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Kafkaesque cinema in the context of Post-fascism

Introduction: Some thoughts on the Kafkaesque and post-fascism.

The aim of this essay is to examine Kafkaesque cinema within the historical context of post-fascism. Taking as a starting point that Kafkaesque cinema needs to be understood beyond its association with an apolitical aesthetics of mood, I suggest that the Kafkaesque cinematic aesthetic is rooted in Kafka's critique of modernity, but it also extends beyond his work and his historical experiences. Such an approach can enable us to understand the global dimension of the Kafkaesque as it emerges in different geographical spaces and historical periods as a response to the long crisis of liberalism that extends from the late nineteenth century to the present. Here, I intend to focus on Kafkaesque cinema as a response to historical conditions of post-fascism, a term which I will qualify below, through the close reading of three films: Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister harmóniák* (*Werckmeister Harmonies*, 2000), and Christian Petzold's *Transit* (2018). Important interlocutors in the essay are the Hungarian philosopher Gáspár Miklós Tamás and the Italian historian Enzo Traverso; both understand post-fascism as a contemporary mutation of classical fascism, but simultaneously as a historical phenomenon that perpetuates the latter's hostility to the Enlightenment. Drawing on their work, I demonstrate how the films' Kafkaesque aesthetic and themes invite us to consider the link between post-fascism and the defeat of radicalized Enlightenment thought.

Before analyzing the films, a series of definitions and clarifications on the Kafkaesque and post-fascism are in order. The term Kafkaesque cinema is frequently used but it has rarely been subjected to any thorough conceptualization leading many scholars to use it interchangeably for an aesthetics of obscurity. Typical in this respect is Jeffrey Adams' definition of the Kafkaesque as "that strange blend of nightmare absurdity and theatrical farce."[1] Adams rightly suggests that the concept of the Kafkaesque extends beyond the

literary output of Kafka. What is striking in his understanding of the term is a sense of ahistorical universality as evidenced by his conclusion that the Kafkaesque refers to "a dark vision of alienation and despair in a world devoid of truth."[2] Of note, here is the refusal to explain what the features of this "world" are and their historical, social, particularity.

Similarly, in James Naremore's celebrated study on film noir, one encounters terms such as "Kafkaesque guilt", "Kafkaesque gathering", "Kafkaesque mise-en-scène", "Kafkaesque abstraction," "Kafkaesque atmosphere of paranoia and black comedy,"[3] that are treated as self-explanatory concepts that deserve no further scrutiny. Shai Biderman and Ido Lewit understand Kafkaesque cinema as a corpus of films that "incorporate and express the unique qualities of Kafka's world."[4] This point nonetheless begs a series of questions not answered by the two authors: what is Kafka's world? Is it something solely related to the perplexing situations we encounter in his fiction? Or is the fictional universe in his work a response to some extra-diegetic historical contradictions and circumstances? Failing to answer these questions prevents us from placing both Kafka's literary output and Kafkaesque cinema into history. Would it not be more productive to be attentive to how certain recurring themes and motifs visible in Kafka's oeuvre frequently described as Kafkaesque such as the disintegration of individuality, the crisis of agency in modernity, the individual's alienation from the community, the fates of individuals at the mercy of officialdom and apparatuses of control, and the critique of Enlightenment rationalism are responses to social and historical contradictions in the extradiegetic world? Otherwise, Kafkaesque cinema becomes an empty shell devoid of critical valence and historical context. For German Studies scholars such as Martin Brady and Helen Hughes, the Kafkaesque becomes a descriptor that exceeds Kafka's output. There is certainly an element of truth to this, even though both authors use the term disparagingly to criticize Orson Welles' adaptation of the *Trial* (1962), which they deem to be unfaithful to the source text and closer to a Kafkaesque cinematic tradition, whose

characteristics they do not clarify.[5] Without using the term "Kafkaesque cinema," András Bálint Kovács and Peter Hames have discussed the Bohemian author's influence on Central European cinema, especially the Hungarian and the Czechoslovak New Waves.[6] They link this influence to the particular historical experiences of the countries that emerged from the former Austro-Hungarian empire, but again the concept of Kafkaesque cinema comes as an afterthought in their analyses of the films.

Evidently, considering the ambiguity and elasticity of the term, it is no surprise that its deployment by film scholars tends to raise more questions than offer satisfying answers. One senses that the concept functions as a universal descriptor without precise connection with historical issues. Before delving into a definition of Kafkaesque cinema it is useful here to recall that Kafka's modernism cannot be dissociated from the crisis of nineteenth century liberalism following the 1873 Long Depression, whose effects became much more visible in the first decades of the twentieth century and, as Enzo Traverso explains, led to an "intimate mixture of total wars and civil wars that shaped the continuity of the period from 1914 to 1945."[7] The nineteenth century belief in economic liberalism and progress and the hundred-year peace (starting in1815) collapsed; this led to challenges to the liberal order from the nationalist right and the rising international socialism. The crisis of representation that characterizes Kafka's works can be seen as a response to the growing disbelief in bourgeois liberalism and progress. Historians have also noted how liberalism was in the first decades of the twentieth century under pressure by the growth of the wartime economy and the 1929 recession that paved the way for the rise of fascism. Traverso notes that "a century of war" "put an end to the age of peace, liberalism, parliamentarism, progress"[8] while Eric Hobsbawm explains that following 1914, "bourgeois liberalism was entirely at a loss."[9]

This crisis of liberalism is also relevant when it comes to the flourishing of modernism in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, whose collapse Kafka witnessed.

Historians have noted that the bankruptcy of liberalism led to the rise of nationalism that continued after the Empire's collapse. At the same time, the disbelief in the promises of liberalism led also to the flowering of a left-wing culture as evidenced in the works of Hermann Bahr, Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannstahl, and Kafka. John W. Mason comments that the growing disbelief in human rationality and the stability of social and civic institutions had a huge impact and "writers and artists turned to the individual in isolation from his social surroundings."[10] In these terms, this emphasis on social alienation operated as a political critique that undermined liberal principles, such as the self-determined individual and the understanding of history as progress.

This historical context can encourage us to rethink the opacity that characterizes Kafka's texts and their emphasis on individuals estranged from society and communal life as historical responses to the crisis of liberalism. After all, Kafka is one of the key figures in the canon of literary modernism and it is now well established in modernist studies that there is a connection between modernism and the crisis of liberalism.[11] Kafka's texts contain the seeds of critique of the nineteenth century belief in progress as an evolutionary trajectory of social improvement. Pascale Casanova has emphasized how his texts are distrustful of social institutions, the legitimacy of the justice system, and the law;[12] furthermore, his disbelief in progress as something static that simply declares the superiority of bourgeois liberalism is embodied in one of his famous aphorisms stating: "Belief in progress doesn't mean belief in progress that has already occurred. That would not require belief."[13] Evident in this aphorism is a negative dialectic that refutes the nineteenth-century understanding of progress as a deterministic process. Certainly, in Kafka one encounters themes of individual alienation something that tallies with the left and right-wing modernists who cast doubt on the liberal view of the individual as the basis of social identity and responsibility. But what is certainly missing in his texts is the belief in a heroic striving that can offer an exit from the impasse of

history. An important consequence of this is that Kafka's works anticipate a world where even counter-liberal responses to the liberal deadlock cannot necessarily guarantee a path to progress.

This has been aptly captured by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their seminal study on the author, where they declare that his alienated characters need to be seen as embodiments of collective forces. His work anticipates the historical horror of "Fascism, Stalinism, Americanism, diabolical powers that are knocking at the door."[14] Interestingly, in this grouping of reactionary forms of political governance, they include anti-liberal movements, e.g. fascism and Stalinism, but also Americanism, that is late capitalism, which is a product of liberalism, a liberalism that is so hegemonic that becomes undemocratic, a point that tallies with the post-fascist historical experience that I discuss below.

Writing in 1951, Jorge Luis Borges suggested that Kafka "will modify our conception of the past as it will modify the future."[15] For Borges, Kafka's work then would be a key to reevaluating many of his precursors and successors too. This understanding of the Kafkaesque as something that goes beyond Kafka has been recently elaborated by literary scholars commenting on the Bohemian author's legacy. Iris Bruce and Mark H. Gelber argue that if following Borges, we may be able to understand some of Kafka's precursors as Kafkaesque authors, then in a similar vein, we can "identify an entire "Kafka after Kafka" corpus."[16] Bruce and Gelber accurately suggest that this "corpus" is expansive and includes authors, who are very different from one another such as Philip Roth, J. M. Coetzee, W. G. Sebald, Sally Clark, Kobo Abe, Haruki Murakami, and many others. These writers develop and transform motifs, themes, situations, as well as stylistic traits encountered in Kafka's fiction. Yet, it would be inaccurate to say that they share the same formal and stylistic features as each one draws on Kafka's lessons in different ways.

