

EDITORIAL

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Siegfried Kracauer's contribution to twentieth century thought is undeniable. Yet he is difficult to define in relation to any particular tradition or discipline of knowledge. Kracauer was a colleague and friend of some of the key Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch, amongst others. Suspicious of economism, he also challenged the Hegelian-Marxist position of Georg Lukács for its transcendental and metaphysical flights away from the material conditions of existence. His fascination with the reality of the everyday and his determination to dig deep into reality, rather than fly over it, was the context for his reading of Georg Simmel's phenomenological sociology. In Simmel, Kracauer recognised something of himself, a nomad and a wanderer between objects and phenomena. And yet, he was also critical of Simmel for his lack of engagement with what he called the soul, for being too lost in the external world, and for overlooking the passion, belief and ideas that inspire individuals and connect them with the life force and flow of life. Kracauer was mindful of how people were alienated from themselves in the social functions available to them.

David Frisby suggests that Kracauer 'radicalized Simmel's theory of cultural alienation by infusing it with quasi-religious existentialism'.¹ But his philosophical outlook might equally be understood as a radical social humanism, refusing universals and preoccupied with the longing for fulfilment and insistence that lies within the soul or psyche. Kracauer never loses sight of the person within the philosophy, the feelings that accompany the idea, the lived life without which knowledge and meaning are rendered abstract and obsolete. His refusal to form an allegiance to either the truth of the philosophical idea or the empirical fact demonstrates an insistence on the importance of how ideas, science and the progress of capitalism connect within the lived existence of the individual. How, in life and in truth, the person is always networked within a community. Science and capital give us logical thinking, whereas socialism and social theory show us a view of material actions and specific goals. And yet, as ideas or will these things remain too abstract or literal, too reflexively conscious to encapsulate the lived existence of the person. The integrity of the inner psyche and its desires lose out to the manufactured dreams of capitalism, which can be consumed but not lived.

In this sense Kracauer's vision is that of an artist as well as a critic, curiously anticipating contemporary notions of hybrid and nomadic identities. His radical refusal to be straitjacketed within the boundaries of specific disciplines is because he saw those boundaries as the self-interested workings of knowledge, in pursuit of self-legitimation and power. Of course, this refusal was also bound up with Kracauer's identity as an outsider, but although

1. David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1986, p114.

2. Siegfried
Kracauer, *History,
The Last Things Before
The Last*, Oxford
University Press,
1969, p4.

Kracauer suffered from being outside the academy and any particular claim to identity, he also found in that wandering spirit between objects and ideas, the truest encapsulation of his own experience. It is, perhaps, no accident that Kracauer, in writing his last book, *History: The Last Things Before The Last*, voices his life-long intention of interrogating and revealing the surfaces in between spaces that seem so incoherent - those 'objectives and modes of being which still lack a name and hence are overlooked or misjudged'.² This is a poignant reminder of how we might indeed remember Kracauer himself: as an artist, philosopher, journalist, architect, poet and film theorist - so many occupations and interests that it is impossible to sum up the man. He was someone, who located himself within those in-between spaces: between knowledge and experience; philosophy and emotion; the ideal and the material; the pragmatic world and the artist. And it is almost because Kracauer and his work are so un-located, so mysteriously invisible and impossible to place and define, that we have forgotten, or refused to acknowledge him. Our forgetting is perhaps rooted in his fluidity, his strong protean sense in moving between disciplines of thought. Perhaps our failure of memory is also because of his ability to illuminate those spaces between art and life that the intellectual institutions of the academy have notoriously been unable, either to understand or inhabit. And it is of a piece with that inability to locate himself, with Kracauer's seemingly intrinsic inability to join anyone's club, his lifelong occupation of being an inveterate escape artist, that we can also see the pain of displacement and non-belonging that is perhaps a mark of the original thinker.

