

University of Groningen

## The social imaginary of precarious Europeans

Waal, van der, Margriet

*Published in:*  
Politique Européenne

*DOI:*  
[10.3917/poeu.066.0170](https://doi.org/10.3917/poeu.066.0170)

**IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.**

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2019

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Waal, van der, M. (2019). The social imaginary of precarious Europeans: the cultural representation of European socio-economic precarity in Tascha and Bande de Filles. *Politique Européenne*, 66(4), 170-193. <https://doi.org/10.3917/poeu.066.0170>

### Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

### Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.*

The social imaginary of precarious Europeans

Author(s): Margriet van der Waal

Source: *Politique européenne*, 2019, No. 66 (2019), pp. 168-192

Published by: L'Harmattan

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48588160>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



L'Harmattan is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Politique européenne*

JSTOR

**The social imaginary of precarious Europeans: the cultural representation of European socio-economic precarity in *Tascha* and *Bande de Filles***

This contribution focuses on how two artistic texts represent precarious Europeans: vulnerable social subjects (citizens, inhabitants of Europe/the EU) who may be deemed “losers” of the European project. These precarious people are seldom – if at all – represented as participants in the complex processes of Europeanisation. The texts analysed and discussed in this contribution are the Dutch novel *Tascha* by Mira Feticu (2015) and the French feature film, *Bande de Filles* by Céline Sciamma (2014). I argue that a critical analysis of these narratives enables us to probe open the category that constitutes “Europeans” and nudges us to rethink who is considered to be “European”.

**L'imaginaire social des européens précaires : la représentation culturelle de la précarité socio-économique en Europe dans *Tascha* et *Bande de Filles***

Cette contribution s'intéresse à la manière dont deux textes artistiques représentent des Européens en situation de précarité : des sujets sociaux vulnérables (citoyens, habitants de l'Europe/UE) qui peuvent être considérés comme des « perdants » du projet européen. Ces personnes précaires sont rarement - voire pas du tout - représentées en tant que participants aux processus complexes de l'europanisation. Les textes analysés et discutés dans cette contribution sont le roman néerlandais *Tascha* de Mira Feticu (2015) et le long métrage français, *Bande de Filles* de Céline Sciamma (2014). Je soutiens qu'une analyse critique de ces récits nous permet d'ouvrir la catégorie des « Européens » et nous pousse à repenser qui est considéré comme « Européen ».

# The social imaginary of precarious Europeans: the cultural representation of European socio-economic precarity in *Tascha* and *Bande de Filles*

Margriet van der Waal

University of Groningen/University of Amsterdam

## Introduction

“So similar, so different, so European.” With this tagline, the EU published their “Hidden treasures of Europe” video, created by Brussels-based ICF Mostra Agency (now known as ICF Next) in 2012, to promote the possible eastern enlargement of the EU. The narrative of the video clip tells about the similarities between Europeans within and outside of the EU – in particular South Eastern European countries and their inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> In this campaign video, female teenagers both in France and Serbia are represented as eager to go shopping and sharing social media, the education systems in England and Macedonia are shown as sharing remarkable similarities and Turkey and Germany, so the video suggests, are both economic power houses. Unlike some other EU promotional videos,<sup>2</sup> this video was received generally positively, and was interpreted as a message about how similar various European regions, some of which are already part of the EU, others not yet, are (Pignal, 2012). In fact, the video makes the case that the neighbouring countries of the EU are as beautiful as the rest of (Western) Europe and likewise boast not only a rich cultural heritage, but a progressive and modern culture too.

1 The video can be seen here: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_jRj-PI9iRQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_jRj-PI9iRQ)>.

2 A good example is a video published more or less around the same time as the “Hidden Treasures” video, and also commissioned by the European Commission’s DG NEAR (Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations). It was intended for young voters, with intertextual references to popular culture such as *Kill Bill* and martial arts, but was pulled quickly after much public criticism of the video’s racist depiction of a white woman (representing the EU) being threatened by men of colour representing diverse, geographic origins.

The hopeful and optimistic message of comparable powerhouse economies and economically active and empowered citizens indeed challenges problematic stereotypes about South Eastern Europe as an underdeveloped and rural area (Todorova, 1997). While a promotional video such as this one is supposed to present an optimistic and positive message according to generic conventions – in this case the celebration of cultural diversity on the basis of a reassuring “sameness” – the video nevertheless circulated in a context where millions of European inhabitants are daily confronted with more problematic realities caused by various far-reaching events: the 2008 global economic crisis that morphed into the sovereign debt crisis in Europe, the so-called migration or refugee crisis, growing unemployment in particular areas of Europe (Southern Europe), changing labour practices (such as zero-hour contracts, unpaid internships, the casualisation and flexibilisation of the labour force), hard-hitting austerity measures that have been implemented in most member states on the one hand, and the increasing unequal socio-spatial structuring and uneven regional development within the EU on the other hand (Broughton, Green et.al., 2016; Hadjimichalis, 2019).

Acknowledging the existence of this “other” side of the European reality, the question is if this bleak and harsh reality is part of the stories we tell about Europe and Europeans and through which Europe and Europeans are constituted, and if so, how? Whereas literary and cultural studies productively investigate the representation of social difference along gender and racial lines, the issue of class, let alone awareness of class difference and socio-economic inequality as aspects of social identity, seems to be of less importance. In their joint collaboration to study working class literature comparatively, John Lennon and Magnus Nilsson, for example, quote Julian Markels in this regard who calls class the “lip-service afterthought to gender and ethnicity” (Lennon and Nilsson, 2017, x) while John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon deplore the fact that “scholars interested in class are often not even invited to the academic ‘diversity banquet’” (*ibid.*). This lack of attention to socio-economic inequality is also evident in the manner in which diversity within Europe is oftentimes understood or meant, namely as different but equal – as we saw in the “Hidden Europe” video – where national, cultural and regional “differences” have been juxtaposed along the axis of economic similarity. In this way, both the existence of social inequality (and the issue of how to represent it) and the underlying mechanisms and structures that keep these material inequalities in place are being obscured. In their work on the literary representations of poverty, Michael Butter and Carsten Schinko (2010) refer to Walter Benn Michaels’s (much discussed and polemic) *The Trouble with Diversity* (2006) as a timely

reminder for us to (re)turn our attention when considering difference within the social to the problem of class alongside categories of race and gender (and sex, one might add). Michaels's argument is that there is no basis on which to structure hierarchically the perceived differences in race or gender, and therefore racial and gender categories should be considered equal in spite of any perceived differences; one might call this "diversity". This is quite different in the case of class, though. Michaels argues that class differences should not be regarded as equal: the unequal distribution of wealth makes the hierarchical structuring of class difference evident. Economic inequality in the form of poverty should therefore not be seen as something to "respect", but as something that needs to be eradicated in order to establish equality and social justice (Michaels, 2006).