Still, what remains unexplored is whether this rethinking of the Kafkaesque as something that precedes and succeeds Kafka can be understood historically, namely as something that gives prominence to a Kafka politics. This approach aligns itself with recent studies on modernism that challenge canonical periodization with the view to expanding the movement's temporal parameters; modernism in these terms does not solely describe a set of recurring formal characteristics but an attitude that enables us "to critically engage with our present as history."[17] Along these lines, we might want to consider the Kafkaesque as an umbrella term that can describe authors whose works respond to different historical contradictions. For instance, Kafkaesque works by Andrei Platonov, and Yevgeny Zamyatin, such as *Котлован, kotlovan* (*The Foundation Pit*, 1930) and *Мы* (*We,* 1924), are responses to the failures of the Russian Revolution and the impending Stalinist horror; texts by Anna Seghers, Peter Weiss and Imre Kertész influenced by Kafka such as *Transit* (1944), *Der neue Prozeß* (*The New Trial*, 1982), and *Sorstalanság* (*Fateless*, 1975) are responses to a European anti-fascist tradition and the Holocaust. At the same time, authors of the likes of László Krasznahorkai and Szilárd Borbély ruminate on the vast inequalities and renewed historical pressures following the collapse of Communism in Hungary. In South America, the Kafkaesque aesthetic of writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Roberto Bolaño can be seen as a response to histories marred by underdevelopment, enforced dictatorships, and their economic dependency to the core Western economies.

In expanding the historical parameters of the Kafkaesque, we can understand it as a critical category that responds to the crisis of the nineteenth century liberalism in its longue durée; this crisis has been hitherto unresolved as demonstrated by the historical landscape of the twentieth and twenty-first century. The term longue durée is associated with Fernand Braudel's ground-breaking 1958 essay, where he recommends a different approach to history that is not restricted to the study of isolated historical episodes; instead, he asks us to consider

the wider structures that permeate different historical periods. He describes structure as "a reality that time can only slowly erode, one that goes on for a long time. Certain structures, in their long life, become the stable elements of an infinity of generations."[18] We are tempted here to deem the crisis of liberalism as a Braudelian structure that extends far beyond the first half of the twentieth century and allows us to understand the concept of Kafkaesque cinema historically. If, as Borges and contemporary scholars note, there is a Kafkaesque literature before and after Kafka then there is a Kafkaesque cinema before and after Kafka too.

The term describes modernist films (narrative in scope) that deploy formal complexity, tragicomedy, irony and ambiguity to respond to social/historical contradictions which are:

1. either directly elaborated in Kafka's own work (e.g., labor alienation in texts such as *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*, 1915), and *Der Verschollene* (*Amerika*, 1927); the discrimination against the European Jews and structures of exclusion in the modern world as implied in *Das Schloss* (*The Castle*, 1926), and the link between violence and futile bureaucratic procedures that permeates *Der Prozeß* (*The Trial*, 1925).
2. or anticipated in the author's oeuvre, e.g., the Holocaust, Stalinist terror, the modern culture of surveillance and control (as developed in *The Trial*), anti-democratic liberalism, and climate change (as suggested in *Der Bau* (*The Burrow*, 1931).

In other words, I want to avoid reducing the Kafkaesque to a matter of stylistic eccentricity and reveal it instead as something directly interrelated to questions of history, politics, and aesthetics. Certainly, many of these films deploy excessive mise-en-scènes and a visual style that at times overrides conventional narrative, but this in itself is not the key quality that justifies their categorization as Kafkaesque. The salient implication of my argument is that in

thinking about Kafkaesque cinema we need to put politics at center stage so as to understand it as part of a transnational cinematic tradition that responds to political and historical crises in modern and late modern history. Considering Borge's point, we can deem as Kafkaesque,

i) films concerned with issues of labor alienation and bureaucracy both in the capitalist center and the former socialist states, such as Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), Grigori Kozintsev's *Шинель* (*The Overcoat*, 1926), Ermanno Olmi's *Il Posto* (*The Post*, 1961), Pavel Juráček and Jan Schmidt's *Postava k podpírání* (*Joseph Kilian*, 1963), Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *La muerte de un burócrata* (*The Death of a Bureacrat*, 1966), and Ousmane Sembène's *Mandabi* (*The Money Order*, 1968). *Modern Times*, *The Overcoat*, and *The Post* make use of a bitter, ironic humor as a means of responding to the alienating conditions of modern labor. Here, one notes the much-discussed connection between the Chaplinesque and the Kafkaesque that has preoccupied many commentators on Kafka and cinema. Walter Benjamin was one of the first to suggest that "Chaplin holds in his hands a genuine key to the interpretation of Kafka,"[19] while Kafka himself did not hide his admiration for the major English comedian.[20] Both *The Overcoat* and *The Post* have visible references to a Chaplinesque comic tradition drawing on the portrayal of individuals being at a loss as a consequence of the pointlessness or complexity of labor in modern times, a theme that was significant in Kafka's oeuvre too. The comic mode is used to show the puzzlement of the individual in its clash with machineries of oppression. While in *Modern Times*, the individual is literally subjected to the rigid operations of Taylorized machines, in *The Overcoat* and *The Post* the characters become themselves parts of complex machineries of administration, to which they fail to adapt.

Themes of individual estrangement figure also importantly in *Joseph Kilian*, *The Death of a Bureacrat*, and *The Money Order*, which address the violence of bureaucracy in different political systems: Stalinist Czechoslovakia, post-revolutionary Cuba, and post-

colonial Senegal. These films manipulate the Kafkaesque theme of bureaucracy as a form of social alienation; bureaucracy is pictured as an administrative system committed to the reproduction of its own institutions whose intricate organization refutes accountability. Tragicomedy and bitter humor are the key tropes deployed in these films, where in a typical Kafkaesque fashion, we see characters trying to overcome obstacles hoping that they will find rational solutions to problems emanating from systemic flaws. When they manage to overcome one obstacle, they then face further complex situations which they vainly try to solve giving rise to absurd comic sequences. For example, the pointless pursuit of a relative in *Joseph Kilian*, makes the lead character witness Stalinist disappearances and complex machineries of officialdom; in *The Death of a Bureaucrat*, and *The Money Order*, we follow the characters' aimless attempts to achieve simple things, the recovery of a widow's pension after the death of her husband and the receipt of a money order, in their dealings with convoluted systems of administrators and departments.

ii) films by Hungarian and Czechoslovak New Wave filmmakers reflecting on their own histories of fascist collaboration/occupation and the Stalinization experienced in their post-war societies. Selected works by Péter Bacsó, István Szabó, Zoltán Fábri, Ján Kadár, Jaromil Jireš, Zbyněk Brynych, Pavel Jurácek, and Jan Schmidt fall into this category. Kafka's influence on these filmmakers can be understood historically. Peter Hames explains that in the former Czechoslovakia the rehabilitation of Kafka in the 1963 Liblice Conference, acquainted a new generation of writers and filmmakers with the author's output. Until then, most of the people were mostly oblivious to their compatriot's work due to the imposition of Zhdanovian aesthetic principles. Kafka's work provided them with the impetus to deal with the country's post-war historical contradictions, such as the Jewish persecutions during WWII, the Slánský trial and the Stalinist paranoia that followed, using a dark, absurdist humor.[21] Similarly in Hungary, Kafka's influence is visible in films dealing with the

entrenched Stalinization during the Rákosi era. As Kovács explains, there is something inherently Kafkaesque in the histories of the countries that emerged from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

> The frequent and rapid changes of rules in Central Europe, which were the fundamental experience of peoples of this region during the last couple of hundred years, have developed an ability for quick mental and moral adaptation together with appreciation for a stable order regardless of its form or content. Individual autonomy standing up to the order is painfully missing from this experience.[22]

What makes the case of the Czechoslovakian and the Hungarian New Wave interesting is that some of these films were adaptations of texts from authors deeply influenced by Kafka something that shows how their Kafkaesque aesthetic derived from a broader dialogue between Kafkaesque literature and cinema. This is for instance the case in Zoltán Fábri's *Hannibál tanár úr* (*Professor Hannibal*, 1956), which is an adaptation of Ferenc Móra's *Hannibal Feltamasztasa* (*Hannibal Resurrected*, 1955), Jaromil Jireš' Zert (*The Joke*, 1969), which is based on Milan Kundera's 1967 Kafka-inspired homonymous novel, and Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos' *Obchod na korze* (*The Shop on Main Street*, 1965), which is a free adaptation of Ladislav Grosman's novel *Past* (*The Trap*, 1962).

