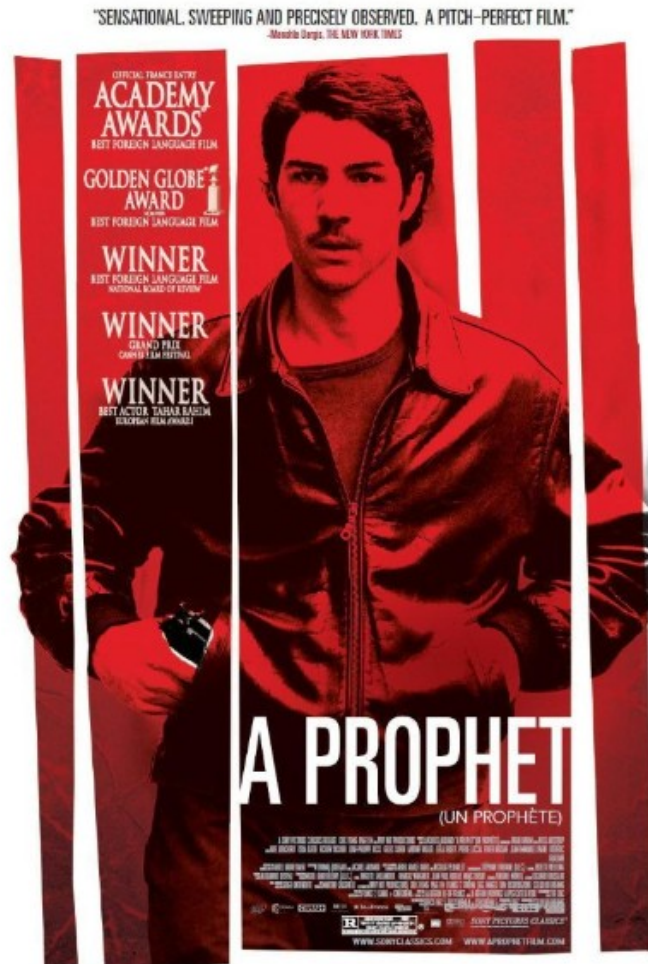


New Iterations of the Auteur

Lecture 3: Neo-auteurism, multi-racial France and neo-noir



Un prophète (Audiard 2009)

STRUCTURE OF THE LECTURE

- (Neo-)auteurism
- French (descendants of) North Africans in France and French cinema
- (French) (Neo-)noir in a historical context
 - *Noir films, US and French*
 - *Gendering the genre*
 - *Marginality in the neo-noir*
- Situating Audiard's cinema
 - *Space in Un prophète*
 - *Gender, biology and culture in Audiard*
 - *The dialogue with contemporary US genres*
- Close analysis of UP + Malik's characterisation

Conceptualising the Film Author/Auteur

1950s/60s France: The New Wave and the *politique des auteurs* – Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol et al

‘I say no! Cinema is not a craftsman’s trade: it’s an art. It’s not teamwork. You’re always as alone on set, as you are before a blank page.’

Jean-Luc Godard, ‘Bergmanorama,’ *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 85, January 1958

Then exported to the USA by the film critic Andrew Sarris in particular.

See also:

- Pam Cook, ‘Authorship and Cinema,’ in P. Cook and M. Bernink (Eds), *The Cinema Book* (2nd. Edition, BFI, 1999)
- Andrew Sarris, ‘Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962,’ in L. Braudy and M. Cohen (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism* (5th edition, Oxford University Press, 1998), 515-18.