In his essay on Kracauer entitled *The Curious Realist*, originally written as a radio talk to celebrate Kracauer's seventy-fifth birthday, Theodor W. Adorno seems infuriated with Kracauer's inability to behave and join, what is for Adorno, the right academic club. He is cross with Kracauer for not remaining with, or within, the dedicated lines of the right discipline of philosophy - dialectical materialism. Adorno is curiously idealistic as well as ambivalent about his teacher and one time mentor. We see his admiration and praise alternate with cruel dismissal. To begin with Adorno seems to acknowledge Kracauer's contribution to his education:

I am not exaggerating in the slightest when I say that I owe more to this reading than to my academic teachers. Exceptionally gifted as a pedagogue, Kracauer made Kant come alive for me. Under his guidance I experienced the work from the beginning not as mere epistemology, not as an analysis of the conditions of scientifically valid judgements, but as a kind of coded text from which the historical situation of spirit could be read³

3. Theodor W.
Adorno, 'The
Curious Realist: On
Siegfried Kracauer',
New German Critique,
Vol 54, (Fall 1991):
160.

So, Kracauer made knowledge come alive for Adorno; he showed him the affect and feeling - the imagination that brought it into being. At the same time, he revealed how there is no pure truth or meaning, that all knowledge is a

war between the subjective and the objective. Philosophy, after all, like human beings, is fatally flawed, because any unified meaning or system is always being radically undone by what is unruly and uncertain. Passion and the irrational are at the heart of knowledge; they bring it into being and movement within time; they are the vital constituents that made Kant come alive for Adorno, revealing to him the forces and spirit that historically drive the seemingly unified text. So, Adorno realises that this ability to mix expression with rigour is what makes philosophy live, and yet as soon as he acknowledges this, his debt to Kracauer is swiftly corrected by condemnation. Kracauer becomes liable and disappointingly not up to the mark for his stance as an 'alogical man'. Adorno notices that Kracauer represents a paradox, where philosophy is always mixed up with 'an almost boundless capacity for suffering'.⁴ Suffering enters into the idea as a central force, contradicting the accepted view that representation mediates or dissipates pain. The Enlightenment theory of the centrality of meaning and interpretation is radically undone or pushed aside by the notion that ideas and suffering bring each other into being; pain and passion are inextricably bound up with the production of knowledge. And, therefore, knowledge and the ideal of philosophy cannot be transcendental. Philosophy is always at some level irrational, unconscious, or animal; and this - the idea that to really understand philosophy is to be led away from it, or at least to be placed outside its disciplinary margins - is clearly quite an unbearable and *painful* thought for Adorno. Perhaps this is why Adorno criticises Kracauer for introducing suffering to knowledge, because he shows the necessity of suffering to what is, after all, Adorno's pet ideal; and he goes about it in what is arguably the most unforgivable way, by attacking Kracauer through an analysis of his childhood.

4. Ibid., p161

The word *Leiden*, suffering, even made its way into the title of one of Kracauer's first monographs. To me Kracauer seemed, although not sentimental, a man with no skin, as though everything external attacked his defenceless interior; as though he could defend himself only by giving voice to his vulnerability. He had had a difficult time in his childhood, in more than one regard; as a pupil in the Klinger Upper School he had also suffered anti-Semitism, something quite unusual in the commercial city of Frankfurt, and a sort of joylessness hovered over his milieu, despite its humane scholarly tradition; this was probably the source of his later aversion to the architectural trade he had had to pursue. In retrospect it seemed to me that, for all the friendliness I was shown, the catastrophe that befell his mother and her sister, who seemed to have an influence over him, in extreme old age had long been anticipated in the atmosphere of Kracauer's home.⁵

5. Ibid.

Suffering, in Adorno's eyes, is at the centre of Kracauer's thinking and this can be traced back to his character, and his role as victim, in his childhood. This is a particularly nasty attack on Kracauer because it links his victim hood

to anti-Semitism, prejudice that Kracauer seemingly brings on himself, as on the whole such prejudice in the commercial city of Frankfurt was unusual. The implication, here, is that other German, Jewish intellectuals such as Adorno were immune; an immunity that only makes sense if we believe in Kracauer's inherent tendency to be bullied. We might understand how Adorno would want to see Kracauer's suffering as personal rather than political, but what also seems so glaring is how suffering has to be removed from Adorno's own identification with his trade. So, when Adorno critiques Kracauer's distance from the great philosophers, such as Hegel, he cites Walter Benjamin calling Kracauer 'an enemy of philosophy'. We realise, though, that this is simply a confirmation of Adorno's own view when he goes on to state:

His oeuvre is tinged with a kind of amateurish thinking on his feet, just as a certain slackness damped self-criticism in favour of a playful pleasure in felicitous insights ... On the other hand being an autodidact gave Kracauer some independence from routinised method. He was spared the fate of professional philosophy, the doom of being established as a department, a specialized discipline beyond the other specialized disciplines; accordingly he was never intimidated by the demarcation between philosophy and sociology.⁶

6. Ibid, p162.

Maybe Adorno's fury at Kracauer's independence was also his envy at Kracauer's ability to take his ideas from life and experience rather than from the deadly reduction of 'general principles' and methods. Adorno sums up, albeit in a rather negative way, the unusual freedom that characterised Kracauer the scholar.