Thinking critically about socio-economic inequality might, in fact, help us to move beyond a persistent problem in thinking about Europe: whereas much top-down talk about Europe refers to Europe's national and cultural diversity, there is a much less discussed, but different kind of diversity that requires our attention when asking who is a European. All dimensions of European identity, not only that of national culture but also those of class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender in fact intersect with one another in the constitution of European identities. These social identities are not static givens, but the result of the interplay between structural and material conditions (the economy, political systems and so forth), cultural traditions, and hermeneutic processes such as representational practices. The complexity of these identities can only become visible if the lens through which we consider these identities recognizes the particular combination of the different identity-constituting categories.

My contribution to this special edition is therefore to close-read two fictional, aesthetic, narrative texts as representations of Europeans who are socio-economically in a precarious position and at the bottom-end of social inequality. My strategy is to think the concepts of "precarity" – both in its social and economic meaning – and "European" together to make sense of narratives about Europe and the representation of Europeanness. This will allow me to argue that socially vulnerable or precarious persons need to be understood as Europeans too and that they too form part of Europe's social complexity.

Artistic, narrative texts (broadly understood) thus provide tools with which to think critically about a range of social issues, including that of social inclusion and exclusion within the social space of Europe (Jacobs, 2016, 381. See also McGuigan, 2005 and Buikema, 2017). More specifically, such narratives provide

opportunities to study subjectivity and to create both knowledge about the worlds we do not have first-hand experience of ourselves and empathy with those living in these worlds different to our own. These imagined, fictive narratives also explore possible alternatives to the world; that is, new ways of thinking and conceptualizing our own world and the social relations in it. It is therefore important to recognize the role of cultural production and the narrative arts in particular in shaping social imaginaries and how these imaginaries in turn, as Barbara Korte puts it, “shape the way in which we perceive the world and act, also in the social sphere” (Korte, 2010, 124). Literary narrative can render a character’s consciousness and provide us with details about how characters make sense of the world around them. Furthermore, as Korte explains elsewhere, “it is an important complement to the general categories and statistics of the social and economic sciences. Literature (and other narrative arts, one might add) gives faces and voices to poverty, and asks readers (and viewers) to see situations from the perspective of those who are afflicted” (Korte, 2014, 2). It is because of its function as a tool to think with about the world and how others make sense of that world, that creative narratives (literary and other cultural texts) partake in the deliberation of the public project of construing “Europe” in all of its (social) complexities.

The structure of the remaining part of this text is as follows. After a brief conceptual exploration of the notions of precarity and the informal sector, and their treatment in literary, film and cultural studies in order to position it in a growing research field, I will turn to two case studies: the novel, *Tascha* by Romanian-Dutch author Mira Feticu (2015), and a feature film, *Bande de Filles* (distributed in English under the title of *Girlhood*) by the French director, Céline Sciamma (2014). These two texts will be close-read to examine the narrative representation of two precarious characters as social subjects with psychological and social depth. In both cases young European women take important decisions to direct their own lives. In my analysis of the selected artistic works, I will explore how two dimensions of the concept of precarity (explained below), one grounded in the context of material circumstances and labour practices and the other referring to social relations, may be thought together. I conclude my contribution by reflecting on what an interpretation of these representations may hold for how we understand precarious subjectivity, who we consider to partake in processes of Europeanisation, and who, and what we refer to when speaking about Europeans and Europeanness.

## Conceptual framework

### Precarity and the informal economy

The complex European economic situation – briefly referred to above – has received much attention from analysts, politicians, and commentators. Less focus, however, has been placed on the negative effects (a form of “slow violence”, to speak with Rob Nixon (2011)) of the current situation on the lived lives of a growing group of Europeans for whom these processes imply increasing insecurity, uncertainty, risk, and vulnerability across a range of occupations and conventional economic classes (Della Porta et al., 2016). This situation is contained with the concept of “precarity”, a term I specifically choose to use, because it allows, as Louise Waite has pointed out, to “incorporate the political and institutional context in which the production of precarity occurs” (Waite, 2009, 421).

The notion of precarity, following Kathleen Millar (2017), refers to at least three different issues. First, she explains how the concept has come to refer to a *particular labour condition* (introduced in the work of Pierre Bourdieu), characterized by job insecurity/unemployment, social exclusion and poverty, and caused mainly by a transition from industrial society to a post-Fordist economy, neoliberalism, globalization and the decline of social welfare. Second, following the work of Guy Standing, she explains how the prevalence of these working conditions and practices has prompted the theorization of the emergence of a *new, specific socio-economic class*: the precariat, a neologism that combines “precarious” with “proletariat” and refers to a heterogeneous class of labourers without labour security. The third dimension of the notion as Millar sees it is taken from Judith Butler and indicates the *existential and ontological condition of vulnerability*: exposure to possible suffering and risk of losing attachment to those social relationships that could provide care and protection. In this contribution, I will follow Millar’s suggestion to connect Butler’s definition of precarious existence with those defining it as specific labour regimes and political economic structures. This combination produces an interest in “how these material conditions constitute affect, subjectivity, psychological interiority and lived experience”, as Millar explains (Millar, 2017, 5). It is this combined understanding of precarity as referring both to precarious labour and precarious life that will act as an analytical lens for the critical discussion of the two selected case studies further on in this contribution.

As far as the particular labour situations are concerned, I choose to zoom in on the representation of the lives of persons who may be categorized as



labouring in the so-called “informal economy” or “shadow economy”. A range of definitions exist to cover various aspects of this “multifunctional” concept (Koufopoulou et al., 2019, 45). Many definitions of the term refer to the unreported nature of income resulting from the production of goods and services (Schneider and Buehn, 2017, 2). This production of goods and services includes visible economic activities such as immigrant beach and street selling, but also more hidden labour such as non-market and/or non-declared domestic work and childcare, service sector jobs in hotels and restaurants and the construction sector, which are paid for with money, or paid for in kind (Boels, 2016). Furthermore, the informal economy may also be considered as including even less visible, “underground” or illegal forms of labour, such as women’s trafficking, prostitution, and drug production and drug dealing (Koufopoulou et al., 2019, 48). This wide range of activities is usually left outside of consideration in policy-based research, even though they constitute labour in some or other form as kind of market-based economic activity. There is, however, little systematic knowledge of these types of work or the conditions under which they are performed (Schneider, 2008, 512).

