neoliberalism

- *Dernier été / Last Summer* (Robert Guédiguian, 1981)
- *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf / The Lovers on the Bridge* (Leos Carax, 1991)
- *La Vie rêvée des anges / The Dreamlife of Angels* (Erick Zonca, 1998)
- *Ressources Humaines / Human Resources* (Laurent Cantet, 1999)
- *L'emploi du temps / Time Out* (Laurent Cantet, 2001)
- *Violence des échanges en milieu tempéré / Work Hard, Play Hard* (Jean-Marc Moutot, 2003)
- *La question humaine / Heartbeat detector* (Nicolas Klotz, 2007)
- *De bon matin / Early One Morning* (Jean-Marc Moutot, 2011)
- *La loi du marché / The Measure of a Man* (Stéphane Brizé, 2015)
- *En guerre / At War* (Stéphane Brizé, 2018)

Gérard MEYLAN Arianne ASCARIDE

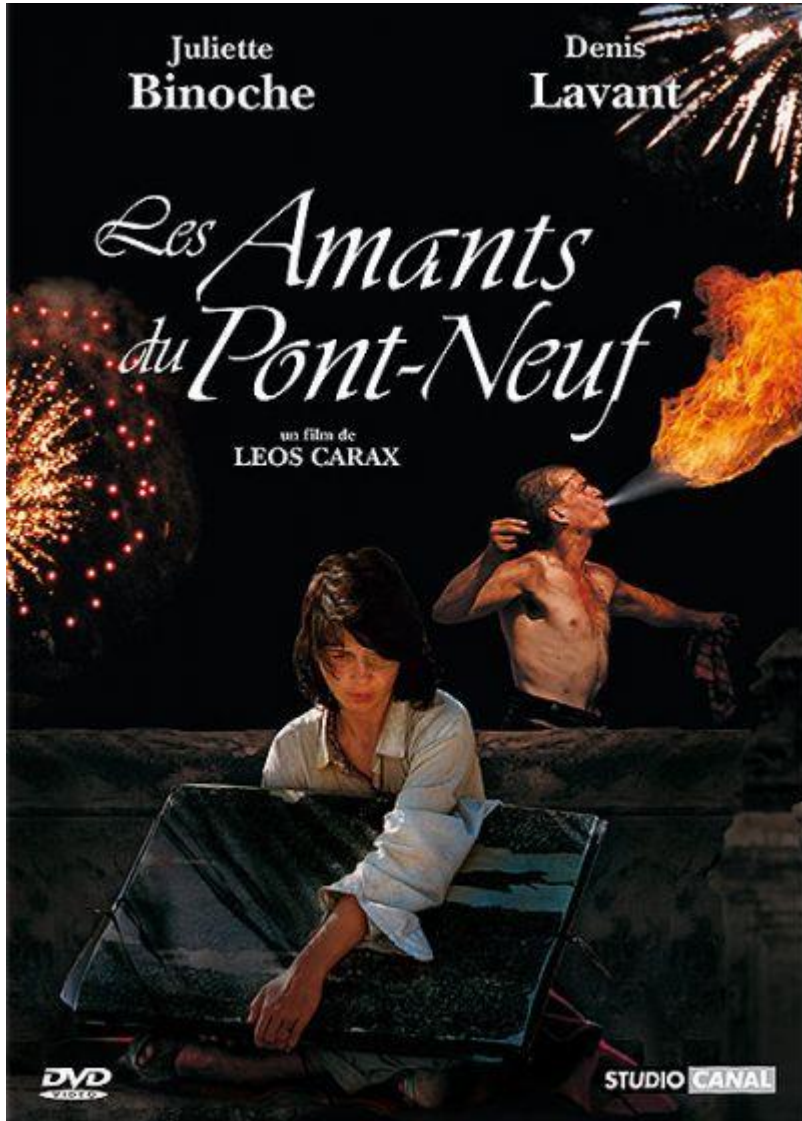


# DERNIER ETE

Un film de  
Robert GUEDIGUIAN et Frank LE WITA











Both *Last Summer* and *The Lovers on the Bridge* stage a refusal: the refusal of a ‘normal’, ‘ordinary’ life, whether that life is understood in generational terms (*Last Summer*) or existential terms (*Lovers*). By the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, this ‘romantic’ reading of precarity (fatalistic in Guediguian’s case, exuberantly defiant in Carax’s case)—understood *positively* as freedom, uncertainty, unpredictability, youthful rebellion—is no longer possible.