Siegfried Kracauer was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1889 to a middle-class Jewish family. His father was a businessman, but his Uncle Isidor to whom Kracauer was close, taught history and researched the Jewish history of Frankfurt and the surrounding area. Isidor proved a great influence on the young man and when Kracauer embarked on the practical study of architecture in 1907, he also continued with his studies in philosophy and sociology. Studying in Darmstadt, Berlin and Munich, Kracauer graduated from his architectural studies in 1911 and was awarded his doctorate in 1914. His years working as an architect between 1915 and 1920 were dispiriting and they were later documented in his autobiographical novel *Ginster* (1928). During this period Siegfried was also very affected by the events of the Great War, returning to work in Frankfurt when the war broke out and writing his first piece, *On the Experience of War* in 1915. Kracauer's views on the advance of capitalism and material culture are made clear in his early writing. He saw mass culture as forming a super-ego of convention and fixed ideas or values, to which individuals were forced to conform, or risk total alienation:

The life of the majority took place within stale social conventions and professional callings. As the sole supra-individual forms they secured

a fixed goal and determined the possibilities for development. If one distanced oneself from that sphere, then one stepped into empty space.⁷

7. Siegfried
Kracauer, 'Vom
Erleben des Krieges',
Preussische Jahrbuch,
58, 3 (1915): 414.

Kracauer's perception of how objective material culture was increasingly split off from subjective existence also informed his long unpublished book in 1917 entitled, *The Suffering from Knowledge and the Longing after the Deed*. In this book Kracauer bemoaned the accumulation of knowledge and information that was the fashion of the times. People suffered from ideas and also from a certainty that they could gain knowledge and master the soul. But Kracauer also criticised an overemphasis on action and deeds for their own sake, a perspective which, as David Frisby points out, was indicative of Kracauer's negative view of the fashionable ideas of Henri Bergson. Kracauer was critical of ideas that emphasised movement and flux in modernity, which he saw as part of the individual's alienated search under capitalism, a sort of restless desire that is constantly ignited by culture, but never fulfilled. His unhappiness with this material world of distracted desire fuelled his caution about Simmel's phenomenology of external objects. To just focus on the material world of surface objects is to forgo what Kracauer saw as the soul as unified subjective essence. Although, as Frisby notes, it is the existential emphasis on a lost soul, the isolated modern individual that Kracauer wants us to acknowledge.

Kracauer saw the material surface world, then, not just as something we escape into, but also as the harbourer of a keener truth, the lost ideal of who we might be. He was wary of mysticism and perhaps this wariness also informed his scepticism with notions of distracted enchantment, whether or not it is the material world, or indeed the spiritual one, that keeps us spellbound. He was very critical of the mystified distraction mobilised by capitalism, as his famous essay *The Mass Ornament* documents. But Kracauer still makes his own positive reading of the experience and movement within the space and time of culture's distractions, although this is a distraction as material memory, rather than mystical transcendence. His sense of the world falling apart and disintegrating connects him, like his friend Benjamin, with a tradition of Jewish Gnosticism, and yet Kracauer's radical scepticism of mysticism and his belief in Weberian and Enlightenment principles of rationality and reason, also drove his project of exposing the so-called naturalness of the material and everyday contexts of life.