The choice to focus in this contribution on the artistic representation of precarious participants in the informal economy is deliberate: despite the fact that our attention is being drawn to growing poverty and social inequality in Europe – within European member states, and also very much across member states – those at the socio-economic bottom of society are oftentimes either obscured from our view because of the relatively scant cultural representation of poverty and inequality (Lemke, 2010), or represented in problematic ways because of social stigma and stereotyping of poverty (Walker and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2014; Shildrick, 2018). This article thus responds to the call by Gavin Jones to work out a “critical framework” to situate works that have grappled with the “ethnic, cultural and linguistic difficulties” of poverty and precarity as “substantive” categories of “social being” (Jones, 2009, xiii).

## **European literary, film and cultural studies of precarity**

The disciplines of literary, film and cultural studies are not an often-used prism through which the phenomenon of precarity has been studied in the developing field of precarity studies. Although class and labour have been areas of focus in both literary and film studies, it is important to note that notions such as “working-class” – as if the category itself is a stable entity – are not useful in the current volatile socio-economic context, nor is the oftentimes national,

rather than transnational, European or even global, framework within which representations of class and labour are usually studied sufficient for making sense of the representations of contemporary, transnational practices of (labour) mobility (see Bardan, 2013; Perera, 2014; Lennon and Nilsson, 2017). Furthermore, the category of labour and the conditions under which is being laboured have undergone significant changes during the past fifty years, and it is necessary to reconsider what is considered “work” (or not) in the current neoliberal order. But precarity is not only a class-based phenomenon, and although class has been a productive analytical category in the studying of cultural texts, poverty and social inequality as dimensions of precarity, have been much less so.

In the case of America, for example, Sieglinde Lemke, in her study of poverty in the US, contends that the experiences of the forty million Americans officially categorized as “poor” remain virtually invisible in literary and cultural texts (Lemke, 2010, 97). Of course the issue of voice is one of the key explanatory reasons for the scant attention that has been paid to the representation of a precarious existence or living in poverty, given the difficulties for those who are socially marginalised – because of poverty and precarity among other reasons – to express themselves and have their mediated expressions circulate within the cultural field.<sup>3</sup> When persons living in poverty and a precarious existence do find representation in cultural texts, it has often been in a highly problematic, abject manner, with such persons (fictive and non-fictive) represented as passive, and in contexts of crime and delinquency,<sup>4</sup> or through the lens of sentimentality: “we are supposed to get involved out of feelings of compassion, inspired by our innate moral sense and a feeling of solidarity, perhaps, tacitly, also by a fear that we may someday be in a similar position”, Winfried Fluck summarizes the other strategy often chosen to represent those living in poverty (Fluck, 2010, 68).

3 See Nick Couldry (2009) who argues about the necessity (but difficulty) for such voices to be heard and especially to be listened to in the public sphere. Although literary narratives of poverty are rarely written down by poor people themselves and intended to be consumed by readers who have never experienced poverty themselves. In this context it is worth mentioning that the creators of the two texts under discussion do not represent their protagonists: Feticu is a successful, higher-education trained Romanian author who met her future Dutch husband during his Erasmus exchange to Romania, after which she migrated to the Netherlands. Sciamma is a middle-class, white French director who did not grow up in a Banlieue context. Nevertheless, Barbara Korte reminds us that it is texts, rather than author personalities that shape the social imaginary and that “an author’s possibly ‘authentic’ experience of poverty will not per se ensure a text’s quality, its credibility or its impact”, (Korte, 2012, 80-81).

4 The notion of “poverty porn” points in this direction (Ibrahim, 2018).

These critical observations are part of the growing interest in studying the representation of poverty and precarity, dominated by attention within American Studies as a glance at the field reveals (see for example Kaplan, 2000; Gandal, 2007; Jones, 2009; Lemke, 2016). The situation within European cultural studies is, however, more dire. While literary and cultural studies about class, poverty and precarity in Europe do exist, it is still mainly produced from a national perspective in nationally-oriented sub-fields of literary studies (see for example Korte and Regard, 2014; Korte and Zipp, 2014; Williams, 2016; Aragay and Middeke, 2017; Connell, 2017; Mazierska, 2017; Fragkou, 2018; Schmitt, 2018; Baghetti, 2019). An exception is Bardan's work (2013) on the transnational representation of precarity in European cinema. Furthermore, inquiries in the field of poverty and precarity within a European context, similar to works on class, seldom take the effects of Europeanization as a lens through which to study the representation of social inequality, poverty and precarity. In fact, in the field of European Studies the cultural critical study of poverty and socio-economic inequality is nearly completely absent.

In the following section, I will analyse how the novel *Tascha* and the film *Girlhood* represent the two vulnerable protagonists, Tascha and Marieme as precarious social subjects and thus nudge the reader/viewer into (re-) considering notions of Europeanness: who may be thought of as belonging to the social category of "Europeans"? This novel and film were selected for analysis because both tell the story of a marginalized, young female, European urban, European setting. The difference in medium will not be considered in this paper, because it is rather the process of representation itself that is of importance in this analysis (here I follow Ryan, 2008, 4. See also Baetens and Sánchez-Mesa, 2015 for a discussion of the concept of "intermedial" in literary studies). In my close reading of the two artistic works, taking my cue from Ryan, both novel and film are seen as texts that encode – through various channels such as verbal language, written language, visual images and sound – a particular meaning (Ryan, 2008) related to the representation of the precarious social subject. It is important to note here too that the choice for texts in different languages (Dutch and French), referring to different national settings (the Netherlands and Romania in the case of *Tascha* and France in the case of *Girlhood*) was intended: to rethink the narratives about Europe, we need, also in our own research, to place our analysis beyond the confines imposed on us by methodological nationalism. Instead, we could start to search in a "nomadic" fashion (Braidotti, 2010) for transnational relationalities and connections.