The next four films I discuss are not only more downbeat but also more preoccupied with questions of class and class conflict, though they tackle this issue in very different ways, narratively and stylistically.

FRANCE 3 MARQUAIS PRÉSENTE  
**DOUBLE PRIX D'INTERPRÉTATION FÉMININE**  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES 1998

**ÉLODIE BOUCHEZ NATACHA RÉGNIER**

**GRÉGOIRE COLIN**

# la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA

COLLABORATION ARTISTIQUE VERGINIE WAGON. AVEC PATRICK MÉRCADO ET JO PRESTIA. IMAGE AGNÈS GODARD. MONTAGE YANNICK KERGOAT. SCÉNARIO ERICK ZONCA. RÉALISATION ERICK ZONCA. MUSIQUE ROGER BONHOÛT. SON JEAN-LUC AUDY. MIXAGE STÉPHANE THIÉBAUT. DÉCORS JIMMY VANSTEENKOSTE. COSTUMES FRANÇOISE CLAVEL. DIRECTION DE PRODUCTION FRANÇOIS LAMOTTE. UNE PRODUCTION LES PRODUCTIONS BAGHEERA. FRANCE 3 CINÉMA, DIAPHANA. AVEC LA PARTICIPATION DU CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE, DE CANAL+, DE LA RÉGION NORD-PAS DE CALAIS ET DU C.C.F. DE LA RÉGION CENTRE ET DE L'APCOT, ET LE SOUTIEN DE LA FONDATION GAN ET DE LA PROCREP. GÉNÉRIQUE DU FILM COMPOSÉ ET INTERPRÉTÉ PAR YANN TIERSSEN SUR DISQUE.

France inter



PREMIERE

Libération



la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA



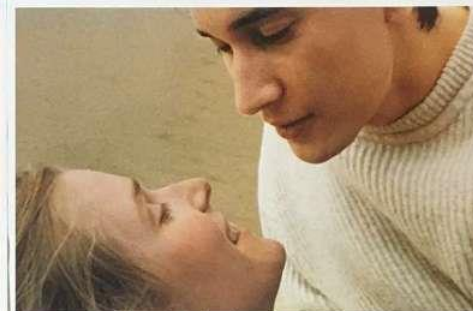
la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA



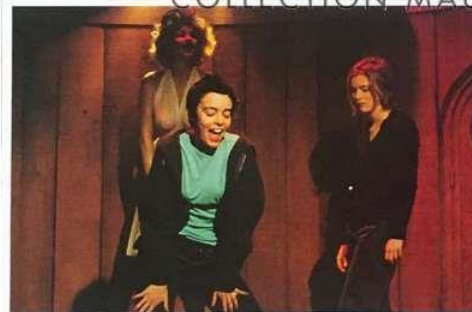
la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA



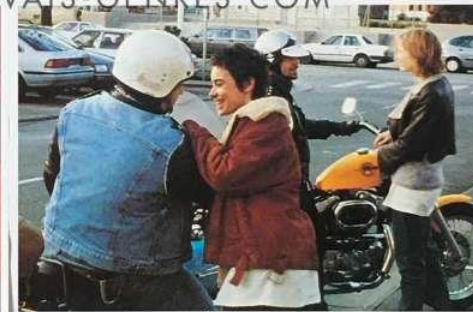
la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA



la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA



la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA



la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA



la vie rêvée des anges

UN FILM DE ERICK ZONCA



haut et court présente



# ressources humaines

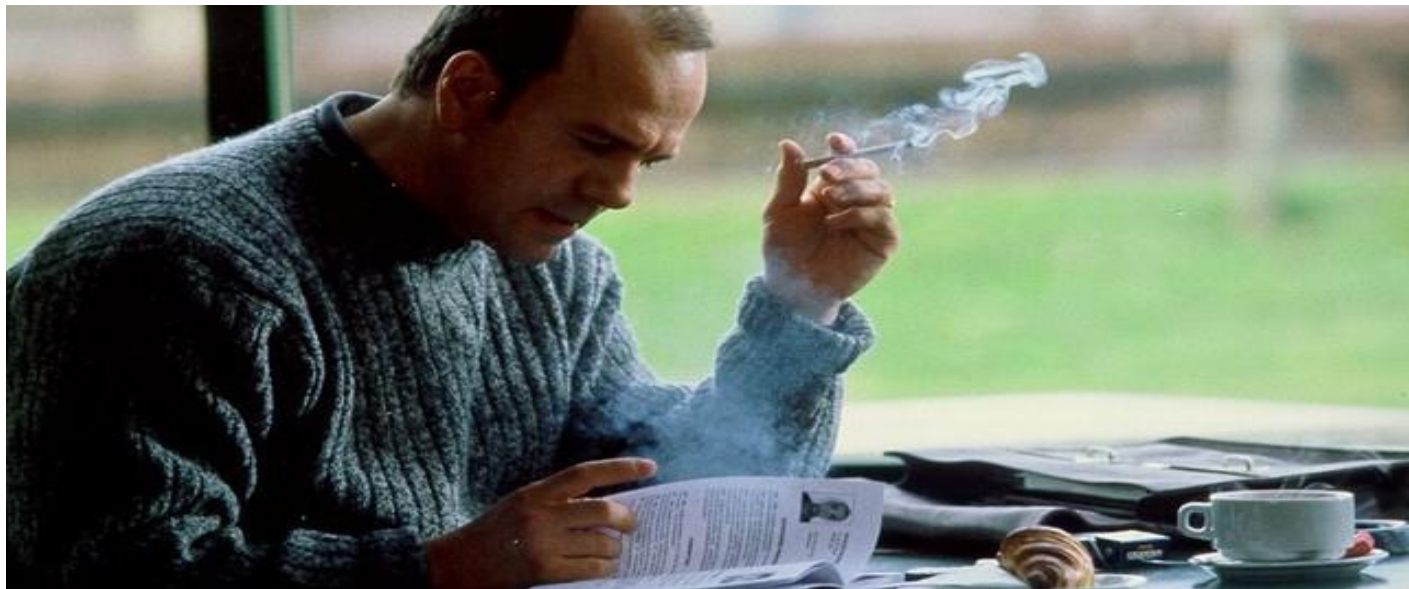
un film de Laurent Cantet

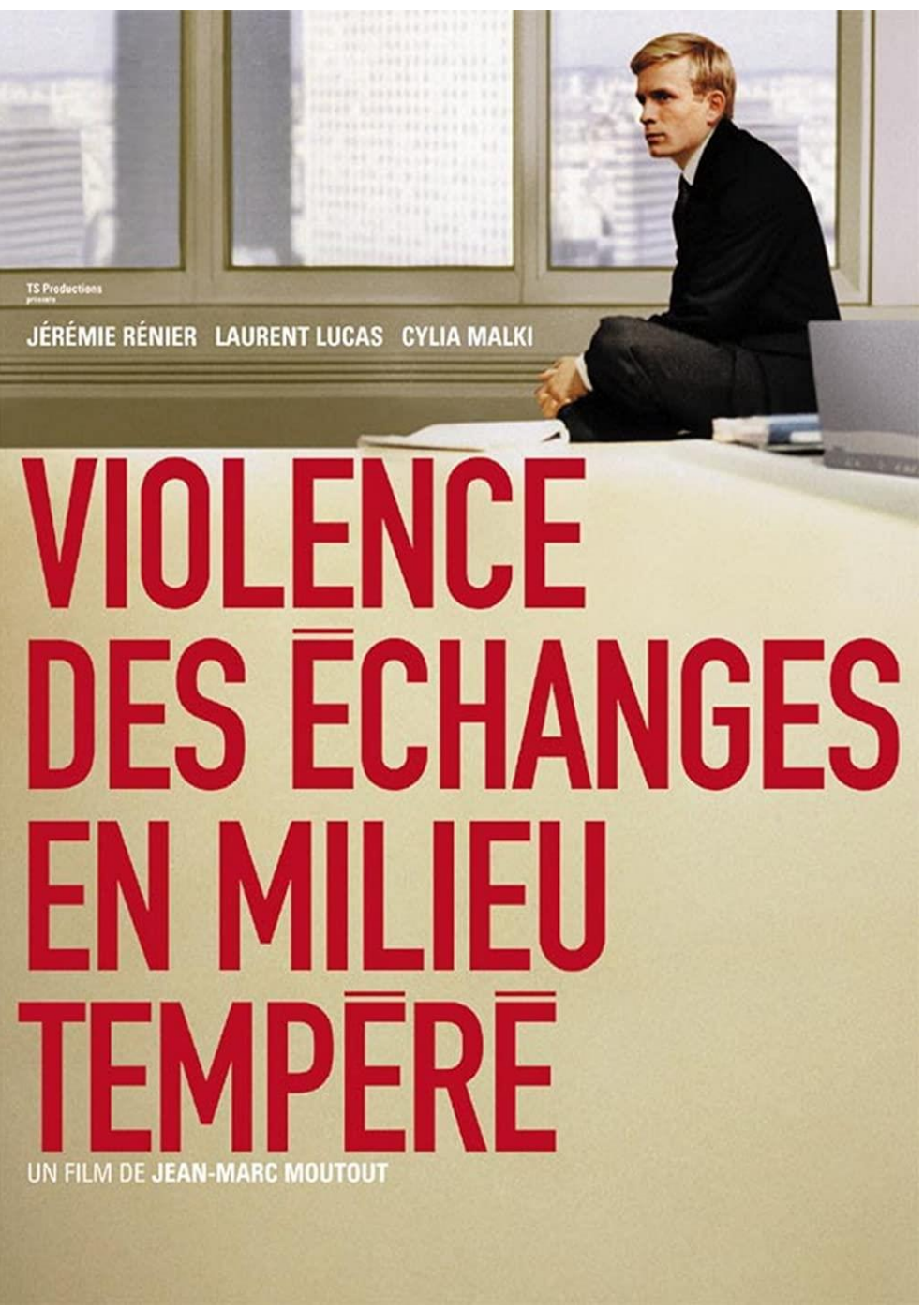
Avec JAILLÉ LESPÈRE, JEAN-CLAUDE VALLOO, CHANTAL BARRÉ, YVESWIGNE DE PANDELAÈRE, MICHEL BÉGNEZ, LUCIEN LONGUEVILLE, DANIELLE MÉLADOR, PASCAL SÉBARD, DIDIER EMILÉ-WOLDFEMARD (Scénario) LAURENT CANTET en collaboration avec GILLES MARCHAND. Réalisé par LAURENT CANTET. Image MATTHIEU POIROT DELPECH. Montage Image ROBIN CAMPILLO. Son PHILIPPE RICHARD. Montage son VALÉRIE DELOOF. Mixage FABRYCE CONESA ALCOLEA. Casting KONSTANCE DEMONTOY. Décors ROMAIN DENIS. Conseiller Artistique GILLES MARCHAND. 1er assistant réalisateur ÉMILÉ LOUIS. Direction de production MAY THOI DAY. Produit par CAROLINE BENOÎT et CAROLÉ SCOTTA. Producteur exécutif BARBARA LETELLIER. Une coproduction HAUT ET COURT, La Sept ARTE - Unité de Programmes Fictions, PIERRE CHEVALIER. Avec la participation du CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE, de la PROCORRÉ, du Programme MEDIA de l'Union Européenne et de la BBC Films.