Conceptualising the Film Author/Auteur

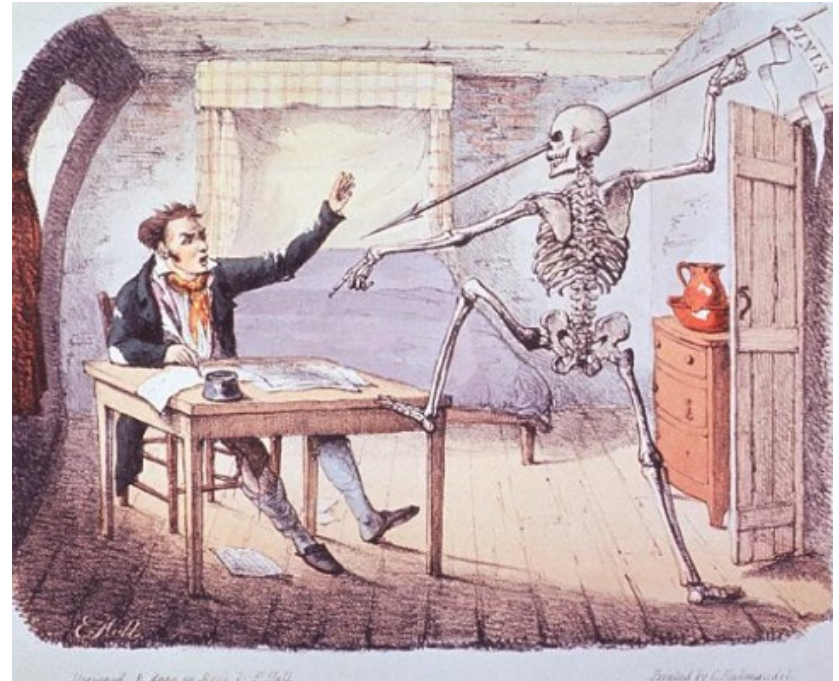
DEATH....

Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' (1967)

AND REBIRTH

Michel Foucault's 'author function' (1969)

1980s in Film Studies: an industrial concept of authorship e.g.
Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema:
Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*



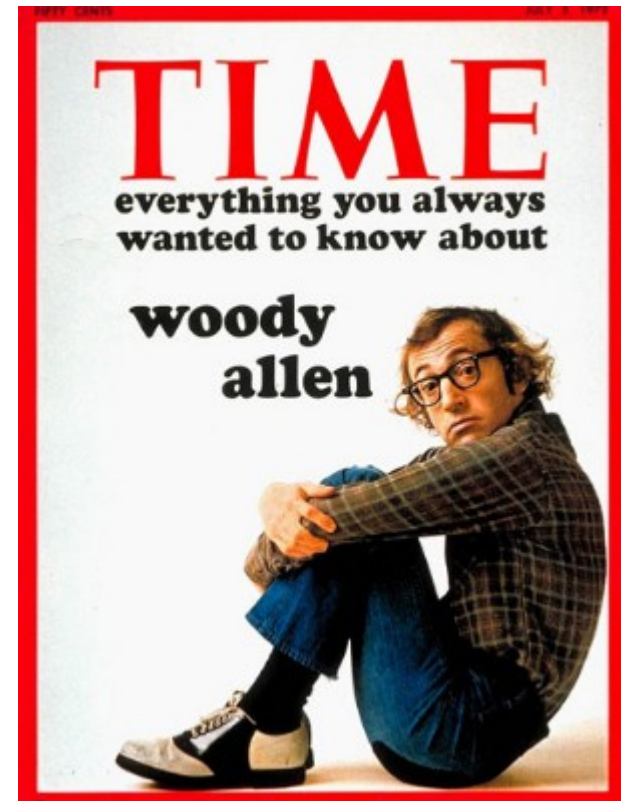
Conceptualising the Film Author/Auteur

Timothy Corrigan, 'The Commerce of Auteurism,' in *A Cinema Without Walls* (1991)

'[The auteur] has rematerialized in the eighties and nineties as an agent of a commercial performance of the business of being an auteur' (p. 42)

See also Noël King and Toby Miller, 'Auteurism in the 1990s,' in *The Cinema Book* (2nd edition), 311-14.

Timothy Corrigan, 'Auteurs and the New Hollywood,' in J. Lewis (ed.), *The New American Cinema* (Duke UP, 1998), 38-63.