## Case Study One: *Tascha*, the robbery from the Kunsthal (2015)

The Dutch novel, *Tascha*, subtitled, “the robbery from the Kunsthal”, is based on a historical event, namely the theft of seven art works by three young Romanian men from a Dutch art museum in Rotterdam in 2012. The author Mira Feticu presents in three parts the unsuccessful investigation into the stolen works of art by two Dutch police officers. But more than a story about this unsuccessful investigation into the stolen art works, the novel tells a hitherto, largely obscured, second story related to the theft. Whereas the media attention focused mainly on the logistics of the theft and the subsequent police investigation in the Netherlands and Romania, the much-speculated value of the specific artworks, and the possibility that the mother of Radu, one of the thieves, had burned the artworks, the novel tells the story of Radu’s young girlfriend, suspected as accomplice to the crime by the Dutch police and who, as the scant media references to the real-life Natasha insisted, worked in the Dutch sex industry. For Feticu the greater crime that had been committed in this case was not that of the irreplaceable art works that were stolen and probably destroyed, but rather Radu’s sex trafficking of Natasha (Van der Zee, 2015).<sup>5</sup>

The text contains two storylines: a first storyline about the (more or less unsuccessful) search for the artworks by the Dutch police officers, and a secondary storyline which is interwoven through flashbacks into the first story. This second storyline critically examines and counters Balkanist stereotypes through telling the story of a young woman from South Eastern Europe working as a sex worker in Rotterdam, and by providing background and context to her situation. This second storyline is an exploration of *Tascha*’s life story. It provides information about the past of the young woman of about 17 years old who spent her youth in a rural part of Romania (Carcaliu): the death of her sister because of a car accident, her parents’ divorce, her strong emotional dependence on her father, her falling in love with Radu and her growing dependence on him, their move to Rotterdam, where she is coerced into prostitution by him, and where they both depend on the labour she carried out in the sex industry. After the art-work theft this story concludes with her own decision, after she is released from custody in the Netherlands, to return

5 This position is echoed in the sentiments of a female police officer in the novel: “And she, the woman in the uniform, thought human trafficking [to be] worse than robbery, regardless of what had been stolen” (p. 42). Citations are my own translations from Dutch. In-text quotations without further references in this section are from the novel *Tascha* by Mira Feticu, 2015.

to sex work in Rotterdam to secure an income in order to pay the medical bills of her ailing father in Romania. It is in this second storyline that Tascha – vulnerable as she is – is given a history and background that situates her as a marginalized, vulnerable and precarious European subject. The flashbacks to the past sketch the context of how Tascha became a sex worker in one of Rotterdam’s impoverished regions, the neighbourhood of Rubroek/Crooswijk. These flashbacks create the necessary social, economic and cultural context that renders Tascha’s decisions and actions comprehensible.

By using specific narratological tools such as flashbacks and focalisation the novel explores not only the art theft, but also the recent political and economic transitions in Romania. While the end of Ceausescu’s regime and political revolution were seen as a promise of the start of a new life (p. 96), the contemporary dire living conditions in post-socialist, rural Romania suggest that the promise is yet to be fulfilled for many people living there. The part of Romania where Tascha grew up is depicted as a backwater that failed to catch up with postsocialist economic developments and the socio-political transitions following the post-Ceausescu era.<sup>6</sup> Rather, the people of Carcaliu seem caught in the hardship of social, economic and cultural turmoil. A dire lack of employment (i.e. legal economic opportunities) resulted in all of the able-bodied people in the small, rural towns moving away to bigger urban hubs in Romania or further away across Europe in search of “a better life”: “The big thieves go to you. The real whores too,” says one of the local police commissioners to the Dutch police officers (p. 35). Those who are left behind seldom hear anything from these migrants who are thought of as being dead: “[...] the ones abroad, once they have tasted from the good life, you never see them again in Carcaliu. Dead!” explains the commissioner’s assistant (p. 61). These migrants are as dead as the town itself (e.g. p. 20): the village is now one big graveyard (p. 85), where the dogs are left behind to die of hunger and despair (p. 54). The dual setting of the narrative, both in Rotterdam and Romania, thus not only connects the various locations and suggests meaningful but complex and complicated entanglements with each other, but also demonstrates the importance, as argued by Shields (2013) and Tally (2017) of seeing space as relational to the coming into existence of social subjects: the rural, impoverished and opportunity-poor Carcaliu in relation to the economic

---

6 A factor that also alludes to the vulnerability and marginality of the community from which Tascha comes, is their Lipovene background. The Lipovenes are a minority group from Russian descent living in rural parts of Romania. In a sense Tascha and her community are thus twice marginalized in Romania: not only as impoverished, rural peasants, but also as members of a cultural minority group that possesses very few forms of capital.

possibilities offered in Rotterdam co-shaped Tascha and Radu as social subjects (sex-worker and thief).

The novel shows how labour migration unraveled the social fabric of the community: parents leave children behind to find seasonal labour elsewhere in Europe (p. 113), while severely impoverished individuals remain in the rural town. Their own vulnerability and precariousness is painfully evident in the absence of their support networks, the people who moved elsewhere in search of income and the promise of a better life (e.g. Dănuț, who left his ill mother behind to earn a living in Hungary. Upon his return two years later she is dead, because “no one came by to bring food for more than one month” (p. 110)).

In this rural context, the young woman Tascha is a vulnerable person. To protect herself she establishes a relationship with a young man, Radu. He, much like his peers, however, has no real protection to offer her because of his own lack of employment, lack of education, and criminal record. Furthermore, her vulnerability only increases because the relationship enables him to claim ownership over her body and her life (p. 48 and 49). Tascha’s body represents possible income of some sort and subsequently the possibility of material goods to be consumed (such as cars for example). The narrator makes clear that Tascha is the key to Radu’s own economic survival: “everything, their house and Radu’s car, was being paid for by her” (p. 20, see also p. 168). As a teenager, she fell in love with Radu and closed off any possibility of an independent life for herself when she dropped out from school. He subsequently violently (e.g. p. 66, p. 88) pressured her to go with him to the Netherlands, and to earn a living for both of them through sex work. Tascha’s compliance with his wishes should be understood as her search for someone to love (p. 89), following the break-up of her own family after the death of her sister and split-up of her parents. These fraught and complex interpersonal relationships make evident that other, non-economic meaning of the concept of precarity – precarious life, following Judith Butler.

Despite Tascha’s hardship, she is represented as a naive and simple person, whose practical knowledge is gleaned from “the university of life” (p. 49), rather than higher-level formal education. But, despite Tascha’s simplicity, she manages by the end of the novel to create a situation that enables her to earn a living of some sort for herself. Being certainly restricted in her range of options, she chooses – without having many other options to her disposal – to return to the sex industry (p. 173) with the meaningful difference now being that the income she generates is her own, to spend as she chooses. The novel

suggests that Tascha is now set *en route* (at least from her own perspective) to some kind of better life: “Just a short while and life could start” (p. 189), she contemplates. The reader, however, understands that Tascha’s life, upon release from custody, has not changed significantly in any quantitative sense, but there is a suggestion that she thinks of herself as having more agency in this new situation without Radu.<sup>7</sup> Despite the sense of optimism on Tascha’s side, her perspective rather painfully illustrates the limited range of options available to marginalized, socially vulnerable persons such as herself and may best be described, speaking with Lauren Berlant (2011), as *cruel optimism*: the promise of (good) life that, being pursued in the manner Tascha proposes, will most likely not materialise.

