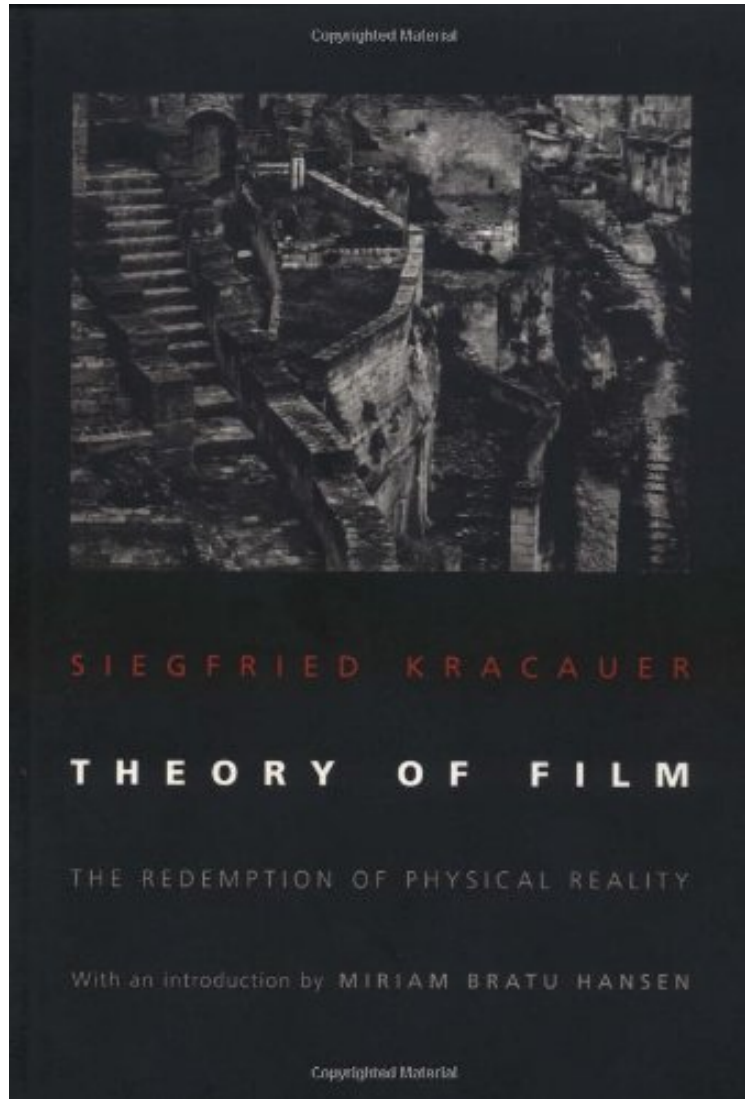


Theory of Film

Siegfried Kracauer

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Siegfried Kracauer : Theory of Film before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Theory of Film:

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful. A Classic of RealismBy Eric MullisKracauer's book is an astonishingly detailed look into the cinema. What also makes this work interesting is the novelty that is expressed in the author's writing. Like Eisenstein, there is an excitement about the possibilities of this revolutionary new art (an excitement that seems somewhat scarce in the present). Kracauer explores how film is similar to and yet wholly different from other classical arts including photography, theatre, and literature. Also of interest are his thoughts