Origins of the term *Beur*

- *Beur* = *Arabe* in *verlan*
- Second/third-generation children of North African immigrants to France
- Most of Algerian extraction although some Moroccan or Tunisian
- Provocative as almost all Moroccans and a majority of Algerians are of Berber origin, only 'Arabized' through language and religion.

Table 4
Origins of immigrants in France, 1987

Country of origin	Numbers in France*	% of all foreigners
Portugal	844,338	24.8
Italy	370,363	10.8
Spain	342,202	10.0
Other EC	195,206	5.7
Yugoslavia	66,455	1.95
Poland	58,771	1.7
Algeria	710,193	20.8
Morocco	575,386	16.9
Tunisia	230,073	6.7
Turkey	158,511	4.6
Francophone Africa	174,628	5.1
S.E. Asia	24,670	0.72
Indian subcontinent	22,062	0.64
Total	3,402,495	

*NB. These figures give only officially recorded, legal immigrants. They undoubtedly fall short of the real numbers of foreigners in France.

John Flowers, *France Today* (1998).

- By the 1980s, there were 1.5m immigrants from the North Western African region known as the Maghreb, or **44% of France's total immigrant** population (Flowers p. 103)
- By 2016, Muslims make up around **8% of the total population** of France (Fenby, *The History of Modern France*, 2015, reprinted 2016, xii-xiii).

Background to Contemporary Immigration Politics in France

- 1970s – Introduction of measures designed to prevent unchecked immigration into France
- 1980s – Mitterrand first introduces in earnest the policy of assimilation
- For Flowers and others, this can be linked to fact that France has two very strong traditions that have shaped the concept of citizenship:
 - rational philosophical universalism
 - the Christian Right's notion of a *patrie* based on blood soil and ancient rights

Immigration in Popular Attitudes and Media

- 1990s surveys by newspaper *Le Nouvel observateur* found 70% of French people thought there were too many immigrants (p. 117 Flowers).
- Rise of the *Front national* since 1980s.
- Sarkozy's inflammatory public attacks on the *banlieue cités* as *Ministre de l'intérieur* following 2005 riots.
- 2000/2010s: aggravated by high unemployment and the radicalisation of some Muslims: Islamophobic attacks went up by over 300% in the first half of 2015 compared with the same period the previous year (p. xii Fenby).
- In 2015, according to Reuters News Agency, Muslims might make up as much as 60% of France's prison population (p. xii Fenby).

'Beur' cinema

- To prominence in 1980s and 1990s, especially following *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (Charef, 1985)



1985

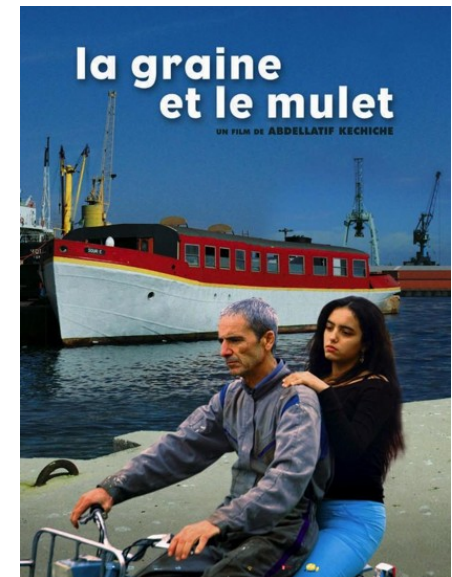
1995



2006



2007



Christian Bosséno, 'The Case of *Beur* Cinema,' in R. Dyer and G. Vincendeau (eds), *Popular European Cinema* (1992).

Troubling the Limits of 'Beur' Cinema as a Genre



- Famous use of the tagline 'black-blanc-beur' in advertising the film.
- Yet director Kassovitz is not North African.
- Carrie Tarr (2005) and Ginette Vincendeau (2005), however, do suggest the non-white identities are side-lined in the film.