The topos of mobility, and the novel’s investigation of agency and subjectivity of a young woman living in the shadow-side of society, invites us to ask ourselves who we consider to be Europeans and how Europeanisation has affected the lives of people living in Europe. One approach, as Neil Fligstein offers, is to distinguish between successful Europeans, or “winners” who profit from European transnational movement and interactions and “losers”, those Europeans who fail to profit from these processes both in substantive and symbolic terms (Fligstein, 2008). The important point to make though is that the distinction between winners and losers is critically reconsidered here to distinguish not between transnational experiences of mobility across Europe (in the case of the winners) or the lack thereof (in the case of the losers), but rather to the different affordance of the transnational experience for different social subjects. *Tascha’s* narrative, as I have shown above, reveals that Europeans, rather than the nationally-defined diversity that is often held as characteristic of Europe, experience Europeanisation in many different ways. The Romanian museum curator Adriana is enabled by her education and cultural and social accomplishments to participate successfully in the growing interconnectedness of an increasingly transnationalising Europe. This is also the case for the other Europeans such as the two Dutch policemen, who represent the transnational Europeanisation of cross-border practices such as law enforcement. But besides these “obvious” Europeans who are able to participate successfully in the social complexity of an increasingly transnationalised Europe, the novel also examines how these “success” stories are entangled in complex ways with the life stories of the vulnerable “losers”, Europeans such as Tascha and Radu – in this case lower educated

---

7 See Andrijasevic (2010) for a critical consideration of the conventions and practices that construe how we understand the (European) sex industry.

Southern Europeans whose lives are affected, but not necessarily improved, by becoming mobile Europeans themselves.

## Case Study Two: Bande de Filles

A different kind of precarious experience in Europe is explored in the film, *Bande de Filles* (2015) (distributed with English subtitles under the title *Girlhood*) by French director Céline Sciamma. The story told in this case does not deal with the kind of transnational mobility within Europe that we saw in *Tascha*, but rather focuses on the social experience of people with a migration background (so-called 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation migrants from former European colonies) who contribute to the multicultural character of Europe's cities. The film is firmly set in genre of *banlieue* cinema,<sup>8</sup> which deals with the topic of France's poor, working-class immigrant populations living in the *banlieues*; those "stigmatized neighbourhoods situated at the very bottom of the hierarchical system of places that compose the metropolis", as Loïc Wacquant so succinctly describes these social spaces (Wacquant, 2008, 1). Similar to *beur* literature, *beur* and *banlieue* cinemas represent the lives of typically unemployed, second generation men and women from North African descent living in marginalized neighbourhoods around Paris and other French cities. These *banlieues* were originally built for migrant workers, isolating them from middle-class inhabitants of Paris who live within the city.

*Girlhood* tells the coming-of-age story of the sixteen-year old Marieme (played by Karidja Touré) who lives in Cité de la Noue<sup>9</sup> in Bagnolet, Paris. It is a typical French *banlieue* with dilapidated high-rise apartment buildings (row upon row of grey cement housing projects) lacking public services, parks and shops, with high unemployment among its (mostly black) inhabitants. Tasked with taking care of her two younger sisters (Bébé and Mimi) in lieu of an absent mother who works as a cleaner, Marieme also needs to negotiate her own social life while living under the patriarchal surveillance of their volatile and abusive

8 *Banlieue cinema* developed out of *beur* literature and cinema, which emerged during the 1970s and refers to films made by *beur* filmmakers: filmmakers born in France with a North African background, and/or filmmakers who are themselves immigrants to France, and/or French filmmakers without North African background and portraying in most, but not all, cases *beur* characters and communities (Tarr, 2005).

9 For a documentary impression of the hardship entailed in living in this neighbourhood, see Frayer-Laleix and Cuccagna, 2016.



brother, Djibril. At school, a teacher informs her that because of insufficient grades she cannot continue with her education in the *baccalauréat* system – an option that might have been her ticket out of the *banlieue* setting – and may only continue with a so-called *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*, a vocational track that forecloses much future professional possibility for her. This news sets in motion her decision to drop out of school and join a gang of girls led by a girl called Lady. After a series of initiation rites, she is renamed “Vic” (shortened form for victory) by the gang members, and engages with them in petty-crime and the intimidation of others. Yet at the same time the teenage girls act lovingly and in a supporting manner towards each other. Their sisterly bond is represented in the much-referenced scene that forms the heart of the film: in a hotel room the girls spend a night to escape their lives in their own dreary *banlieue* homes. While lip-syncing Rihanna’s *Diamonds*, they dance in their (stolen) party dresses; it is “a joyous interlude, framed like a scene from a musical, expertly utilising that genre’s unique capacity for fantastical flights of interior fancy with unaffectedly natural choreography”, as one reviewer puts it (Kermode, 2015).

Marieme/Vic falls in love with Ismaël, a friend of Djibril, but after he proposes to her to get married and have a child together, she leaves him. Set on a new path, she has redefined herself once again by adapting her physique, binding her breasts and wearing baggy clothing, moved out of her family’s house and works as a drugs courier for Abou, a local drug dealer. The film’s end is open: Marieme returns to the building where her family lives and presses the doorbell, but instead of entering the building upon the bell’s ringing being answered, she waivers in front of the building with a shot over Paris blurred in the background.