iii) films that deploy formal complexity to reflect on histories of reactionary modern political movements including the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, e.g., Fernando Arrabal's *Viva La Muerte* (*Long Live Death*, 1971), twentieth century dictatorships in South America, e.g., Hugo Santiago's *Invasión* (1969), Raúl Ruiz's *La Colonia Penal* (*The Penal Colony*, 1970), and the legacy of the Holocaust, e.g., Wojciech Jerzy Has' *Sanatorium pod klepsydrą* (*The Hourglass Sanatorium*,1973). These films portray fascism and its legacies in different parts of the globe using formal and stylistic tropes that allude to surrealism and Kafka. Again, there is a commingling between cinema and literature. For instance, Arrabal's *Viva la Muerte* (*Long Live Death*, 1971) is an adaptation of his semi-autobiographical text *Baal Babylon* (1959); the film evokes his Kafka and Artaud-influenced panic theatre, which

aspired to bridge the real with the imaginary so as to reflect on the troubled historical reality of the twentieth century.[23] Hugo Santiago's *Invasión* is co-written by two major figures of Argentinian literature and Kafka enthusiasts Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares; its convoluted narrative of an imaginary city under siege by menacing forces foreshadows Argentina's post-war history of Western-orchestrated military coups. Raúl Ruiz's *The Penal Colony* is a very loose adaptation of Kafka's homonymous text, which, however, only takes it as a starting point to tell a totally different story of South American forced underdevelopment and neocolonial conditions of existence. Ruiz once commented that "Kafka is a Latin American Writer," precisely because of the troubled histories of military coups and imposed underdevelopment faced by countries in the region.[24] Finally, Has' *The Hourglass Sanatorium* is an adaptation of Bruno Schultz's (widely known as the Polish Kafka) homonymous novel, which was written before the Holocaust and contained "Messianic imagery and themes" reflecting on the Polish Jewish condition.[25] The film adaptation has retained much of the text's complexity but has accumulated a different meaning as a post-Holocaust elegy.

iv) films concerned with questions of surveillance and the crisis of individual agency in late capitalism such as Nikos Nikolaidis' *Γλυκιά Συμμορία* (*Sweet Bunch*, 1983), John Hillcoat's *Ghosts… of the Civil Dead* (1988), and Jeff Renfroe & Marteinn Thorsso's *Paranoia 1.0* (2004). These films develop Kafkaesque themes of surveillance and picture late modernity as an era where the boundaries between the public and the private have been confounded. In Nikolaidis' film surveillance operates as a means of political suppression on the part of state institutions alarmed by a group of young people with no concrete political ideology, who react against the imperatives of capitalist reason and socialization. *Ghosts… of the Civil Dead* is set within the confines of a maximum-security prison in Australia, where surveillance is used as a behaviorist instrument that perpetuates further securitization and a

constant state of emergency. The film is a commentary on neoliberal policies, which are committed to the growth of the prison–industrial complex. Surveillance in these terms, challenges the neat boundaries between observing and observed subjects. Finally, *Paranoia 1.0* also points to the link between surveillance and behaviorism and pictures a world that recalls what Shoshana Zuboff calls "surveillance capitalism," a term which describes practices of digital behaviorism on the part of contemporary corporations as a means of predicting future consumer patters.[26] In the spirit of Kafka, these films demonstrate the growing convergence between surveillance and the crisis of individual agency in modernity.

v) films addressing the post-Communist uncertainty following the defeat of the narrative of radicalized Enlightenment. Selected films by Béla Tarr, Fred Kelemen, and Christian Petzold belong to this category. Running throughout the work of these directors is a sense of modernist belatedness, which is intricately linked with the revivification of a slow cinematic aesthetic of minimalism, long duration, and *temps morts* associated with post-war modernist cinema. This aesthetic slowness has made a comeback precisely because modernism's critique of the liberal concept of freedom becomes relevant again. This is the case in Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* – of which more below – and Sátántangó. The Kafkaesque quality of these films is also the product of their literary source-texts by László Krasznahorkai but also of their pessimistic portrayal of history, which is pictured as a repetition of failures rather than as a progressive route to progress. The same applies to Fred Kelemen's *Frost* (1997) and Christian Petzold's *Transit* (2018), which I discuss later on.

vi) and films evoking the Anthropocene crisis such as Ferdinand Khittl's *Die Parallelstrasse* (*The Parallel Street*, 1962), Jia Zhangke's *三峡好人*(*Still Life*, 2006), and Peter Brosens & Jessica Woodworth's *La Cinquième Saison* (*The Fifth Season*, 2012). These films deploy Kafkaesque themes, such as the critique of logocentrism in *The Parallel Street*, the motif of metamorphosis in *The Fifth Season*, and the individuals' inability to orientate

themselves in late modernity in *Still Life*, where Zhangke's film seems to suggest that current modes of production literally exhaust workers and the planet's resources.[27] All of them address the Anthropocene crisis by pointing to the dialectical affinity between Enlightenment and counter- Enlightenment, reason and unreason.

From the aforementioned examples, we can see how many films labelled as Kafkaesque are in dialogue with literary source texts by diverse authors such as, Arrabal, Kundera, Krasznahorkai, Seghers and others, who owe a lot to Kafka. This enjoins us to consider the interconnection between Kafkaesque cinema and literature. Robert Stam has recently commented that contra to what many contemporary film scholars think "the Worlds of Literature and Cinema are thoroughly commingled" and cinema scholarship is weakened when we ignore its relationship to its sister art.[28] Taking a cue from this point, let me stress that any discussion of Kafkaesque cinema cannot ignore its debt to Kafkaesque literature after Kafka.

The list of films mentioned above is far from being exhaustive and it is worth underscoring that Kafkaesque cinema, like Kafkaesque literature, is an expansive term and does not refer to films characterized by stylistic and formal uniformity. Many of the above-mentioned filmmakers consciously manipulate Kafkaesque themes, whereas others are heirs to his literary tradition despite being less acquainted with his work. In an essay published in 1948, André Bazin suggested that certain literary traditions and themes exceed the authors and the texts out of which they originate. As he says, "Don Quixote and Gargantua dwell in the consciousness of millions of people who have never had any direct or complete contact with the works of Cervantes and Rabelais".[29] Something analogous applies to Kafka, whose work has inspired a global Kafkaesque tradition of cinema that goes beyond his own texts. In addressing the link between Kafkaesque cinema and the crisis of liberalism in its longue

durée we can start thinking beyond statist periodization and consider how prior aesthetic responses to social crises might be pertinent in different moments and places in history.[30]

The key contradiction of liberalism even in its heydays was that although it aimed to extend the liberal values and institutions, it operated by means of structural exclusions, such as the working classes in the capitalist metropoles and the colonized populations in the colonies, which experienced a forced underdevelopment that still affects them in the present. The failure of Communism, which as Traverso rightly asserts was like liberalism – and unlike fascism – a child of the Enlightenment, has rendered contemporary liberalism complacent willing to adopt anti-liberal tactics, such as the militarization of law enforcement and borders, torture, abrogation of individual privacy, the standardization of surveillance practices, and an anti-Enlightenment rhetoric that naturalizes economic and social inegalitarianism. In other words, contemporary liberal democracies rely on illiberal policies paving the way to counter-liberal projects that challenge once again the Enlightenment tradition.

It is in this context that we can understand the historical experience of post-fascism that renders the Kafkaesque aesthetic pertinent again. My understanding of the term is informed by the work of Gáspár Miklós Tamás and Enzo Traverso. According to Tamás, post-fascism describes the present historical experience when contemporary fascism does not operate as a form of counter-revolution against international Socialism as it was the case with its twentieth century precursor. Importantly, for Tamás contemporary liberal democracies are post-fascist ones because they have undermined "the Enlightenment idea of universal citizenship," according to which every individual irrespective of race, class, origin, gender, and nationality should be part of the civic community. Socialist internationalism embodied this desire to complete the Enlightenment project that could not be realized in bourgeois societies. This project was based on the idea of liberating individuals through the eventual

abolition of entrenched privilege; instead, contemporary societies function through the maintenance of privilege domestically and internationally.

As he says,

> Citizenship is today the very exceptional privilege of the inhabitants of flourishing capitalist nation-states, while the majority of the world's population cannot even begin to aspire to the civic condition, and has also lost the relative security of pre-state (tribe, kinship) protection. The scission of citizenship and sub-political humanity is now complete, the work of Enlightenment irretrievably lost. Post-fascism does not need to put non-citizens into freight trains to take them into death; instead, it need only prevent the new non-citizens from boarding any trains that might take them into the happy world of overflowing rubbish bins that could feed them.[31]

Post-fascism, therefore, refers to the reversibility of the Enlightenment project from within. It does not simply indicate, although it includes them, the reemergence of extreme right movements across the globe.

For Enzo Traverso, post-fascism is the consequence of the defeat of Socialism. The "anti-politics" of the far-right poses the only alternative to the present system. Ironically, this "anti-politics" is the product of the anti-politics of contemporary neo-liberalism that assumes that electoral changes should not be accompanied by changes in economic policies, to which no alternative should be envisioned.[32] To put it simply, the challenge of the contemporary political landscape is that hostility to the Enlightenment project does not solely arise from the far right, but from the liberal center itself.