Classic US Noir



Howard Hawks, 1946

European Antecedents to US Film Noir: From German Expressionism to French Poetic Realism



Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari/The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Wiene, Germany 1920)



Pépé le Moko (Julien Duvivier, France 1938)

Vincendeau, 'French Film Noir' (2007)

(on extra reading list)

On Classic French Noir (heyday in 1950s)

Two forms:

1. **The 'policier/polar'**: crime films that were visually 'noir' but narratively upbeat.
2. **'Social noir'**: not crime films proper but urban dramas that were more truly 'noir' in narrative, mood and visual style.

On Neo-Noir

Since the mid-1990s, in a period that has seen more genre-blurring in French cinema as a whole, social commentary and [inherently generic] crime narratives have tended to mix [e.g. *La Haine*] and 'neo-noir' can refer to any crime film or urban drama.

Vincendeau Cont.

1980s – *cinéma du look* included police films e.g. *Diva*

1990s/2000s:

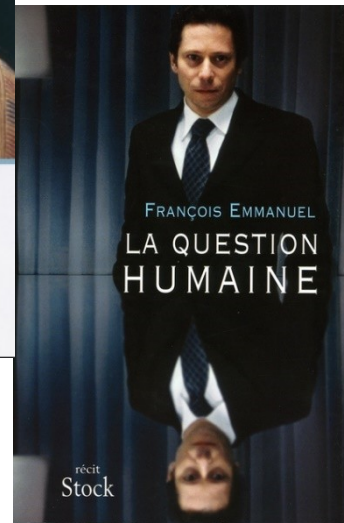
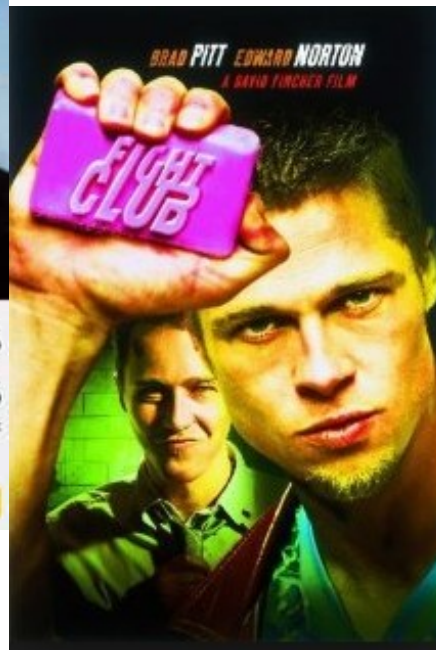
1. More social issue films, by both established directors e.g. Bertrand Tavernier's *L.627* (clip to follow) and linked to the *jeune cinéma français* or French New Realism, of which Audiard [like Kassovitz] is on the margins.
2. 'Extreme' films like *Baise-moi* (2000) and *Irréversible* (2002) feature violent crimes



3. A return to the classic *policier* e.g. *36 Quai des Orfèvres* (2004; clip)

Masculinity under Postmodernity

- 1960? onwards: late capitalism and increasing technological advancement: post-Fordism; the technological (digital, information...) revolution – thematised in (post-)1990s cinema especially.



The *Femme Fatale*

Disavowing the threat of castration in US noir?



See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975)

Fetishism and **voyeurism** as two possible strategies for dealing with women's fear-provoking difference in male-authored classical cinema.

Situating Audiard's Cinema

Equally but differently beleaguered masculinity in French neo-noir



La Haine (Kassovitz 1995)



Regarde les hommes tomber (Audiard 1993, starring Kassovitz)

- Women less disavowed than simply absent - equality less of a 'problem' for French men?
- A greater climate of moral relativism nonetheless poses questions about the meaning of masculinity – traditional ideals of power and assertiveness are no longer viable.

Vincendeau Cont.

The 'lower depths' in which these films are set moves from the classical 'metonymic city', populist microcosms of the French community e.g. *Touchez pas au grisbi* (Becker 1954) ...



... to increasingly peripheral and/or anonymous locations since the 1990s – Marc Augé's 'non-places': underpasses, car-parks, the *banlieue* in general, the postmodern office and other dreary public spaces, typified by sterility or chaos and squalor.