According to film scholar Carrie Tarr, the history of representing people from North African descent in French films shows that they are either depicted as bad guys, or as the victims of bad guys. Such characters have often been represented through a “white, eurocentric gaze and discourse” (Tarr, 2005, 10). These stereotypical representations, she argues, have contributed to the marginalization and silencing of the postcolonial “other” in French society and thus normalized power hierarchies that came into existence because of colonialism and imperialism (see also Beaman, 2016, 854). The emergence of *beur* and *banlieue* cinema, however, exposed the lie of the French ideal of equality among its citizens by representing the racial discrimination and “*fracture sociale* (the increasing disparity between haves and have-nots in contemporary French society)”, as Tarr explains (Tarr, 2005, 74). In fact, from

the perspective of European narratives, the film *Girlhood* may be viewed in line with the critical approach to a particular, often dominant story about European integration, which Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson describe as one often “imbued with a progressive spirit and teleology” which is “dissociated from processes of colonialism and decolonization” (Hansen and Jonsson, 2014, 5. See also El-Tayeb, 2008, who points to the problematic non-evocation of colonialism in the process of Europeanization). It makes visible what Gurinder Bhambra calls Europe’s postcolonialism: what the loss of European colonial territories and subsequent move to Europe mean for the “people associated with it” (Bhambra, 2016, 194). The structural and slow violence experienced daily by black Europeans whose parents or grandparents migrated from former European colonies to Europe is obscured by such teleological narratives of economic integration and political stability that disregards the colonial dimension of Europeanization. Such narratives continue – problematically – to reproduce categories such as “European” (or “French” in this case) mainly as referring to hegemonic, ethnic (white) culture and identity. In the case of “European”, an economic dimension flavoured with conceptions of successful cosmopolitanism often plays a prominent role as well – as I have pointed out in the introduction.

The important questions the film poses are therefore about how a young (black) woman lacking economic and political power creates a sense of agency and purposefulness for herself. One of the most telling lines of inquiry is tracing the purposeful movements of Vic and the girl gang through the environment in which they live and socialize. Their walking through the *banlieue* environment, their conspicuous metro rides, their hanging out in the shopping space of *Les Halles* (where they are not only treated in the most stereotypically suspicious manner by the white shop assistant, but where they also engage in the shoplifting of dresses) the outdoor fights with other girls and their being together in the open space of *La Défense* all represent moments in which these girls establish their own subjectivity in one way or another by claiming their right to be present in the city despite the structural conditions that inform their social positioning within this environment (see Mathivet, 2011).

We witness this making of the girls’ subjectivity in their physical movement through their environment already right at the start of the film. The opening scenes of the film show two teams of American football players engaged in a tough, physical game with one another, revealing at the end of the match that these are young black women playing against each other. On their way back from the game home they talk lively with one another, up to the point where

they encounter a group of young men, whose presence silences them – designating the patriarchal control of these young men on their lives – a typical theme in *beur* cinema (Tarr, 2005, 87-88). A second example of the structural constraints experienced by Marieme on who she can be is located in a scene where she looks out at the night skyline of Paris while inside the building where she is trying out a job of cleaner, like her mother: she is unable to participate in those promises of Parisian life referenced by the sign of the skyline. In a form of rebellion, Marieme quits the job and heads back to her friends. It is a reminder, as Handyside points out, that the logic of neoliberalism – as was the case of Tascha – “exhorts girls to embrace progress and take advantage of the opportunities opened up to them through education and equality, [even though] the reality of the environments that shape and contain their trajectories is of a more complex interaction between the girl and the world” (Handyside, 2019, 115). The facts of Marieme’s life demonstrate it too: she is required to take care of her own siblings’ needs, is exposed to her brother’s violent behaviour at home, her teacher is unwilling to explore her personal situation as possible reason for her low grades, and so forth.

Marieme, despite her precarious socio-economic position, claims the right to be present by appropriating public and private spaces in the way she does. Powerfully, this narrative about a girl claiming her presence in the social environment she lives in, is also a means to negotiate visibility for her and other comparable precarious citizens in the public sphere. For various reasons their visibility and participation in the public sphere is problematic – either because they do not have the means and opportunities to gain access to the public sphere, or because they are symbolically represented in the public sphere (in films, for example) in ways that marginalize or silence them as I have explained above. In an interview, the film’s director, Sciamma, tellingly stated, “French young women today are this girl” (quoted by Kermode, 2015). The fact that the film’s publicity poster publicly displayed the faces of these four marginalized, black girls as lead characters in a French (European) film therefore has the political impact of indexically signaling toward a more inclusive Europe. In fact, it does exactly what Loshitzky describes as the function of European cinema today: by telling Marieme’s story, it articulates a “sociocultural space” shaped and negotiated by both “experience of displacement, diaspora, exile, migration, nomadism, homelessness and border-crossing” (Loshitzky, 2010, 8) and socio-economic inequality. In the process, both Frenchness is radically redefined, and the question is posed if a subject like Marieme and her gang of friends – as citizens of a European member state – may also be thought of as *European* subjects. By this semiotic act whereby Marieme and her friends represent

young French and European women, both the identity categories of French *and* European citizens are reworked to include racialized and economically deprived and marginalized subjects as well.

## Conclusion

This contribution close-read two artistic texts as representing social, political and economic invisibility of two vulnerable, precarious female Europeans. The goal was to problematize glib and easy success stories about Europeanization and formulate questions about whom we deem and consider to be Europeans. My reading of the texts points to what Chris Rumford (2016) has called the existence of “multiple Europes”, which hold different truths for various kinds of Europeans who live there and for whom a single story or narrative about “Europe” will not suffice. This insight recognizes the existence of a multiplicity of “Europeans”, is able to take notice of those marginal and marginalized subjects, and develops the reader’s understanding of how each in their own way also occupy the subject position of a precarious person very specifically: this precarity is not only related to the conditions under which they labour – in both cases this labour renders them specifically precarious because it takes place in the shadow economy of the informal sector. Their precarity is also evident in their relationality with others and particular spaces that render them vulnerable.

This brings me to a number of conclusions. Firstly, the close-reading of these two texts brought forth the insight that although these two characters share many characteristics as vulnerable, precarious subjects, the interconnectiveness of race, class, gender ethnicity and nationality renders each of them very specifically as a precarious social subject. It is thus of crucial importance to engage further in critical work of this kind to analyse – more than I have been able to do so in this contribution – the intersection of these identity categories, in particular race, ethnicity/culture, gender, and class in order to understand the complexity of the precarious social subject. Secondly, the kind of cosmopolitanism embodied by Europe’s successful mobile classes is juxtaposed here with the more gritty, “vernacular cosmopolitanism” (Werbner, 2006) experienced by a different kind of mobile class – not the “winners” of Europeanization, but rather “losers” who live by the “slow knife” of everyday, structural violence that limits their possible actions and everyday politics they may undertake (Das and Randeria, 2015, 11). Thirdly, texts such as the two