The Curves of Time: *La Jetée*, *Werckmeister Harmonies*, *Transit*.

The reason for choosing the specific films to discuss Kafkaesque cinema in the context of post-fascism rests not only on their common deployment of Kafkaesque themes, but also due to their use of anachronism, which operates as a means of thinking the aftereffects of twentieth century fascism and its legacy in the present. While *Werckmeister Harmonies* and *Transit* are twenty-first century films and therefore closer to the temporal reality of post-fascism as articulated by Tamás and Traverso, Marker's *La Jetée* envisions a future world

that has abandoned the Enlightenment belief in a liberated future and is obsessed by the hangover of the Holocaust and the colonial disciplinary methods of torture. The film's eschatological imagery of the future and its obsession with the past are not to be seen just as an elegy for twentieth century traumas, but also a cautionary suggestion of the persistent legacies of fascism. Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* is an adaptation of László Krasznahorkai's *Az ellenállás melankóliája* (*The Melancholy of Resistance*, 1989), which takes place in an imaginary Hungarian town in an unspecified time where the residents seem to be stuck into a present deprived of a vision of the future, but also ready to lapse into attitudes and practices that recall the country's fascist past. Petzold's *Transit* is an adaptation of Anna Seghers' homonymous novel that engages with questions of forced migration of European refugees in Marseille trying to flee fascism and hoping to find a sanctuary in North and South America. The film's central strategy of anachronism is that although it is set in the past, it is filmed in the contemporary spaces of Marseille foregrounding a dialectical tension between the history of fascism and the present reality of forced displacements, exile, and militarized border controls in Europe. All films draw on Kafkaesque themes such as the nameless character in *La Jetée* and the system of surveillance and camp detention; Petzold's adaptation of Seghers' novel draws on the trope of mistaken identity and like the novel the film focuses on the meaningless and absurd bureaucratic procedures faced by political refugees. *Werckmeister Harmonies* manipulates a Kafkaesque comic-grotesque aesthetic tradition meditating on the thin boundaries between everyday banality and authoritarian conditioning. Both the source-text and the adaptation are rooted in an Eastern-European Kafkaesque tradition that resorts to irony to respond to Hungary's tumultuous past and present history. This has been aptly formulated by the Hungarian author Szilárd Borbély, who argued that "We Eastern Europeans are all Kafka's sons."[33]

The chronological inconsistency that characterizes *La Jetée* is not just something relevant to the plot but a formal feature too since the film deploys an anachronistic style narrating the story through a series of still images. Marker has called it a *photo-roman* (photo-novel) and striking in this regard is that as the key character needs to go back to the past to get a vision of the future, the director chooses to reflect on an imaginary post-WWIII society by going back to the roots of cinema in photography. The key feature of the photo-novel is its intermediality, since it is hybrid medium at the intersection between literature, visual arts, and cinema. The photo-novel, as Jan Baetens explains, is on the crossroads between innovation and anachronism since it kept on finding creative solutions to its limits by borrowing elements from other popular art forms.[34] Furthermore, the photo-novel placed emphasis on a deictic representational style that stressed the showing of characters and situations and downplayed narrative coherence.

Marker's film utilizes the belated style of the photo-novel while it evokes the tradition of the radical photo-books such as Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Krieg* (*War on War*, 1924) and Bertolt Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* (*War Primer*, 1955), which reflected on the crisis of representation brought about by the mass destruction of WWI and WWII respectively. Both photo-books relied on a style that highlighted the conflict between the images and the texts that accompanied them. The logic of this modernist approach is rooted in a valorization of a style that seeks to subvert the harmonious relationship between images and words. This is also the case in Marker's film, which is set in a camp located in a future post-WWIII devasted Paris, where a man's (Davos Hanich) childhood memory of a woman (Hélène Châtelain) makes him the perfect guinea pig for an experiment in time-travel that can prevent a nuclear catastrophe in the present. In the camp, prisoners are subjected to various experiments that have visual analogies with the WWII concentration camps and the colonial practices of torture. The central character is sent back to the past and after returning to the

camp, he is saved from the people of the future who help him flee incarceration. He then asks to be sent back to the pre-war years only to discover that the image that haunted him and we see in the film's opening was that of his own death.

Of note in the film is the production of narrative gaps produced by the still images, which are sometimes heightened than clarified by the voice-over narration. Although the storyline purports to be focused on the reconstruction of the character's recollection, the boundaries between individual and collective memory seem to be blurred. Commenting on this aspect of *La Jetée*, Jean Louis Schefer suggests that "it borrows its script from the narrative mode of a Kafka."[35] What does Schefer mean here? To answer this question, we need to consider questions of narrative agency and photography. For in Kafka's texts narrative agency is problematized since the narrators are unreliable even when shifting from a third-person perspective to one that sees things from the point of view of the character, as it happens for instance in *The Metamorphosis*. This suggests that the narrators do not function as the objective authorities that can clarify the narrative situations. For instance, they seem unable to offer an explanation or even relevant context for the most absurd situations faced by K in *The Trial* and K in *The Castle*. This dialectic between unreliable narration and narrative complication can be further understood if we consider Kafka's own engagement with photography in his own writings, a medium that fascinated him because of its capacity to simultaneously reveal and distort reality. Carolin Duttlinger explains that Kafka was attracted by this dual function of photography and his texts contain numerous passages that simulate the gaze of a camera; moreover, his narratives include "photographic moments"[36] that are indicative of the narrative impersonality that permeates his stories. For Kafka, engaging with a medium that relies on technological mediation operates as a means of exploring how individuals are "confronted and constructed by impersonal socio-political machineries."[37] In other words, the engagement with photography does not strive for veracity

and objectivity but intensifies the complexity of the narrative and urges one to think about social and political factors that exceed the narrative universe.

Certainly, in *La Jetée* there is a parallel with Kafka both in the lack of objective narration as well as in the use of images as snapshots that point to historical and political processes. Both the voice-over and the assembly of still images impart narrative information but not unlike Kafka, they take the most absurd situations for granted; in addition, the problematization of temporality amplified by the time-travel plot raises a series of questions regarding agency, time, and memory. While the voice-over describes the experience of the central unknown character and attempts to reconstruct his memories, the question that arises is how is an individual memory reassembled by an external observer? Is there an overlap between the third-person narrator and the character? This is not clarified by the story, but the circularity of the narrative suggests that the narrator himself is not in a privileged position of knowledge. This strengthens the dialectical tension between the novelistic and the photographic aspects of the film, since the novel is an art form reliant on the solitary individual, whereas photography on technological processes of reproduction. Significantly, the still images that are supposed to visualize the character's memories cannot master the complexity of the material either; thus, the modern medium of photography does not accomplish modernity's desire to master time.

It is well known that *La Jetée* was influenced by Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). Commenting on the latter film, Marker said that "it is a clear, understandable and spectacular metaphor for yet another kind of vertigo, much more difficult to represent – the vertigo of time"[38] that emanates from the character's desire to achieve the impossible, that is, to return to a past, revive an experience and master it. There is something analogous taking place in *La Jetée* and like Hitchcock's film the desire to master time turns into a fiasco. The trope of individual recollection gives rise to memories that are collective registering a temporality that

blurs the boundaries between the past, the present and the future. The opening of the film in Orly that captures an image from the past pictures an environment reminiscent of postwar Paris; after a jump in time, we move to a future post-WWIII dystopic Paris. But this imaginary environment is haunted by the past of WWII and the postwar present of the time. Nora M. Alter has noted how the pictures of the city ruins evoke images of the postwar Berlin as pictured in films by "Wolfgang Staudte, Günther Lamprecht, and Roberto Rossellini."[39] Max Silverman also points to the similarities with images of bombed European cities in WWII and the cityscapes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Silverman also contends that the underground post-WWIII camp filmed in Palais de Chaillot recalls the Nazi concentration camps as well as the chambers of torture in Algeria.[40] Matthew Croombs has also analyzed how the images of torture in the film consciously recall colonial violence in Algeria.[41] Janet Harbord aptly explains that in the film "the present is a condition of multiple temporalities."[42]

It is most revealing, therefore, that the visualization of a post-apocalyptic future is reliant on "real" images from the historical archive. What I want to highlight here is how this blurring of temporalities brings together different histories of violence that point to the past horrors of the defeated side in WWII, but also to uncomfortable histories of the winners. The problematization of temporality rests also on the fact that the experimenters of the apocalyptic future speak in German, which is an obvious reference to the Nazi concentration camps, but as scholars have noted, the practice of torturing prisoners through electrodes shown in the film alludes to French postwar methods of colonial suppression.[43] In placing these histories together, one can think of the wider mark of fascism as well as its roots in imperial methods of repression, and its impact on the mass brutalization of conflict that extends beyond the crimes committed by fascist regimes. After all, as Traverso rightly explains, "the horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was not the result of a totalitarian ideology; it was planned by Roosevelt and ordered by Truman."[44]

Significantly, the past that the character is sent back to so as to find a solution for humanity's energy, environmental, and food problems does not look so unproblematic either. Initially, it evokes a European Belle Époque of peace and tranquility but later the signs of catastrophe are evoked when he and the woman of his memory visit a natural history museum with lifeless animals preserved as exhibition objects. Death and environmental degradation are evoked here in the images of the exhibited dead animals. The museum is the typical institution aiming to master time and put forward evolutionary ideas of progress. But one cannot avoid noticing the conflict between a supposedly peaceful past and the violence that permeates this natural museum as an institution itself. The dialectical tension between the imaginary serene past and violence is reconfirmed in the film's ending when the character realizes that the childhood incident that troubles him was the image of his own death.