Both *The Dreamlife of Angels* and *Human Resources* explore repressed feelings of class shame and resentment against the background of the decomposition of the working class, in one case with tragic consequences (Marie's suicide).

In *Time Out* (2001), which shifts the attention to the state of white-collar labor, the protagonist's refusal to obey neoliberal imperatives of work echoes similar gestures of refusal or revolt dramatized in *Dernier ete* and *Lovers*. However, unlike these two films, *Time Out* pursues the terrifyingly real consequences of this refusal and the pathologies it gives rise to.

By the time we get to *Work Hard, Play Hard* the idea of revolt, whether in the sense of refusing to work (Gilbert in *Dernier ete*), choosing a life outside 'normative reality' (Michelle and Alex in *The Lovers on the Bridge*), instigating a strike (Franck in *Human Resources*), or taking 'time out' (Vincent in *Time Out*), seems inconceivable. Despite its narrative similarities to *Human Resources*, *Work Hard, Play Hard* no longer stages the conflict between labor and capital in class terms but rather in ethical and thus psychological terms, pointing to the difficulty of imagining alternatives to neoliberalism.

Films made after the 2007-2008 global financial crisis reflect the deepening pathologies of neoliberalism: Vincent's symbolic suicide (*Time Out*, 2001) gives way to Kessler's psychotic breakdown (*Heartbeat Detector*, 2007), Gregoire's real suicide (Mia Hansen-Love's *Father of My Children*, 2009), Paul's murder/suicide (*Early One Morning*, 2011), Antoine's fictional murder (Laurent Cantet's *The Workshop*, 2017), and Laurent's suicide (*At War*, 2018).



















"...RIVETINGLY REAL" — Jessica Kiang, Variety

"GRIPPING ACCOUNT OF WORKERS TAKING ON THE MAN"  
— Jordan Mintzer, Hollywood Reporter

CINEMA LIBRE STUDIO PRESENTS

VINCENT LINDON

# AT WAR

A FILM BY THE DIRECTOR OF 'THE MEASURE OF A MAN'

CINEMA LIBRE STUDIO PRESENTS A WORD-QUEST FILMS, FRANCE 3 CINÉMA CO-PRODUCTION & STÉPHANE BRIZÉ FILM VINCENT LINDON "AT WAR"  
WITH JACQUES BORDIERE, BRUNO BOURTHOL, GUILLAUME DRAUX, JEAN GROSSET, VALÉRIE LAMOND, OLIVIER LEMAIRE, MÉLANIE ROYER, SÉBASTIEN VAMELLE  
CASTING BY CORALIE AMÉDÉO (ARDA) ORIGINAL MUSIC BY BERTRAND BLESSING COSTUMES BY ANNE DUNSFORD EDITED BY ANNE KLOTZ SOUND MIXING BY EMMANUELLE VILLARD SOUND EDITING BY HÉRYÉ GUYADER  
POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR JULIEN AZOULAY PRODUCTION MANAGER CHRISTOPHE DESENCLOS CHOREOGRAPHY BY ÉRIC DUMONT  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER PIERRE GUYARD LINE PRODUCER EYE FRANCOIS-MACHUEL CO-PRODUCED BY VINCENT LINDON AND STÉPHANE BRIZÉ PRODUCED BY CHRISTOPHE ROUSSIGNON & PHILIP BOEFFARD  
SCREENPLAY BY STÉPHANE BRIZÉ AND OLIVIER GORCE WITH THE COLLABORATION OF XAVIER MATHIEU DIRECTED BY STÉPHANE BRIZÉ