artistic works that I have discussed in this contribution probe us as readers to rethink our own conceptions of Europeans and Europeaness and may open our eyes to the divergent effects Europeanization has on the European population. The protagonists Tascha and Marieme are European subjects who fall outside of the boundaries demarcated by mainstream narratives about Europe and Europeaness. Both seem to lack the kind of (political) agency that we conventionally associate with citizens of modern, liberal-democratic states. Mihnea Mircan and Jonas Staal remind us that the current “crisis” in Europe is not only a political, economic, or humanitarian crisis, but also a crisis of the imagination (Mircan and Staal, 2018. See also Felski, 2013; Braidotti, 2015; Heynders and Bax, 2016). If we are unable to imagine the subjectivity and (structurally limited) agency of those in precarious conditions, how are we to understand the contemporary social fabric of Europe and devise strategies for living together in Europe? If artistic imagination precedes political action, as Mircan and Staal claim, then the cultural and aesthetic representation of precarious living and relative depravity amid contexts of affluence (Western Europe) *and as part of that reality* is a powerful cultural critical tool to help us pose questions concerning the common good of Europeans. It also affords us the possibility of contemplating a common future in Europe of various kinds of Europeans (see Shaw, 2017) and the implications this diversity might have for social policy and projects of social justice, for example. Finally, it asks for the critical reconsideration of the narratives about that reality and the public deliberation about how to shape that European reality in a way that is good to all of those Europeans who hold it in common.

## Bibliography

**Andrijasevic, Rutvica** (2010), *Migration, Agency and Citizenship in Sex Trafficking*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan.

**Aragay, Mireia and Middeke, Martin** (eds) (2017), *Of Precariousness: Vulnerabilities, Responsibilities, Communities in 21st-Century British Drama and Theatre*, Berlin, De Gruyter.

**Baetens, Jan and Sánchez-Mesa, Domingo** (2015), “Literature in the expanded field: Intermediality at the Crossroads of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature”, *Interfaces. Image Texte Language*, vol 36, <<http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/interfaces/index.php?id=245>>.

- Baghetti, Carlo** (2019), “Works by Vitaliano Trevisan and the Representation of Work in the Neoliberal Age”, in Tiziano Toracca and Angela Condello (eds), *Law, Labour and the Humanities: Contemporary European Perspectives*, London, Routledge, p. 183-198.
- Bardan, Alice** (2013), “The New European Cinema of Precarity: A Transnational Perspective”, in Ewa Mazierska (ed.), *Work in Cinema: Work and the Human Condition*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 69-90.
- Beaman, Jean** (2016), “Citizenship as Cultural: Towards a Theory of Cultural Citizenship”, *Sociology Compass*, vol. 10 (10), p. 849-857.
- Berlant, Lauren** (2011), *Cruel Optimism*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Bhambra, Gurinder K** (2016), “Whither Europe? Postcolonial versus Neocolonial Cosmopolitanism”, *Interventions*, vol. 18 (2), p. 187-202.
- Boels, Dominique** (2016), *The Informal Economy: Seasonal Work, Street Selling and Sex Work*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Braidotti, Rosi** (2010), “Nomadism: Against Methodological Nationalism”, *Policy Futures in Education*, vol. 8 (3-4), p. 408-418.
- Braidotti, Rosi** (2015), “Nomadic European Identity”, in Pascal Gielen (ed.), *No Culture, No Europe: On the Foundation of Politics*, Amsterdam, Valiz, p. 97-113.
- Broughton, Andrea, Green, Martha et al.** (2016), *Precarious Employment in Europe: Patterns, Trends and Policy Strategies*, Brussels, European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies.
- Buikema, Rosemarie** (2017), *Revoltes in de Cultuurkritiek*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.
- Butter, Michael and Schinko, Carsten** (2010), “Introduction: Poverty and the Culturalization of Class”, *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 55 (1), p. 5-18.
- Connell, Liam** (2017), *Precarious Labour and the Contemporary Novel*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Couldry, Nick** (2009), “Rethinking the Politics of Voice: Commentary”, *Continuum*, vol. 23 (4), p. 579-582.
- Das, Veena and Randeria, Shalini** (2015), “Politics of the Urban Poor: Aesthetics, Ethics, Volatility, Precarity. An Introduction to Supplement 11”, *Current Anthropology*, vol. 56 (Supplement 11), p. 3-14.
- Della Porta, Donatella, Hänninen, Sakari et al.** (eds) (2016), *The New Social Division: Making and Unmaking Precariousness*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan.

- El-Tayeb, Fatima** (2008), “‘The Birth of a European Public’: Migration, Postnationality, and Race in the Uniting of Europe”, *American Quarterly*, vol. 60 (3), p. 649–670.
- Felski, Rita** (2013), “Introduction”, *New Literary History*, vol. 43 (4), p. v–xv.
- Feticu, Mira** (2015), *Tascha. De Roofuit de Kunsthal*, Amsterdam, Jurgen Maas.
- Fligstein, Neil** (2010), *Euroclash: The EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Fluck, Winfried** (2010), “Poor like Us: Poverty and Recognition in American Photography”, *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 55 (1), p. 63–93.
- Fragkou, Marissia** (2018), *Ecologies of Precarity in Twenty-First Century Theatre: Politics, Affect, Responsibility*, London, Methuen Drama.
- Framer-Laleix, Arthur and Cuccagna, Michela** (2016), “La Noue, Le Quartier Abandonné de Montreuil”, *Streetpress*, 24 October, <<https://www.streetpress.com/sujet/1477062869-la-noue-quartier-abandonne-montreuil>>.
- Gandal, Keith** (2007), *Class Representation in Modern Fiction and Film*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hadjimichalis, Costis** (2019), “‘New’ Questions of Peripherality in Europe or How Neoliberal Austerity Contradicts Socio-Spatial Cohesion”, in Thilo Lang and Franziska Görmar (eds), *Regional and Local Development in Times of Polarisation*, Singapore, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 61-78.
- Handyside, Fiona** (2019), “Girlhood Luminosities and Topographical Politics: 17 Filles and Bande de filles”, in Ari J. Blatt and Edward Welsch (eds), *France in Flux: Space, Territory and Contemporary Culture*, Liverpool, Liverpool UP, p. 113-140.
- Hansen, Peo and Jonsson, Stefan** (2014), *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism*, London, Bloomsbury.
- Heynders, Odile and Bax, Sander** (2016), “Imaginary Scenarios: Literature and Democracy in Europe”, *Pivot*, vol. 5 (1), p. 1-13 (online), <<https://pivot.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/pivot/article/view/40256>>.
- Ibrahim, Yasmin** (2018), “The Re-Aestheticisation of Poverty: Blogging Hunger in the Age of Austerity”, *Social Identities*, vol. 24 (3), p. 364–379.
- Jacobs, Ronald N.** (2016), “Media, Culture and Civil Society”, *Questions de Communication*, vol. 29 (1), p. 379-394.
- Jones, Gavin** (2009), *American Hungers: The Problem of Poverty in US Literature, 1840-1945*, Princeton, Princeton UP.