The "vertigo of time" inspired by Hitchcock's film is reworked here and turns into a significant leitmotif to picture a world that cannot project itself into the future. This characteristic of the film entails thinking about the defeat of the emancipatory strength of the Enlightenment project. The post-apocalyptic present in the film's fabula is the product of catastrophes rooted in the past, while the future that the character is transferred to in one of the last experiments does not look that promising either. The post-WWIII environment remains obsessed by the past and not able to envisage the future as a liberating force. What adds complexity to the film is that the pre-war past has its own share of violence too. Emblematic in this respect is that the image of the death of the unnamed character references Robert Capa's famous 1937 picture of the falling Republican soldier in the Spanish civil war. This allusion to a war that "condensed conflicts of continental and global significance"[45] and prefigured WWII is far from being accidental; it does not simply point to a missed encounter with history on the part of the subsequent allied forces, whose neutrality allowed the establishment of an anti-Enlightenment and sister fascist state in Europe. It also points to its

continued existence in the post-Nazi European milieu of the time, as well as to the failure of the one of the last internationalist projects of the twentieth century following the USSR's abandonment of the idea of global revolution in the interwar years. Marker's film suggests that the defeat of the emancipatory narrative of radicalized Enlightenment leads to a vicious circle of violence where past historical horrors are repeated without offering a vision for a liberated future. Although made in a different historical period, *La Jetée* can be read in light of the contradictions of the present because it cautions that once history abandons the understanding of the future as an emancipatory possibility, then the reversal to an anti-Enlightenment tradition becomes unavoidable.

The latter point is particularly relevant if we jump in time and consider how the Western liberal democratic and free market values have lost their appeal in formerly European socialist countries, although they were initially eager to embrace them unquestionably. Many of these societies have reacted to capitalist conditions of unequal exchange by shifting to the extreme right. This is a pertinent context for thinking about Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies*, which is based on László Krasznahorkai's *The Melancholy of Resistance*. The novel is part of a European comic-grotesque modernist tradition with echoes of Kafka and Beckett.[46] It is set in an unknown Hungarian small town which is supposedly in decline, although the narrative provides no explanations why. The key characters are Mrs Plauf, a petty bourgeois woman, her son János Valuska − a Dostoyevskian holy fool who wonders around the town talking about the magnitude of the cosmos −, Mr. Eszter who is a retired musician living alone and thinking about a new theory of harmony beyond the ideas of Andreas Werckmeister, and his separated wife Mrs. Eszter who plots to take over the town's affairs and run a committee for moral and social renewal. People become distressed after the arrival of an itinerant circus whose main attraction is a giant dead whale. A group of drifting onlookers captivated by one of the performers, The Prince, follow

the circus. János fascinated by the whale visits twice only to hear that the Prince is ready to incite his followers to commit acts of nihilistic violence. When he tries to warn the locals, they do not take him seriously, and one member of the mob forces him to join them while going on a violent frenzy beating people on the streets and in hospitals. János becomes intoxicated by the spectacle of violence and actively participates in the mob's aggressive rampage. In the end, it seems that Mrs. Eszter's plan to take over the town has succeeded. The army and the police are called, her political ambitions are fulfilled and János is committed to a mental asylum.

Krasznahorkai's novel uses many of the trademarks of modernist literature such as stream of consciousness, polyphonic composition, anti-heroes and long sentences. These long sentences produce a dramatic incoherence that challenges any notion of compositional realism. Krasznahorkai has explained that his penchant for long sentences stems from a desire to use language that resembles real life conversations and situations. As he says, "reality [is] examined to the point of madness."[47] The style thus, evokes modernism's influence from nineteenth century realism, something that has been analyzed in depth by Fredric Jameson.[48] In terms of content, the novel has been habitually discussed as a parable regarding the impending collapse of Communism (it was published in 1989 a few months before the major geopolitical changes).[49] With historical hindsight, however, it would be fruitful to rethink the novel's ending considering the post-1989 historical context, something that Tarr's adaptation successfully achieves. The story does not offer narrative closure nor does it suggest that the new situation has brought about positive political change. The town's state of decline is followed by an orgy of nihilistic violence, which subsequently leads to a more oppressive order. As the narrator ironically suggests, Mrs. Eszter has "swept away the old and established the new."[50] The new here stands for a top down, autocratic concentration of power relying on repressive state apparatuses such as the army and the police.

Béla Tarr's adaptation of the second part of the novel – entitled also *Werckmeister Harmonies* – was released in 2000, when the shift from a planned state economy to free-market capitalism had already caused large discomfort in the country paving the way for the current illiberal democracy of Viktor Orbán. The film, therefore, invites a renewed reading of the novel too and allows us to consider how the failure of a narrative of political emancipation can lead to the resurfacing of political forces hostile to the Enlightenment political tradition, which are analogous to the ones that ensued the crisis of liberalism in the beginning of the twentieth century. This suggests that previous historical contradictions can reappear in the present and generate aesthetic responses associated with the past.

This reading is strengthened when considering the film's form, which is a belated reanimation of stylistic elements associated with post-war European modernist cinema and especially Italian neorealism, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Miklós Jancsó. Shot in black and white and consisting of thirty-nine shots, the film reiterates modernist cinema's ambition to observe everyday spaces, gestures, and situations, with the view to making sense of how social conditions affect social relations and experiences. The film's belated style is part of the slow cinema movement, which revivifies post-war modernism's desire to produce formally complex films that negated the rhythms and the values of the industrial societies that emerged after the end of WWII. As scholars have acknowledged, slow cinema follows post-war modernism's slow observational form as a means of engaging with contradictions suppressed and obscured by the fast pace of late modernity.[51] Cinematic slowness' revival of aesthetic tropes associated with modernism is not a nostalgic gesture, but one that desires to reactivate the modernist desire to engage with the historical reality in its contradictions. Slowness, in these terms complicates the politics of time so as to reveal the persistence of past historical contradictions in the present.

Like Krasznahorkai's novel, the film adaptation merges a type of observational realism with compositional stylization, something evidenced in the celebrated opening scene of the film in the town's cafe, as well as in the scenes registering the eruption of violence on the part of the mob. This dialectic between stylization and dedramatized realism creates a sense of dramatic incoherence, which is comparable to the source text's disjointedness produced by the long sentences. The film's contemplative registration of everyday undramatic moments recalls what David Trotter calls modernism's "commitment to the ordinary,"[52] which is concerned with exposing aspects of everyday life by blurring the boundaries between the act of representing and recording the world. Modernism's (literary and cinematic) emphasis on the mundane and the everyday was a means of defamiliarizing reality and question its self-evidence and obviousness.

At the same time, the moments of stylization invoke canonical modernist tropes, which are at times reworked to address the politics of the present. The refunctioning of the cinematography of the group best illustrates this point. When Tarr frames collectives in the film, he recalls well-known examples from the canon of the modernist avant-garde, such as Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Jancsó, and Angelopoulos, but the difference is that the mass has lost its status as the revolutionary agent of change. For in the Soviet auteurs, in the 1960s films by Jancsó, and in Angelopoulos' 1970s historical trilogy, the emphasis on the collective subject of cinema signified a belief in the potential of the extra-fictional collective subject of history, that is the proletariat, to act as a revolutionary force of change. Particularly, Jancsó's and Angelopoulos' eschewal of close-ups and *plan américain* and their preference for registering collectives in long takes and travelling shots indicated a desire for a collective rather individual dramaturgy; this collective dramaturgy rejected dramatic individualism to point out that change in the cinematic experience can be coupled with historical change in the extra-diegetic universe. In *Werckmeister Harmonies*, this is no longer the case, and the

reappropriation of the cinematography of the group captures a different reality of historical pessimism. When János' (Lars Rudolph) visits the circus, the camera registers in detail the collective in the town square, which look like aimless, unemployed drifters. The images of the crowds warming themselves with fires outdoors recall familiar pictures of homeless and unemployed people in post-industrial wastelands in Eastern Europe.