regarding film's effects upon the spectator in relationship to the characteristics and difficulties of modernity. 5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Great Book By EReally interesting. A great read. Kracauer is one of the best. Used it as a text book for an anthropology of film class. 27 of 28 people found the following review helpful. One of the indispensable classics of film theory -- but not only of historical interest By Nate In this exciting classic, Kracauer not only developed a rich and detailed analysis of the nature of film and its relation to photography and other art forms, but he also develops an original and still relevant view of film's potential and relevance to our age. Kracauer is often recognized as one of the most articulate and influential (along with Andre Bazin) of realist film theorists. Realism in film theory argues that what is special and distinctive to film as an art medium is its capacity for capturing and presenting reality, even realities that can never be directly experienced in other ways. To the extent that realism is presented as a thesis about the sole feature of film that gives it artistic merit, it is a problematic view -- since one of the other distinctive capacities of film is to frame and interpret and shape the reality it depicts. What is most original and still worthwhile, though, in Kracauer's thought is his recognition that realism is a tendency of film and a latent possibility -- not all films are realistic and strict realism (e.g. a camera that follows someone around 24 hours a day) would be neither interesting nor artistic. Kracauer recognizes that the very best films are those that use all of the devices at the disposal of the cinematic art, but, he insists, when they do so in the service of the presentation of reality. Kracauer's view -- which seems more relevant today than ever -- is that we are living in an increasingly technologized age, where everything we experience is mediated and our experience is shaped by ideologies so that the real illusion (what Baudrillard calls the "Simulacrum"; and what the Wachowski brothers called the "Matrix") is the world around us as we experience it. (He doesn't put it that way, but emphasizes the mechanization and compartmentalization of the modern world -- resulting in an increasing alienation of each of us from each other and from the places we inhabit, rendering interactions increasingly sterile and lifeless and communication increasingly utilitarian: mere means to transmit information rather than intimate acts of communion.) Film has the power, at its best, to summon us back to reality, to remind us of what other media conspire to render invisible. Film, in Kracauer's words, has the power to effect a "redemption of physical reality." The Italian neo-realist tradition of films, for example, told stories informed by everyday life, about everyday people, and using non-actors on location -- they serve thereby to document their time and place, and to connect the dots between aspects of experience that are often not thought together. A similar movement happened to American films in the '70s -- films that held up a mirror to society rather than an image for the audience to imitate and aspire to; some independent films still achieve that condition. The very best foreign films give the experience of peering into a living world, more than that of listening to someone telling a fanciful story. Kracauer's book, then, is not only an important document from the history of thought about film but remains a living legacy and an indispensable read for anyone interested either in the history and nature of film or in its liberatory potential for the future.

Siegfried Kracauer's classic study, originally published in 1960, explores the distinctive qualities of the cinematic medium. The book takes its place alongside works in classical film theory by such figures as Bela Balzs, Rudolf Arnheim, and Andr Bazin, among others, and has met with much critical dispute. In this new edition, Miriam Bratu Hansen, examining the book in the context of Kracauer's extensive film criticism from the 1920s, provides a framework for appreciating the significance of Theory of Film for contemporary film theory.

"Just as new translations of Kracauer's early works have begun to reveal aspects of his intellectual project previously unavailable to readers of English, this most welcome new edition of Kracauer's magnum opus of media aesthetics will cast a new interpretative light on his later work, thanks especially to Miriam Hansen's highly illuminating introductory essay." -- Thomas Y. Levin, Princeton University "Kracauer's profound theoretical investigation revealed film as the form that best captured the new modes of experience that characterize modernity. Miriam Hansen's brilliant introduction chronicles the work's genesis and transformation through Kracauer's conversations with Adorno and Benjamin, his flight from the Nazis, and his uneasy assimilation into the Cold-War United States." -- Tom Gunning, University of Chicago From the Back Cover "Kracauer's profound theoretical investigation revealed film as the form that best captured the new modes of experience that characterize modernity. Miriam Hansen's brilliant introduction chronicles the work's genesis and transformation through Kracauer's conversations with Adorno and Benjamin, his flight from the Nazis, and his uneasy assimilation into the Cold-War United States." -- Tom Gunning, University of Chicago "Just as new translations of Kracauer's early works have begun to reveal aspects of his intellectual project previously unavailable to readers of English, this most welcome new edition of Kracauer's magnum opus of media aesthetics will cast a new interpretative light on his later work, thanks especially to Miriam Hansen's highly illuminating introductory essay." -- Thomas Y. Levin, Princeton University About the Author Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966) was a German intellectual who wrote extensively on modern culture and everyday life. From 1924 to 1933 he was cultural editor of the Frankfurter Zeitung. He emigrated to the United States in 1941. He is the author of From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film (Princeton), The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays and

History: The Last Things Before the Last.