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**20**  
HEURES

**FRANCE**

**PERRIN INDUSTRIE - LA FERMETURE**

## Filmography

- Dernier été (Robert Guediguian, 1981)
- Les Amants du Pont-Neuf (Leos Carax, 1991)
- *Je pense à vous* (Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne, 1992)
- Naked (Mike Leigh, 1993)
- *To Have (or Not)/ En avoir (ou pas)* (Laetitia Masson, 1995)
- La promesse/The Promise (Jean-Luc and Pierre Dardenne, 1996)
- Will It Snow for Christmas (Sandrine Veysset, 1996)
- Marius and Jeannette (Robert Guediguian, 1997)
- Ossos/Bones (Pedro Costa, 1997)
- I, Daniel Blake (Ken Loach, 1997)
- TwentyFourSeven (Shane Meadows, 1997)
- *Reprise* (Hervé Le Roux, 1997)
- Barrio (Fernando León de Aranoa, 1998)
- The Dreamlife of Angels/*La Vie rêvée des anges* (Erick Zonca, 1998)
- Ospiti/Guests (Matteo Garrone, 1998)
- Rosetta (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 1999)
- Ressources humaines/ Human Resources (Laurent Cantet, 1999)

- Nordrand (Barbara Albert, 1999)
- Dlug (Debt, Krzysztof Krau, 1999)
- Rogue Trader (by James Dearden, 1999)
- La ville est tranquille (Robert Guediguian, 2000)
- *Nadia et les Hippopotames* (Dominique Cabrera, 2000)
- No quarto da Vanda/In Vanda's Room (Pedro Costa, 2000)
- L'emploi du temps/Time Out (Laurent Cantet, 2001)
- The Navigators (Ken Loach, 2001)
- *La Ville est tranquille* (Robert Guédiguian 2001)
- L'adversaire/The Adversary (Nicole Garcia, 2002)
- Los lunes al sol/Mondays in the Sun (Fernando León de Aranoa, 2002)
- Mies vailla menneisyttä/The Man without a Past (Aki Kaurismäki, 2002)
- Violence des échanges en milieu tempéré/ Work Hard, Play Hard (Jean-Marc Moutot, 2003)
- Elle est des nôtres/ She's One of Us (Siegrid Alnoy, 2003)
- Mi piace lavorare: Mobbing (Francesca Comencini, 2004)



- Princesas (Fernando León de Aranoa, 2005)
- Il vangelo secondo precario/The Gospel according to Precario (Stefano Obino, 2005)
- Sommer vorm Balkon/Summer in Berlin (Andreas Dresen, 2005)
- Cover Boy: L'ultima rivoluzione/Cover Boy...Last Revolution (Carmine Amoroso, 2006)
- Emmas Glück/Emma's Bliss (Sven Taddicken, 2006)
- The Boss of It All (Lars von Trier, 2006)
- This is England (Shane Meadows, 2006)
- La Question Humaine/Heartbeat Detector (Nicolas Klotz, 2007)
- Signorina Effe (Wilma Labate, 2007)
- Madonnas/Madonnen (Maria Speth, 2007)
- Giorni e nuvole/ Days and Clouds (Silvio Soldini, 2007)
- Import/Export (Ulrich Seidl, 2007)
- It's a Free World (Ken Loach, 2007)
- Autumn Ball (Veiko Õunpuu, 2007)
- Tutta la vita davanti/A Whole Life Ahead (Paolo Virzì, 2008)
- Somers Town (Shane Meadows, 2008)
- Better Things (Duane Hopkins, 2008)
- Fuga dal call center/Escape from the Call Center (Federico Rizzo, 2008)