But nowhere is the reworking of the cinematography of the group more evident than in the sequence depicting the mob's violent rampage, which begins with a four-minute tracking-shot registering them as they march the streets to unleash their frenzy of hate. The sequence starts with a long shot in sharp focus that captures the collective as they slowly walk towards an unknown direction. Significant screen time is devoted to the portrayal of the group, which consciously evokes the tradition of a political-modernist cinema that reacted against the narrative categories of individuality by shifting emphasis from the individual character to the revolutionary mass. Tarr plays here with this trope to reflect on a historical period where alternatives have no firm foothold and owing to this political vacuum collectives can turn to forces of reaction rather than radical change.

A look at the scene that follows the above-mentioned one can corroborate this argument. The march of the collective is interrupted abruptly, and the camera registers the empty corridor of a hospital in a static medium shot. It is through a sound bridge that we get the narrative information that the mob is approaching, something that alerts us to the fact that the impending victims of their rage are not the socially privileged but vulnerable individuals. As they enter the field of vision, we see them moving into the wards, smashing hospital equipment and brutally beating the patients with punches, kicks and rods. The camera registers the action in a detached manner and pays detailed emphasis on the gestures of violence which are presented casually; suddenly, two men break a bathroom curtain, and come face to face with an emaciated old man, whose physique and image appeal to collective

memories of Holocaust imagery. Surprised, the two perpetrators stay motionless. They turn their back on him and along with the rest of the mob, they slowly leave the hospital collectively resembling a chorus. Kovács calls this passage from the film unrealistic and vulnerable to spectatorial rejection.[53] I see this viewpoint as limited, especially when it comes to a filmmaker not interested in dramatic causality. This scene can be understood as a metacommentary connecting the past with the present making us think of the historical reemergence of past contradictions related to a history of underdevelopment that were never dealt with. The collective as depicted here is not the radical agent of change, but a group which is carried away by manipulative forces and resorts to nihilistic violence as a means of externalizing their own lack of prospects.[54]

The attack on the vulnerable patients recalls the fascist desire to exclude the unproductive from the public sphere with violent means. Tamás' suggests that in the post-fascist world structures of exclusion of the unproductive are still in place and go hand in hand with the anti-welfare sentiment of neoliberal capitalism. Drawing on Georges Bataille's work on the psychology of fascism, Tamás explains that post-fascism abides by fascism's distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous societies.[55] A homogeneous society is a society of productive labor, exchange-value, "usefulness", and "sexual repression." Those who cannot integrate, such as, the disabled, unemployed, refugees and asylum seekers, belong to the second category. The irony, as Tamás suggests, is that currently, the exclusion of the "unproductive" is not the outcome of an autocratic counter-revolutionary movement, but of policies formed in democratic societies. What makes the violence pictured in *Werckmeister Harmonies* absurd is that one group of "unproductive", namely the unemployed vagabonds, attack another one, that is the hospital inmates. Matters become more perplexed by the end of the film when the mob's pro-fascist rebellion is replaced by a military-police regime. Forms of exclusion are still in place, since János – another example of

an "unproductive" figure – is shown being confirmed to a mental institution. The film's denouement operates as a comment on the historical experience in Central Europe where different cycles of oppression succeed one another. The narrative does not clarify the historical context under which the storyline unfolds, but one senses that the Hungarian past and the present are brought together to reflect on the current impasse following the introduction of the market, which has led to what Erzsébet Szalai calls a "re-feudalization of production relations."[56]

Modernist style in Tarr becomes a means of negation of the linear evolutionary understanding of time drawing attention to how the historical contradictions of the twentieth century Central Europe are being revived in the post-Communist landscape. The narrator in Krasznahorkai's novel sarcastically comments that an old reality has been replaced by a new one, and as the film suggests, the new political landscape is modelled on old paradigms of governance that exacerbate conditions of inequality and oppression. The question raised by the film is: how can history move back by moving forward? Such a question is pertinent for contemporary societies without a vision of the future stuck into a "presentism" defined by Traverso as "a suspended time between an unmasterable past and a denied future, between a "past that won't go away" and a future that cannot be invented or predicted (except in terms of catastrophe)."[57]

An analogous temporal complication that arises from a film adaptation of a novel concerned with past historical contradictions, which are rethought in the present, occurs in Christian Petzold's loose adaptation of Seghers' *Transit*. Both the source-text and the film have conscious references to Kafkaesque motifs. Seghers, an antifascist Communist author of Jewish origins, owed a lot to Kafka and writers who were part of the radical Jewish twentieth-century thought. Kafka's influence permeates other works of her such as *Reise ins elfte Reich* (*Journey into the Eleventh Realm,* 1939) and her collaboration with Bertolt Brecht

for the Berliner Ensemble adaptation of her radio play *Der Prozess der Jeanne d' Arc zu Rouen 1431* (*The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc at Rouen, 1431,* 1953). In the latter piece, Seghers and Brecht responded obliquely to the historical context of the Slánský trial in Czechoslovakia and the play alludes to the forced confessions of the accused.[58] Kafkaesque themes also permeate *Transit*, and this is something that has been acknowledged by Petzold:

> When you read "Transit" by Anna Seghers, she's using Kafka. Everybody who has used the word "Kafka" for "Transit," it's a trace Anna Seghers made by herself. This little story that George is telling the American consulate it's a story out of a Kafka story. She uses Kafka because as she's sitting there in Marseille, the German literature surrounds her and the Jewish literature is totally destroyed. So, you have to take some of the literature with you. You never will forget it. It's a Kafkaesque situation. But in Kafka, there is no sun or wind. But there, you're surrounded by a fantastic Mediterranean sea, the blue sky, the fantastic food and coffee and pizza and Rosé, but it's also Kafka.[59]

The novel focuses on a German apolitical nameless character, who has escaped a concentration camp in his homeland, and later a French camp in Rouen. Thanks to the support of a former girlfriend's husband, he assumes the identity of another missing refugee named Seidler. Paul Staubel, an acquaintance, asks him to deliver a letter to Weidel, a German Jewish author in Paris, but upon arriving to his hotel he realizes that the former has committed suicide. During his trip to Marseille, he opens Weidel's suitcase and finds a book manuscript, a letter from his wife who wants to leave him, another letter by her urging him to join her immediately to Marseille, and a note from the Mexican consulate informing him that his travel funds and visa are ready to be collected. Upon his arrival to the consulate, the authorities confuse him for Weidel despite introducing himself as Seidler. The official disregards this and asks him to submit a form that confirms that the person Seidler is the same as Weidel in order to receive his visa. He assumes Weidel's identity and ends up befriending his wife, Marie, who left Paris with a doctor and is oblivious to her husband's death or to the fact that her new friend is impersonating him to the authorities. The novel focuses on the absurd bureaucratic situations experienced by the refugees, who need to be in

possession of an exit visa that allows subjects to leave France as well as a transit visa "that gives you permission to travel through a country with the stipulation that you don't plan to stay."[60]

The story is based on Seghers' own family experiences as refugees in 1940-41 trying to leave Marseille for Mexico. According to Peter Conrad, "Seghers and countless others were like Kafka's Joseph K trying to get his credentials as a land surveyor recognized by the officials in the impenetrable castle."[61] The novel touches on issues of identity, forced displacement, exile, and political prosecution, while it mourns the impending disappearance of a radical Jewish European culture committed to the project of universal emancipation. Importantly, the figure of the dead author Weidel is modelled on the Jewish writer (and Kafka's friend) Ernst Weiss, while a certain passage in the novel invokes Walter Benjamin's suicide.[62] Despite the text's historical dimensions, the emphasis is not on grand events, even the arrival of the Nazis is treated with restraint; instead, much of the narrative focuses on mundane details such as the monotony of waiting for documents, encountering unfriendly bureaucrats who typewrite every interview with the visa applicants, and repeated conversations in cafes and consulate corridors about documents needed to acquire transit and exit visas. From the first pages, we know that *Montreal*, the ship which Marie and the doctor will embark on, has sunk and in the end, this is reported casually. There is, therefore, in Helen Fehervary's words, "a cyclical quality" in the narrative, which inflects it with a bitter irony;[63] we follow the intricate bureaucratic processes that the refugees have to go through, while we already know the fate of those who were "lucky" enough to get a berth on the ship, which will sink.

It bears noting that the text resorts to many anachronisms and relates the specific story of forced migration to a series of past European catastrophes with references to ancient Greece, Rome, and the Bible. Petzold's adaptation makes use of a different anachronism

putting the 1944 characters in a setting of contemporary Marseille. He justified this choice explaining that the film seeks to identify the parallels between the past, the rising neo-fascism and the refugee crisis in Europe. As he says, "my aim was not Brechtian disruption, but to emphasize correspondences between then and now."[64] Indeed, scholars have been quick enough to recognize the film's references to the current refugee crisis, but nobody has paid attention to the issue of the rising fascism mentioned by the filmmaker.[65] Perhaps, this has to do with the fact that the link between contemporary fascism and the refugee crisis is not the product of an organized reactionary political assemblage as it was the case in the 1940s. The refugee crisis is rooted in the global imbalance between development and underdevelopment that makes migration to the global North the only choice for a substantial part of the world population. This contradiction along with the political scapegoating of refugees for economic problems produced by neoliberal policies do not simply make new reactionary movements reemerge but invite one to consider how reactionary practices are embedded in mainstream politics.