**Kaplan, Cora** (ed.) (2000), “Rereading Class”, *PMLA*, vol. 115 (Special issue) (1), p. 9-89.

**Kermode, Mark** (2015), “Girlhood review - Electrifying Portrait of a French Girl in the hood”, *The Observer*, 10 May.

**Korte, Barbara** (2010), “New World Poor through an Old World Lens: Charlie Chaplin’s Engagement with Poverty”, *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 55 (1), p. 123-141.

**Korte, Barbara** (2012), “Dealing with Deprivation: Figurations of Poverty on the Contemporary British Book Market”, *Anglia - Zeitschrift Für Englische Philologie*, vol. 130, no. 1, p. 75–94.

**Korte, Barbara** (2014), “Narrating Poverty and Precarity in Britain: An Introduction”, in Barbara Korte and Frédéric Regard (eds), *Narrating Poverty and Precarity in Britain*, Berlin, De Gruyter, p. 1-17.

**Korte, Barbara and Regard, Frédéric** (eds) (2014), *Narrating Poverty and Precarity in Britain*, Berlin, De Gruyter.

**Korte, Barbara and Zipp, Georg** (2014), *Poverty in Contemporary Literature: Themes and Figurations on the British Book Market*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan.

**Koufopoulou, Paraskevi et al.** (2019), “Shadow Economy: Definitions, Terms & Theoretical Considerations”, *Advances in Management and Applied Economics*, vol. 9 (5), p. 35-57.

**Lemke, Sieglinde** (2010), “Facing Poverty: Towards a Theory of Articulation”, *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 55 (1), p. 95-122.

**Lemke, Sieglinde** (2016), *Inequality, Poverty and Precarity in Contemporary American Culture*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

**Lennon, John and Nilsson, Magnus** (2017), “Introduction”, in John Lennon and Magnus Nilsson (eds), *Working-Class Literature(s)*, Stockholm, Stockholm University Press, p. ix-xviii.

**Loshitzky, Yosefa** (2010), *Screening Strangers: Migration and Diaspora in Contemporary European Cinema*, Indianapolis, Indiana UP.

**Mathivet, Charlotte** (2011), “The Right to the City: Keys to Understanding the proposal for ‘Another City is Possible’”, in Ana Sugranyes and Charlotte Mathivet (eds), *Cities for All*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Santiago, Habitat International Coalition, p. 21-26

**Mazierska, Ewa** (2017), *Poland daily: Economy, Work, Consumption and Social Class in Polish Cinema*, New York, Berghahn Books.



- McGuigan, Jim** (2005), “The Cultural Public Sphere”, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 8 (4), p. 427–443.
- Michaels, Walter Benn** (2006), *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality*, New York, Henry Holt.
- Millar, Kathleen M.** (2017), “Toward a Critical Politics of Precarity”, *Sociology Compass*, vol. 11 (6), p. 1–11.
- Mircan, Mihnea and Staal, Jonas** (2018), “Let’s Take Back Control! Of Our Imagination”, *Stedelijk Studies*, vol. 6, Spring, p. 1–14, <<https://stedelijkstudies.com/journal/lets-take-back-control-of-our-imagination/>>.
- Nixon, Rob** (2011), *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard UP.
- Perera, Sonali** (2014), *No Country: Working-Class Writing in the Age of Globalization*, New York, Columbia UP.
- Pignal, Stanley** (2012), “The Public Image: EU Enlargement Campaign”, *Financial Times*, 27 February.
- Rumford, Chris** (2016), “The Strangeness of Europe”, *Comparative European Politics*, vol. 14 (4), p. 504–522.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure** (2005), “On the Theoretical Foundations of Transmedial Narratology”, in Jan C. M. Meister (ed.), *Narratology beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality, Disciplinarity*, Berlin, Walter De Gruyter, p. 1–23.
- Schmitt, Mark** (2018), *British White Trash: Figurations of Tainted Whiteness in the Novels of Irvine Welsh, Niall Griffiths and John King*, Bielefeld, transcript Verlag.
- Schneider, Friedrich** (2008), “Shadow Economy”, in Charles K. Rowley and Friedrich Schneider (eds), *Readings in Public Choice and Constitutional Political Economy*, New York, Springer, p. 511–532.
- Schneider, Friedrich and Buehn, Andreas** (2018), “Shadow Economy: Estimation Methods, Problems, Results and Open Questions”, *Open Economics*, vol. 1 (1), p. 1–29.
- Sciamma, Céline** (dir.) (2014), *Bande de Filles* [Film], France, Strand Releasing Home Video.
- Shaw, Kristian** (2017), *Cosmopolitanism in Twenty-First Century Fiction*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shields, Rob** (2013), *Spatial Questions*, London, SAGE.

- Shildrick, Tracy** (2018), *Poverty Propaganda: Exploring the Myths*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Tally, Robert** (2017), *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*, London, Routledge.
- Tarr, Carrie** (2005), *Reframing Difference: Beur and banlieue filmmaking in France*, Manchester, Manchester UP.
- Todorova, Maria** (1997), *Imagining the Balkans*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Van der Zee, Renate** (2015), "Als je arm bent grijp je alle kansen", *NRC Handelsblad*, 20 June.
- Wacquant, Loïc** (2008), *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*, London, Polity.
- Waite, Louise** (2009), "A Place and Space for a Critical Geography of Precarity?", *Geography Compass*, vol. 3 (1), p. 412-433.
- Walker, Robert and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, Grace** (2014), *The Shame of Poverty*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Werbner, Pnina** (2006), "Vernacular Cosmopolitanism", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 23 (2-3), p. 496-498.
- Williams, Anna** (2016), "Class revisited in Contemporary Swedish Literature", in Jenny Björklund and Ursula Lindqvist (eds), *New Dimensions of Diversity in Nordic Culture and Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars, p. 212-229.

**Margriet van der Waal** is senior lecturer in cultural studies within an Erasmus Mundus programme called Euroculture at the University of Groningen. Next to that, she also holds the endowed Chair in South African literature, culture and history at the University of Amsterdam. Her research focuses on cultural representations and the functioning of the cultural public sphere, both in Europe and in South Africa.

[m.c.van.der.waal@rug.nl](mailto:m.c.van.der.waal@rug.nl)