On the one hand, then, was Kracauer's plea for a unified subjective essence of the soul, but this essence of a lost ideal was constantly being undone by his own insistence on the phenomenological movement he locates in our waking and dreaming lives. This is nowhere more prevalent than in Kracauer's writings on Weimar culture in the 1920s and was also reflected in his later film books. After the First World War, Kracauer used the excuse of the scarcity of jobs to retire from his career as an architect and he began to work as a reviewer for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, where he began a life which was to stretch over the next 10 years, writing many articles and essays on politics, philosophy and

society. At the paper, he became an editor of the arts and culture section, for which he was writing as early as 1921. And it was then that he made friends with the people later associated with the Frankfurt school, first with Adorno and Leo Lowenthal and then with Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin. The 1920s were a time of prolific creativity for Kracauer, his metaphysical essays of the early 1920s by 1925 gave way to an exploration of similar themes, through an empirical focus on the phenomenology of everyday life.

In the transitional period 1922-1925, Kracauer penned a philosophical treatise on the detective novel, reading both the genre and the figure of the detective as an allegory of lack that exposes the characteristic split of rationality and logic and in current society. The detective's literal and abstract logic is unseeing, mirroring the ultimate meaninglessness of the plot: both the crimes and the final deduction are ultimately formulaic and devoid of significance. We can see in Kracauer's analysis of the detective novel, the seeds of his celebrated essay *The Mass Ornament* which appeared a couple of years later. In 1926, Kracauer met the woman who was to become his wife, Elisabeth or Lili Ehrenreicha and in 1927, his famous essays *Photography* and *Mass Ornament* appeared. In 1928 Kracauer published his autobiographical novel *Ginster* and started another one entitled *Georg*.

Kracauer's time as editor at the *Frankfurter Zeitung* became increasingly fraught as the 1920s wore on. The paper's increasingly conservative slant matched the reactionary politics of the wider cultural milieu. Kracauer's work was increasingly refused and cut, as were his wages. The Nazis came to power in 1933, and Kracauer escaped to France immediately after the Reichstag fire, hoping to become a correspondent for the Paris edition. However, as a left-wing Jew, Kracauer was quickly fired and although he tried to instigate legal action against this, the anti-Semitic climate gave him no redress. Unsurprisingly, Kracauer's period in exile was extremely difficult. Nevertheless, he kept working, finishing his novel *Georg* and writing a study on Offenbach which offended the ever critical Adorno. Paris is where Kracauer met up with Benjamin and the two, increasingly in danger from the Nazis, fled separately to Marseilles. Miriam Hansen's sad and poignant story of the friendship between Kracauer and Benjamin is well known; the traumatic time the two men spent together in Marseilles, and their different attempts to escape over the Spanish border to Portugal. Although it is Kracauer who habitually voices suicidal thoughts to his friend Soma Morgenstern, a cruel irony manifests itself with the tragedy of Benjamin who succumbs to suicidal impulses, taking his own life after a failed attempt to cross the border.

Kracauer and his wife succeeded on a second attempt to cross into Spain and subsequently sailed to New York where they began a new life. Kracauer is best known for his work as a film theorist and for his later work, which was published when he was in exile in the United States, after the Second World War. Key texts produced and received in relation to an English speaking audience, were: his much criticised *From Caligari To Hitler* (1947), analysing the roots of the Nazi rise to power in the early history of Weimar Cinema;

and *Theory of Film* (1997), an investigation into how film captured the phenomenological experience of modernity. *History: The Last Things Before The Last* (1969) was a philosophy of history published posthumously.

These writings, especially the two books on film, have characterised Kracauer as a realist film theorist. The reduction in this label stems in part, as various introductions of Kracauer have shown, to the long disappearance of Kracauer's earlier work of the 1920s and 1930s, his articles and essays published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Tom Levin, Getrud Koch and Miriam Hansen have all in different ways defended Kracauer against the reductionist charge of realist film critic, arguing that his later work on film has to be studied and understood in relation to his early Weimar writings.⁸ It is this early work that situates Kracauer's thinking on film in relation to wider readings of epistemology and culture; it allows us to see Kracauer, as he himself would have wanted, as a film thinker, but also as a sociologist, philosopher, poet and novelist.