- The Temptation of St. Tony (Veiko Õunpoo, 2009)
- Fish Tank (Andrea Arnold, 2009)
- Generazione mille euros/Generation 1000 euros (Massimo Venier, 2009)
- Temptations of St. Tony/ Püha Tõnu kiusamine (Veiko Ounpoo, 2009)
- Amador (Fernando León de Aranoa, 2010)
- La nostra vita/Our Life (Daniele Luchetti, 2010)
- Father of my children (Mia Hansen-Love, 2010)
- Beautiful (Alejandro Inarritu, 2010)
- The Last Employee (Alexander Adolph, 2010)
- The Drifters/ Eine Flexible Frau (Tatjana Turanskyi, 2010)
- Terrados/Rooftops (Demian Sabini, 2011)
- De bon matin/Early One Morning (Jean-Marc Moutot, 2011)
- Ma part du gateau/My Piece of the Pie (Cedric Klapisch, 2011)
- Louise Wimmer (Cyril Mennegun, 2011)
- Shun Li and the Poet (Andrea Segre, 2011)
- Terraferma (Emanuele Crialesi, 2011)
- Nine Lives/9 Leben (Maria Speth, 2011)

- Les neiges du Kilimanjaro/The Snows of Kilimanjaro (Robert Guediguian, 2011)
- Choses Secrètes/Secret Things (Jean-Claude Brisseau, 2011)
- Escort in Love (Massimiliano Bruno, 2011)
- Äta sova dö/Eat Sleep Die (Gabriela Pichler, 2012)
- Indignados (Tony Gatlif, 2012)
- The Daughter (Thanos Anastopoulos, 2012)
- Trois mondes/Three Worlds (Catherine Corsini, 2012)
- Les éclats (Ma gueule, ma révolte, mon nom) (Sylvain George, 2012)
- Despre oameni si melci/Of Snails and Men (Tudor Giurgiu, 2012)
- Standing Aside, Watching (Giorgos Servetas, 2013)
- 8-Ball (Aku Louhimies, 2013)
- The Last Days (Álex Pastor, 2013)
- Am Kölnberg (Robin Humboldt and Laurentia Genske, 2014)
- A Blast (Syllas Tzoumerkas, 2014)
- Waiting for August (Teodora Mihai, 2014)
- White God (Kornél Mundruczó, 2014)
- Bypass (Duane Hopkins, 2014)
- Deux jours, une nuit/ Two Days, One Night (Jean-Luc Dardenne and Pierre Dardenne, 2014)

- La loi du marché/ The Measure of a Man (Stéphane Brizet, 2015)
- Dheepan (Jacques Audiard, 2015)
- Arabian Nights, volume 1, 2 and 3 (Miguel Gomez, 2015)
- Wednesday 04:45 (Alexis Alexiou, 2015)
- The levelling (Hope Dickson Leach, 2016)
- The Tip of the Iceberg (David Canovas, 2016)
- La Mano Invisible/The Invisible Hand (David Macian, 2016)
- A fábrica de nada/The Nothing Factory (Pedro Pinho, 2017)
- A Ciambra (Jonas Carpignano, 2017)
- This Is Our Land (Lucas Belvaux, 2017)—precarity and the rise of the far-right
- Lazzaro felice/Happy as Lazzaro (Alice Rohrwacher, 2018)
- Rosie (Patty Breathnach, 2018)
- L'ospite/The Guest (Duccio Chiarini, 2018)
- Fiore gemello/Twin Flower (Laura Luchetti, 2018)
- En guerre/At War (Stéphane Brizé, 2018)
- Ray & Liz (Richard Billingham, 2018)
- Glory (Petar Valchanov and Kristina Grozeva, 2018)
- Boys Cry (Damiano and Fabio D'Innocenzo, 2018)
- Sorry We Missed You (Ken Loach, 2019)

- Bait (Mark Jenkin, 2019)
- Les Misérables (Ladj Ly, 2019)
- Un autre monde/Another World (Stéphane Brizé, 2021)
- Ouistreham/Between Two Worlds (Emmanuel Carrere, 2021)
- El Buen Patron/The Good Boss (Fernando Leon de Aranoa, 2021)

Thank you!