CLIP(S): *Sur mes lèvres/Read My Lips* (Audiard 2001)

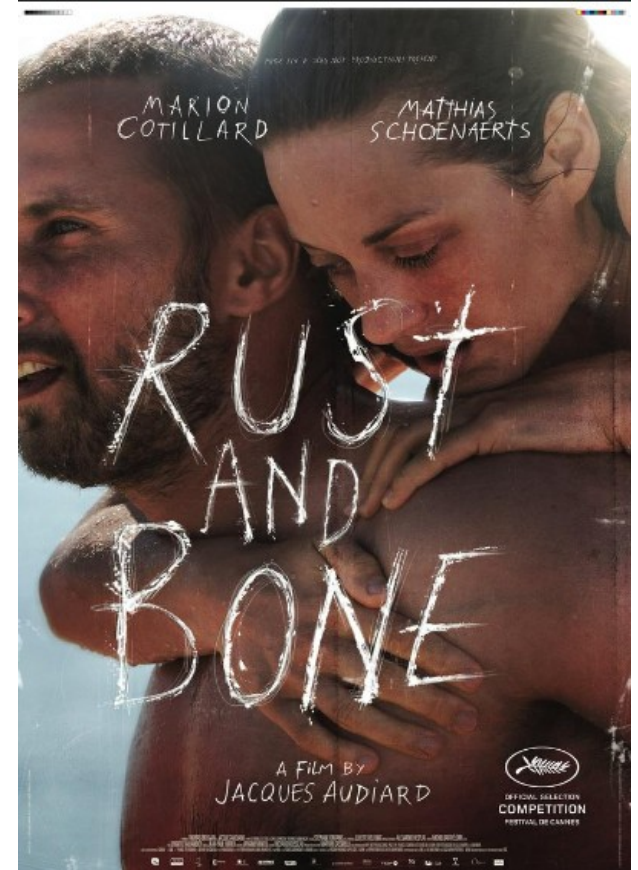
Space and (Non-)Place

See also *De battre mon coeur s'est arrêté/The Beat that My Heart Skipped* (Audiard 2005).



Filmography - and Gender

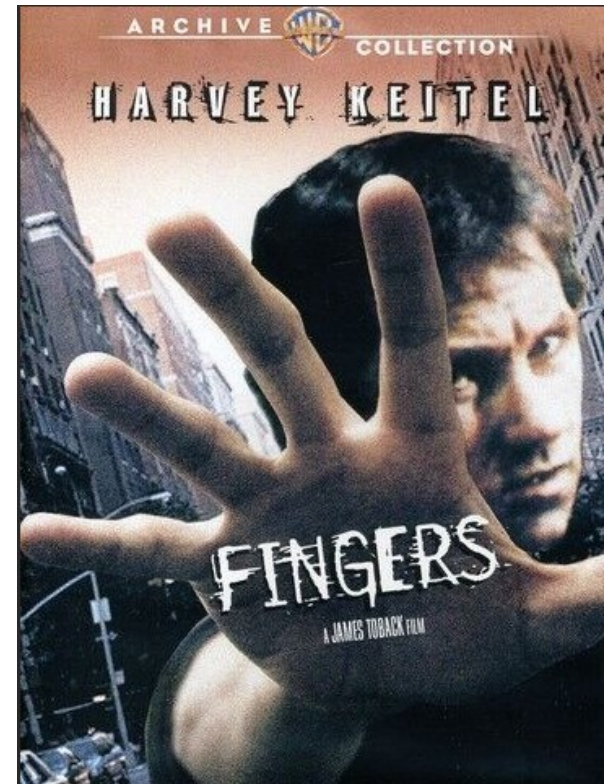
- *Regarde les hommes tomber/See How They Fall* (1994)
- *Un héros très discret/A Self-Made Hero* (1996)
- *Sur mes lèvres/Read My Lips* (2001)
- *De battre mon coeur s'est arrêté/The Beat that my Heart Skipped* (2005)
- *Un prophète* (2009)
- *De rouille et d'os/Rust and Bone* (2012)
- *Dheepan* (2015)



(Slightly different: *The Brothers Sisters/Les Frères Sisters* [2018], an English-language, Hollywood film; *Paris Les Olympiades, 13e* [2021], principally scripted by Céline Sciamma.)