Kracauer's work as a film theorist has been misjudged. He did not see film as offering a literal view of the world: film as a window on to life. His interest lay in film's ability to capture the phenomenology of everyday life: a reality which is never completely subjective or objective but is always moving between the two. Getrud Koch, Miriam Hansen and Heide Schlüppman are key theorists who emphasise the early phenomenology of Kracauer's writing.⁹ Schlüppman discusses how the strength and vitality of the Weimar essays lies in their phenomenological nature: their deconstruction and reflection of everyday life. In his famous *Photography* essay Kracauer reveals how photography is different from history in that it preserves spatial rather than temporal continuity. The camera's spatial reproduction has a negative role, 'the go-for-broke game of history' deconstructing the memory image, revealing a 'nature devoid of meaning'. And it is this void, the impossibility of photography re-capturing or representing the significance of either individuals or history that provides recognition of alienation. Photography has the ability to freeze time and make it eternal; but it is nevertheless in its negative role that it confronts us. So, although photographs as surface phenomena are empty of meaning and history, they also show us exactly what history leaves out, opening up to us the nature or myth that destroys all historical context and significance.

Schlüppman points out the connection between Kracauer's early essay on photography and his later thesis *Theory of Film*. The difference between his early and his later work is that, in the Weimar years, Kracauer saw photography as a 'gamble' of history that could possibly redeem historical catastrophe through its negative revelation of what lay masked or hidden. By the time he writes *Theory of Film* the holocaust has happened and that redemption is a lost dream. Schlüppman notes how it is only the glum prophesies of the early photography essay that are eventually proven:

With the transition from late capitalism to fascist society, precisely what had become conceivable in Weimar occurred: nature 'sat down at the table' that consciousness had vacated.¹⁰

8. Thomas Y. Levin, 'Introduction' to Siegfried Kracauer's *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. T. Levin, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press; Getrud Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction*, J. Gaines (trans), Princeton University Press, 2000; Miriam Hansen, 'Introduction', Siegfried Kracauer's *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, Princeton University Press, 1997.

9. Getrud Koch, op. cit; Miriam Hansen 'Decentric Perspectives: Kracauer's Early Writings on Film and Mass Culture', *New German Critique*, 54 (Fall 1991): 47-76; Heide Schlüppman 'Phenomenology of Film: On Siegfried Kracauer's Writings of the 1920s', *New German Critique*, 40, (Winter 1987): 96-113.

10. Schlüppman, op. cit, p113.

11. Getrud Koch, "“Not yet accepted anywhere”: Exile, Memory and Image in Kracauer’s Conception of History”, *New German Critique*, 54, (Fall 1991): 95-109.

Theory of Film poses the challenge of finding a context for film after Auschwitz. As Getrud Koch points out, the holocaust seems to be missing from Kracauer’s philosophy of history, and yet Kracauer is intent in revealing its horror through film.¹¹ We cannot understand Kracauer’s later *Theory of Film* without also grasping the question of representation, both in film and after Auschwitz. *Theory of Film* is concerned with the nature of ‘physical reality’ and the critics who have seen the book as representative of an untroubled, positive realism have failed to take into account the phenomenology that informed Kracauer’s earlier Weimar essays; a phenomenology that has not been abandoned in the later film project even though the historical stakes of such analysis have been altered.

Many critics have commented on the shift between Kracauer’s early and late work, emphasising the positive attention to phenomenological reality in his early essays and often being more critical of his later, more abstract work. Thomas Elsaesser divides Kracauer’s early political writings in Germany from the later ones written in exile in America. For Elsaesser, *From Caligari To Hitler* is disappointing and shows how Kracauer has swapped his earlier emphasis on dialectics for a reductive sociology and conservative humanism. Schlüpmann thinks that Kracauer’s late work is flawed by generalised abstractions and she contrasts this to his earlier work, which displays, in her view, a much more detailed phenomenological reflection on everyday life:

In *From Caligari To Hitler* and *Theory of Film*, Kracauer’s tendency to generalize, to subsume particulars within conceptual constructs, presents an obstacle to the expression of his ideas. The strength of the essays in the 1920s lies in their phenomenological procedure, their taking up of individual manifestations of daily life and dwelling upon them reflectively.¹²

12. Schlüpmann. op. cit, p98.

Adorno attributes Kracauer’s life circumstances in exile as a reason for his increasing conservatism. Although, we should remember here, that it is in his relation to Kracauer, that Adorno’s own conservative position, as an insider, seems in most need of protection. Patrice Petro, importantly, underlines how we must also take into account the changing institutional context for Kracauer: his move from Europe to America and from writing journalism to film theory. This was further complicated by the lack of an established audience for *Caligari* and *Theory of Film* as Film Studies was not institutionalised in the academy until the 1950s and 1960s. When Film Studies did eventually arrive in Universities in the 1970s Kracauer’s work was dismissed as naïve realism when compared with the increasing popularity of poststructuralist and formalist film theory. With the publication of his earlier Weimar essays, the significance of Kracauer’s work is increasingly accepted in contemporary critical theory. Comparisons are now made between his analysis of the mass ornament and the analysis of spatial flows and spectacle that make up our contemporary global, information society.