Petzold's adaptation focuses mainly on the part of the novel following Weidel's death, while Seghers' nameless character is here called Georg (Franz Rogowski). The film's link between fascism and post-fascism is successfully made via an emphasis on the securitization of life through the military-police complex and modes of surveillance. We do not see Swastikas and familiar Nazi insignia, but riot-policemen in contemporary gear and compliant citizens willing to act as informers against vulnerable refugees. This is brilliantly captured early in the film when Georg manages to escape a police blockade. The setting here evokes familiar images of European security forces arresting refugees for lack of identification documents. When Georg escapes, a local woman is pictured overeager to inform on him to the police.

Later, upon his arrival in Marseille, Georg is being filmed by a CCTV camera whose point of view frames temporarily the action. This persistent emphasis on modern forms of security and control, as well as the citizens' collaboration with the authorities raises indirectly current issues of development and underdevelopment given that the securitization of life that characterizes liberal democracies has an exclusionary dimension aiming to guarantee the unrestricted movement of capital and restrict the flows of people from places whose economies suffer from conditions of unequal exchange. The overeager desire of the locals to inform on the uprooted to the authorities complicates matters further pointing also to repressed histories of French collaboration with the Nazis. This is given full sway in a scene that shows the owner of the hotel, in which Georg resides, accompanying the police, who enter forcefully into his room to check on his identity and residency permit. We have learned from previous conversations that she tends to call the police on refugees staying in the premises, in order to make more profit. When Georg escapes by showing Weidel's documents, she and the policemen are visibly astonished. The scene is interrupted by another incident capturing a woman being forcefully arrested and separated from her children, while the other residents witness this silently.

The style is restrained and places attention to the reactions of the witnesses of this incident, rather than to state violence. This is also toned down by the third-person voice-over, which overpowers the diegetic protests on the part of the woman and the children and reads: "He saw the others watching like him. Were they without pity? Relieved that it was not them?... And he knew what was making everyone so still and hushed: it was shame." The material is rendered more complex by the fact that Petzold opts for conveying the story in a sparse, undramatic way that indicates the everydayness and routine aspects of these events that set his film apart from familiar, melodramatic depictions of fascism as an excess of evil. At the same time, Petzold's choice for natural summer light and vibrant colors produces an

antithesis between mise-en-scène and content that intensifies the Kafkaesque dimension of the story.

Petzold's preference for saturated colors that highlight Marseille's summer are in line with what Rosalind Galt describes as an aesthetic of cinematic prettiness that produces a form of visual seduction through a surplus of color and light. Galt contests the canonical view according to which aesthetic beauty is associated with an apolitical and superficial cinematic tradition and draws attention to many modernist filmmakers including Michelangelo Antonioni, Bernardo Bertolucci, and Ulrike Ottinger amongst others, whose films are characterized by an excessive imagery without lessening their political critique.[66] Galt's point provides an apposite context for thinking about *Transit* as a film whose visual surplus reinforces its political impact, since the style produces some contradictory effects. The mise-en-scène generates an excessive visuality, which is contradicted by the film's narrative restraint, subject-matter, and slow tempo. The visual excess seems to prefigure a dramatic excess, which does not materialize since the narrative remains minimalist and the acting affectless. If anything, there is a certain degree of irony in the manner that this transit space for refugees, who are facing imminent danger and waiting for sought-after visas, is depicted in warm summer colors. In effect, the richly textured staging generates emotional distance heightened by the fact that the storyline privileges mundane rather than dramatic moments.

This is in keeping with Seghers' source-text, which also aims for an affectless style that deploys a certain distance both in the narration of the bureaucratic hurdles faced by the people in transit as well as the more intense moments, such as suicides and arrests. In effect, the novel draws attention not so much to the fascist takeover of Europe but to how this turns into a banal experience, to which both the defeated French side and the persecuted exiles get acclimatized. Similarly, the film's restraint and casual registering of dramatically loaded moments, such as state violence, the suicide of a German Jewish woman (Barbara Auer),

allow one to think about the correspondences between the past and the present but particularly in the way individuals can acclimatize themselves to repressive conditions.

It is this feature of Petzold's adaptation that makes us think about questions of everyday fascism, not the spectacular fascism of the twentieth century, but the present political anti-pluralism and the exclusionary identity politics of contemporary Europe that cement the social exclusion of populations deemed to be superfluous. As Tamás says, "Post-fascism does not need storm troopers and dictators. It is perfectly compatible with an anti-Enlightenment liberal democracy that rehabilitates citizenship as a grant from the sovereign instead of a universal human right."[67] His point addresses a key contradiction of liberal democracy committed to the liberation of the economy, which eventually comes at the expense of universal citizenship; the latter cannot be reconciled with the global division of the world into centers and peripheries. If anything, the associations between the past and the present mentioned by Petzold can be seen in view of the ways that the social exclusion of the "superfluous" populations has been naturalized. In this context, Seghers' story is reworked to point to the current historical contradictions and not to suggest that only liberal democracy can prevent the repeatability of past horrors, as it happens ad nauseam in films about fascism and the Holocaust.

Commenting on the film's complication of temporality and the dialectic between the past and the present, Petzold suggested that *Transit* "is a bit like a dream between the times, and in this dream between the times the old times are passing and also the present times are passing – and they touched each other, and they understand each other."[68] This somehow Benjaminian comment might enable us to think about how the film's temporal in-betweenness does not just rework a story from the canon of German literature to comment on the present. It is well established in scholarship on Petzold that ghosts occupy a decisive place in his oeuvre;[69] after all, three of his films *Die innere Sicherheit* (*The State I am In*,

2000), *Gespenter* (*Ghosts*, 2005), and *Yella* (2007) form the "Ghost trilogy." The topos of the ghost connects the past with the present, but it also signifies absences and losses. While the phantasmatic features of fascism as implied in the film suggest that there are uncomfortable links between the fascist past and the post-fascist present, there is also a visible absence that is emblematic of the defeat of the project of radicalized Enlightenment. Consider for instance how the lead character in the novel's denouement decides to convert to the French Resistance:

> I intend to share the good and the bad with my new friends here, be it sanctuary or persecution. As soon as there's a resistance movement Marcel and I intend to take up arms. Even if they were to shoot me, they'd never be able to eradicate me. I feel I know this country, its work, its people, its hills and mountains, its peaches and its grapes too well. If you bleed to death on familiar soil, something of you will continue to grow like the sprouts that come up after bushes and trees have been cut down.[70]

This unexpected turn in the story strikes one as unpersuasive, but is, however, in line with Seghers' extra-textual persona as a Jewish, anti-fascist, Communist committed to the project of universal emancipation. It operates as an extra-diegetic comment that exceeds the narrative universe. This passage has been omitted by Petzold, who chooses to leave the narrative open and end the film with the Talking Heads' song, "Road to Nowhere". This omission and the song's title point to the limits of our epoch that lacks a credible alternative and a vision for the future. One may be tempted to proclaim that the ghost of the anti-fascist author of the source-text allows the film to bridge the past with the present, but it makes us also aware of the absence of the radical internationalism of what Traverso calls the "Jewish modernity,"[71] to which Seghers and the specters of Kafka, Weiss, and Benjamin (all implicitly referenced in *Transit*) belonged to. This absence is further highlighted by the fact that in both the novel and the film, the central character chooses to adopt the identity of the persecuted Jewish author, Weidel, whose figure signifies a bygone era of Jewish internationalism committed to the project of universal emancipation. While in the historical context of the novel's publication

and setting this could be seen as a signal of solidarity, in the present context of the film's production it operates as a utopian (utopia literally stands for absence) gesture that highlights the eclipse of this culture and the visible lack of an internationalist emancipatory project.

Within the framework I have constructed in this article, I have tried to show that the concept of Kafkaesque cinema needs to be historized and placed within the crisis of liberalism in its longue durée. Kafkaesque films manipulate directly and indirectly themes and motifs we encounter in Kafka's literature or in the work of other authors regarded as Kafkaesque, such as Krasznahorkai, and Seghers, but they also give prominence to his critique of modernity. Such an approach allows us to understand the symbiotic relationship between Kafkaesque cinema and modern/late modern unresolved political contradictions. The three films I have analyzed, reflect on the continuing crisis of liberalism generated by the lack of a future-oriented political imagination. Exposing the connection between the Kafkaesque and the current post-fascist historical period, where counter-Enlightenment ideas permeate the mainstream political framework, can be crucial in understanding the concept as a critical category that offers a nuanced appreciation of questions of politics and aesthetics in the present.