Audiard's Ambivalent Relationship with US models

- Son of highly respected screenwriter Michel Audiard
- Immediately inscribed in a relatively high art cinema tradition – **an auteur** cf. films critically rated, *Un prophète* awarded Grand Jury Prize at Cannes film festival and a BAFTA.
- But also popular e.g. *UP* took around \$20m worldwide
- *De battre* remakes *Fingers* but heavily reworks; Audiard rejects the label 'remake'.



Audiard Beyond 'Realist' Social Issues OR Mainstream Genre



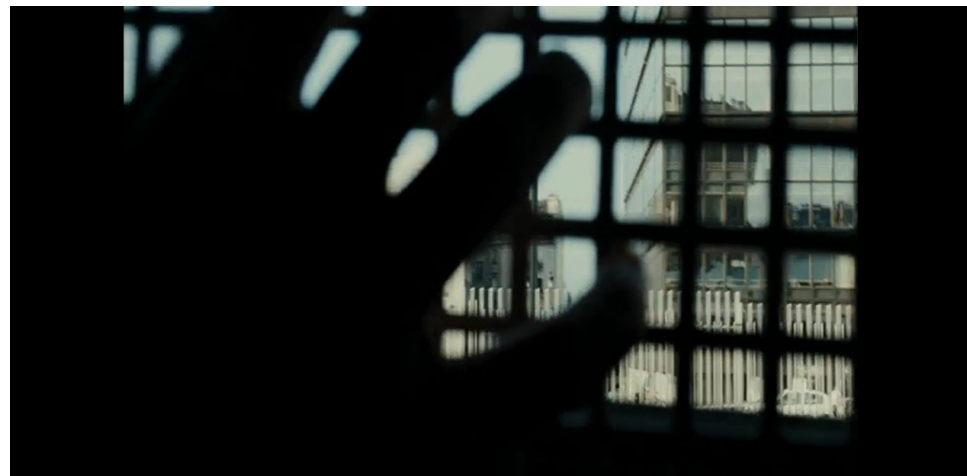
- Powrie (2007) argues that a truly 'noir' sensibility resides in recent French cinema in oneiric elements.

Un prophète


Cinematography

avec la participation de


FRANCE 2
CANAL +
CINECINEMA



Mise en scène



I'll remember you two cunts!



Palms out. Shake your hair.



Intersectional ('Beur') Masculinity



- Consider the portrayal of masculinity and of cultural identity more generally, including linguistic.
 - How do these relate to one another?
 - How is the prison's status as a purely homosocial environment seen to impact on available performances of masculine identities?
- How much importance should we attribute to Malik's ethnicity in his characterisation?



Racial Politics



- Does the film propagate, cite or denounce stereotypes about second-generation French Arabs, or immigrants more generally?

‘The stereotype is a form of enunciation that thrives on [...] the death of irony’
(Rosello 1998, 36).

- Questions of authorship – again!

ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995).
- Will Higbee, *Post-Beur Cinema: North African Emigré and Maghrebi-French Filmmaking in France Since 2000* (Edinburgh UP, 2013).
- Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” (originally published in *Screen*, 1975). In B. Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods*. Volume II, pp. 303-315. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985
- Phil Powrie, ‘French Neo-Noir to hyper-noir,’ in A. Spicer (ed.), *European Film Noir* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 55-83.
- Mireille Rosello, *Declining the Stereotype: Ethnicity and Representation in French Cultures*, Dartmouth, 1998.
- Ginette Vincendeau, ‘From the Margins to the Centre: French Stardom and Ethnicity,’ in Raphaëlle Moine, Hilary Radner, Alistair Fox & Michel Marie (eds), *A New Companion to Contemporary French Cinema* (Chichester: John Wiley: 2014), pp. 547-69.