Perhaps, though, it is a mistake to celebrate Kracauer's early, explicitly phenomenological essays over his later more theoretical writings. Even as these late texts appear abstract and more conceptual in nature, they are in reality confronting the intellectualised and abstract thinking associated with out-of-date ideas. Kracauer's phenomenological reading in *Theory of Film* is indeed very contemporary in its exploration of an embodied spectator who is mimetically and somatically indistinct from the filmic object or image. Although *Theory of Film* is a difficult text to read, frustratingly dense and contradictory, it is actually pointing to a phenomenological reading of film as a lived, indivisible spatial and temporal dynamic: one that challenges so many theories of both linear time and abstract space. Kracauer's last text, aptly named *History: The Last things before the Last* is very similar to *Theory of Film* in its phenomenological search for a retrieval of history from either the truth of the philosophical idea or the positivist and natural laws of the body. Kracauer writes that 'The historian must steer his way between the Scylla of philosophical speculations and their wholesale meanings and the Charybdis of the sciences with their nature laws and regularities'.¹³

It is perhaps not altogether surprising, then, that Kracauer takes his own autobiographical status - the image of the exile and the wandering Jew, as emblematic of the historiographer who can capture the particular and concrete phenomenology of history. The historian has to adapt and identify with the surface of the world he wishes to investigate, and to do this he has to be a stranger: someone whose subjectivity is radically undone and effaced, so that he has the capability of mutating mimetically into the landscape of objects he inhabits, reconstituting himself anew, as self and as other, each time.

The essays in this issue present a new and valuable perspective on the life and writings of Siegfried Kracauer in the sense that they move with the spirit of the man in their attention to the various interdisciplinary themes of his thinking. This collection travels from an early attention to the surface phenomenology of Kracauer's Weimar essays to his later more abstract works on film and history, providing new readings of familiar debates as well as original avenues that have been hitherto unexplored.

The first two articles return to Kracauer's early focus on the phenomenology of urban spaces in Weimar culture, revealing just how important Kracauer's analysis of surface phenomena was to his critique of capitalist culture and reminding us of the contemporary significance of his endeavours. John Allen's essay 'The Cultural Spaces of Siegfried Kracauer: The Many Spaces of Berlin' returns us to the early influence on Kracauer of Georg Simmel. Allen distinguishes his reading from David Frisby, who thinks that Kracauer's investigation of surface phenomena masks a deeper, hidden reality. For Allen, surface is meaning and Kracauer's preoccupation with surface phenomena, the spatial artefacts and hieroglyphs of Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s, is important because it shows the meaning of culture, not as something tucked away inside the individual, some deep structure, the Freudian unconscious, but located in allegorical readings of the ordinary. Allen

13. Siegfried Kracauer, op. cit, p45.

brings Kracauer's earlier analysis of Berlin's montage of everyday objects into a cultural geography of the present, located in close-up images and the spaces of modern Berlin, illuminating how the surface phenomena of our current age of global capitalism are both described and critically deciphered.

Esther Leslie's 'Kracauer's Weimar Geometry and Geomancy' looks at the cityscapes inhabited by Kracauer in the 1920s and 1930s from a Marxist perspective, extending and exploring his analysis of the mass ornament. Like Allen, Leslie focuses on the urban spaces of Berlin, but also on Marseilles, and yet she reads these spaces, not through the play of surface or their illumination in the close-up image, but as lines and geometry. The geometry of urban space thus becomes a rational abstraction that hides the irrational myths that lie at the heart of capitalist culture. The geometric lines of the Tiller Girls or soldiers marching to war are captured by the lines of city-space. In contrast to Allen's essay, where surface and meaning coincide, for Leslie, the surface geometry of the city joins up with the core capitalist myth of an irrational and unknowable human nature. These mysterious and soulless myths resurface as the unconscious and memory-less streets of Berlin in Kracauer's writing. And so although film can become the way to retrieve these lost meanings or ghosts, paradoxically film and cinema space, like city space, also become constantly reconfigured or aligned back into mass ornamental rationality. The geometric surfaces of the entertainment industry, masquerade to hide more critical meaning and memory.

James Donald explores the mass ornament in relation to the Tiller Girls in Berlin, comparing Kracauer's analysis of the Tiller Girls with the famous dancer Josephine Baker to provide a reading of their dance in relation to the cultural history of the period. Whereas Kracauer reads the Tiller Girls in relation to a hieroglyphic representation of abstract, rational capitalism, Donald reads Baker's '*danse sauvage*' in relation to the historical forces and events that shaped it. Exploring Baker's embodied performance and role as a Star, and imagining how the cosmopolitan audiences of the time would have responded to her, in both a historical and psychological sense, gives us a glimpse, as readers, of what Kracauer's hieroglyphic analysis might have missed. Donald highlights the ways in which Kracauer's investigation of the collective mental dispositions displayed by film within Weimar culture (for example in *From Caligari To Hitler*) might have been utilised in studying the audience of Baker's dance.

Kracauer's relationship with Marxism was fluid. He was both cognisant of its strengths as cultural critique and critical of the weaknesses of economism. The next two essays elaborate new Marxist and cultural perspectives in relation to the historical, critical debate on Kracauer's famous 'Photography' essay. Steve Giles' 'Making Visible, Making Strange: Photography and Representation in Kracauer, Brecht and Benjamin' traces the aesthetics of photography in the 1920s that inform Kracauer's famous essay, and explores how Kracauer's thinking on photography moves between mimesis and Art. If photography represents a natural and mimetic realism then it cannot be Art,

but if, as Kracauer seems to say in the last sections of his essay, photography can be redeemed for the purposes of Art and History then it becomes a radically anti-mimetic medium. Kracauer's almost contradictory position between Expressionist and Formalist aesthetics, offers in Giles' view, a Marxist aesthetics of photographic realism, similar to Adorno, and anticipating Brecht and Benjamin, where realist expression and formalist montage coincide.

Elena Gualtieri's 'The Territory of Photography: Between Modernity and Utopia in Kracauer's Thought' tracks a Marxist historiography in Kracauer's thinking, opening up a debate between Kracauer and literary modernism, and concentrating particularly on Proust's famous grandmother (in *In Search of Lost Time*) and Kafka's 'The Truth about Sancho Panza'. Tracing Kracauer's modernist notion of photography, as a signifier of alienated mass consciousness to its role in *Theory of Film*, as an aesthetics redeeming the modern condition, Gualtieri reveals a crucial shift between Kracauer's early view of photography as a material technology of social reality and its later role in redeeming physical reality (and our homelessness) from the intellectual abstraction of technological capitalism. Using *History: the Last Things Before the Last* Gualtieri argues for a third reading of the role of photography, not as negative alienation from physical reality, but as a Utopian exile from the flow of time and certainty, found in the extra-territorial and immaterial state of flux, existing between ideologies, so subverting any certain grasp of the real.

Responding to the current reception of Kracauer within contemporary film theory, the next two essays reveal how Kracauer's work can be seen to anticipate current issues of the 'real': the questions about representation posed by digital technology that so occupy debates today on film, globalisation and our relationship to territory and history. Janet Harbord's 'Contingency's work: Kracauer's Theory of Film and the trope of the accidental', discusses the importance of the contingent and the accidental as tropes in Kracauer's thinking on cinema and modernism. Both, she argues, enable us to understand the socio-historical formation of the subject and his or her relation to physicality and chance. These tropes also show us the important ways contingency works in relation to current digital media. If the temporal structures of cinema and modernity are a way of managing risk (film is both reassuring and startling), then the role of contingency is also directly relevant to debates on film and late capitalism, except its return here is not as some dialectical interplay with rationality, but more worryingly as a dominant force attached to the irrational. Within our current digital era, the contingent enters our apparatuses of cinematic production, interrogating its foundations and destabilising relations between image and viewer. However, if the contingency of film can no longer be read in opposition to modes of rationalisation then its currency as a critical and sensuous possibility becomes less clear. Kracauer makes us see how the very historical categories of understanding contingency and film are themselves subject to change and chance.

In some crucial ways Barry Langford's 'The Strangest of Station Names':

Changing Trains with Kracauer and Benjamin' shares affinities with Giles' essay on aesthetics, in that both writers trace the inextricable relationship between realism and representation in Kracauer's work, although for Langford the emphasis is on film, rather than photography. Langford's essay explores the shared interest of Kracauer and Benjamin in film's ability to reveal urban landscapes and the historical reality that lies obscured by capitalist modernity. Mapping Kracauer's ambivalent response to film and modernity through the metaphor of the railway, Langford reads two films: Walter Ruttmann's 1927 montage documentary *Berlin: The Symphony of a Great City*, produced before World War Two; and Claude Lanzmann's famous post-war film *The Shoah*. Langford provides a complex understanding of the concepts of realism and formalism in Kracauer's *Theory of Film*, showing us how Kracauer's claim for the redemption of physical reality in this book is at best ambiguous, because there is also a formative tendency at work, one which makes his writing conform less to a 'naïve realism' and more to a tragic poetics of the real.

The themes of realism and formalism, Marxist ideology and cultural history, the relationship of urban space and film to knowledge and contingency are never ones that seem to keep to their traditional place, and this makes Kracauer a very postmodern figure, not just because of his very contemporary significance but also because of the way he questions any linear passing of time and history. 'Urban Optics: Film, Phantasmagoria and the City in Benjamin and Kracauer', by Graeme Gilloch, also focuses on the film optics of urban modernity. Gilloch's essay links several of the other essays in this issue through the emphasis on cityscapes with debates on film and contingency and, in so doing, anticipating the focus in the concluding essays on a cultural unconscious. Gilloch explores how a distracted social imaginary operates to link film and architecture in Benjamin's work and to separate them within Kracauer's. We see how Marxist dialectics are again rewritten in Kracauer's understanding of the contingent relation between film and urban landscape. For Kracauer distinguishes his ideas from the more montage orientated, dialectical shock of Benjamin's urban optics, by defining the distraction of these metropolitan dream-worlds as radical only when improvisational.

The last two essays in the collection are concerned with the nature of the unconscious in Kracauer's writings on culture and film, specifically the links between his work and the social psychology of The Frankfurt School. They provide new perspectives on the social psychology of Kracauer's writings and are significant, perhaps because it is the psychological analysis, particularly in Kracauer's *From Caligari To Hitler*, that has been most harshly castigated as conservative and essentialist. Jan Campbell's 'Are Your Dreams Wishes or Desires? Hysteria as Distraction and Character in the work of Siegfried Kracauer', reads Kracauer's work in relation to psychoanalysis and the historical image, linking Kracauer's cultural and distracted unconscious to a more phenomenological reading of the Oedipal Complex. In Campbell's view, Kracauer's work opens up a way of thinking about the intrinsic relation

between psychoanalysis and history, through its understanding of the unconscious as a movement of distracted experience. As historical, rather than timeless, this experience becomes fixed as hysterical disassociation, or flows as a more creative contingency where the (hys)torical object can be imaginatively re-invented and remembered. Linking Kracauer's ideas with those of Erich Fromm, Campbell argues that Kracauer counters the sociologising of the unconscious in Fromm's work through his attention to the bodily contingency of the drives, which constitute a more mobile correspondence between the psyche and the real of history.

Graeme Gilloch and Jaeho Kang's 'Below the Surface: Siegfried Kracauer's "Test-Film" Project' returns to a short, twenty-minute screenplay by Kracauer, dating from 1945, part of a social psychological experiment measuring anti-Semitism among American audiences of the propaganda and prejudice studies carried out by the American Jewish Committee and the Frankfurt School. The screenplay examined the social-psychological implications of media forms such as film in mobilising the masses for modern warfare. Gilloch and Kang show how Kracauer's screenplay tests audience reactions and in doing so is instrumental in proving his film theory. Film is not just an *expression* of the cultural unconscious; it also becomes a tool in eliciting its invisible contents. Furthermore, film addresses the unconscious wishes of the audience but also demonstrates the collective unconscious that is at work in its production. Thus film is never just the work of one individual but is always the creative production of a team of artists and technicians. As such, it is an expression of a social and collective mentality.