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[1] Jeffrey Adams, "Orson Welles's *The Trial*: Film noir and the Kafkaesque," *College Literature* 29, no 2 (2002): 140-157, 141.

[2] Ibid., 154.

[3] James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts* 2nd edition (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008), 65, 81, 122, 236, 269.

[4] Shai Biderman, & Ido Lewit, "Introduction" in *Mediamorphosis Kafka and the Moving Image* edited by Shai Biderman & Ido Lewit (New York: Wallflower Press, 2016): 1-25, 18.

[5] See Martin Brady, Helen Hughes, "'The Essential is Sufficient': the Kafka adaptations of Orson Welles, Straub-Huillet, and Michael Haneke" in *Mediamorphosis: Kafka and the Moving Image*, 181-197.

[6] See, András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950–1980* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 329; Peter Hames, "Alienated Heroes: Marxism and the Czechoslovak New Wave," in *Marx at the Movies: Revisiting History, Theory and Practice*, edited by Eva Mazierska, Lars Kristensen (London: Palgrave, 2014), 147-70.

[7] Enzo Traverso, *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War (1914-1945)* (London: Verso, 2016), Kindle.

[8] Ibid., 228.

[9] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 332. See also Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995).

[10] John W. Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867-1918*, 2nd edition, (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), 50.

[11] See Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Janice Ho, "The Crisis of Liberalism and the Politics of Modernism," *Literature Compass* 7 (2010): 1-19; Brett R. Wheeler, "Modernist

Reenchantments I: From Liberalism to Aestheticized Politics," *The German Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2001):223-36.

[12] See Pascale Casanova, *Kafka Angry Poet,* trans. Chris Turner, (London: Seagull Books, 2015). See also Katja Garloff, "Judaism and Zionism," in *Kafka in Context*, edited by Carolin Duttlinger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 208-215, 208.

[13] Franz Kafka, *Aphorisms*, trans. Willa & Edwin Muir & Michael Hofmann (New York: Schocken Books, 2015), 48.

[14] Gilles Deleuze, & Félix Guattari*, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, (London: University of Minnesota Press, 48.

[15] Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, (London: Penguin, 2000).

[16] Iris Bruce and Mark H. Gelber, "Introduction," in *Kafka After Kafka*, edited by Iris Bruce and Mark H. Gelber (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2019), 1-7, 1.

[17] Michael D'Arcy, Mathias Nilges, "Introduction: The Contemporaneity of Modernism," in *The Contemporaneity of Modernism Literature, Media, Culture*, edited by Michael D'Arcy and Mathias Nilges (London: Routledge, 2016), 1-16, 7.

[18] Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée", trans. by Immanuel Wallerstein, *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 32, no 2 (2009): 171-203, 178.

[19] Cited in Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 119.

[20] In a conversation with Gustav Janouch, Kafka commented: "Chaplin is a technician. He's the man of a machine world, in which most of his fellow men no longer command the requisite emotional and mental equipment to make the life allotted to them really their own," in Gustav Janouch, *Conversations with Kafka*, trans. Goronwy Rees (New York: New Directions, 2012), Kindle.

Jean Collignon was one of the first post-war critics to revisit Benjamin's point that there is a link between Kafka and Chaplin. See "Kafka's Humor," *Yale French Studies*, 16, no 1 (1955), 53–62.

See also Shai Biderman, "K., the Tramp, and the Cinematic Vision: The Kafkaesque Chaplin," in *Mediamorphosis Kafka and the Moving Image* edited by Shai Biderman & Ido Lewit (New York: Wallflower Press, 2016): 198-209, 200.

[21] See Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, 2nd edition (London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), 139-140.

[22] Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 329.

[23] See Thomas John Donahue, "Fernando Arrabal: His Panic Theory and Theatre and the Avant-Garde," *Journal of Spanish Studies: Twentieth Century* 3, no 2 (1975): 101-113, 112.

[24] Cited in Michael Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz: Impossible Cartographies* (London: Wallflower Press, 2013), 30.

[25] Karen Christine Underhill, *Bruno Schulz, and Jewish Modernity*, PhD thesis, University of Chicago (2011), 13.

[26] See Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: Profile Books, 2019).

[27] Importantly, Jia Zhangke is also a Kafka enthusiast and has produced K (2015) and an adaptation of The Castle set in inner Monglia, directed by Darhad Erdenibulag and Emyr ap Richard.

[28] Robert Stam, *World Literature, Transnational Cinema, and Global Media: Towards a Transartistic* Commons (New York: Routledge, 2019), 61.

[29] André Bazin, "Adaptation or the Cinema as Digest," in *Bazin at Work: Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*, edited by Bert Cardullo, trans. by Alain Piette (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), 41-51, 546.

[30] This is already the case in literary studies, whereas film studies tend to accept a neat periodization, according to which modernist experiments of the past have been deradicalized by the postmodern turn. See Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," *PMLA*, 123, no 3, (2008): 737–748. Mao and Walkowitz explain that the "temporal expansion" of modernism has been a significant tendency in recent studies on modernist literature. See also, Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), where they contend that we need to expand the temporal parameters of modernism through a study that sees modernism as the product of combined and uneven development. In film Studies, scholars for the most part accept a canonical periodization. The work of András Bálint Kovács cited above is a typical case in point.

[31] Gáspár Miklós Tamás "On post-fascism: The Degradation of Universal Citizenship, *Boston Review*. http://bostonreview.net/world/g-m-tamas-post-fascism

[32] Enzo Traverso, *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right* trans. David Broder (London: Verso, 2017), 28.

[33] Szilárd Borbély, *The Dispossessed*, trans. by Ottilie Mulzet (London: Harper Perennial, 2013), vii.

[34] See Jan Baetens, "The Photo-Novel: Stereotype as Surprise," *History of Photography* 37, no 2 (2013): 137-152.

[35] Jean Louis Schefer, "On *La* Jetée", trans. Paul Smith, accessed October 28, 2020. https://chrismarker.org/chris-marker-2/jean-louis-schefer-on-la-jete/,

[36] . Carolin Duttlinger, *Kafka and Photography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 20.

[37] Ibid., 16.

[38] Chris Marker, 'A Free Replay (notes on Vertigo)', accessed October 30, 2020, http://www.chrismarker.org/a-free-replay-notes-on-vertigo/,

[39] Nora M. Alter, Chris Marker (Chicago, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 93.

[40] See Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (London: Berghahn Books, 2013), 50.

[41] See, Matthew Croombs, "*La Jetée* in Historical Time: Torture, Visuality, Displacement," *Cinema Journal*, 56, no 2 (2017): 25-45, 29.

[42] Janet Harbord, *La Jetée* (London: Afterall Books, 2009), 9.

[43] See Croombs, 30.

[44] Traverso, *The New Faces of Fascism*, 146.

[45] Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, Kindle.

[46] Krasznahorkai has confessed the influence of Kafka on his work admitting that *The Castle* was one of the books he had repeatedly read. See, Adma Thirwell, "László Krasznahorkai, The Art of Fiction No. 240," *The Paris Review* 225 (2018), accessed October 30, 2020, https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/7177/the-art-of-fiction-no-240-laszlo-krasznahorkai

[47] Quoted in James Wood, " Madness and Civilization: The Very Strange Fictions of László Krasznahorkai", *New Yorker* 87, no 19 (2011), accessed) October 30, 2020, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/07/04/madness-and-civilization

[48] See Fredric Jameson*, The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2013).

[49] See, András Bálint Kovács, *The Cinema of Béla Tarr: The Circle Closes* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2013), 131. See, The Melancholy of Eesistance with Mircea Nedelciu and László Krasznahorkai: Ramona Hărșan "Symbolic Images of Community Under Communism and Alternative Constructions of Moral Identity," *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context*, 4, no 1 (2015): 308-316.

[50] László Krasznahorkai, *The Melancholy of Resistance* trans. George Szirtes (Cambridge, Massachusetts: New Directions, 2013), Kindle.

[51] See Tiago de Luca and Nuno Barradas Jorge, "From Slow Cinema to Slow Cinemas," in *Slow Cinema*, edited by Tiago de Luca and Nuno Barradas Jorge (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 1-21; Emre Çağlayan, *Poetics of Slow Cinema Nostalgia, Absurdism, Boredom* (London: Palgrave, 2018); Angelos Koutsourakis, "Modernist Belatedness in Contemporary Slow Cinema," *Screen* 60, no. 3 (2019): 388-409.

[52] David Trotter, 'Hitchcock's Modernism', *Modernist Cultures*, 5, no. 1 (2010): 106-126, 109.

[53] Kovács, 137. Importantly, this scene is faithful to the source-text, which reads: "now dividing into smaller units, now coming together again, they advanced in tides, but rather disorientated at meeting a completely unarmed victim, not understanding that the dumb fear, the utter lack of resistance which allowed that victim to bear this onslaught, was increasingly robbing them of power and that, faced by this sapping mire of unconditional surrender—though this is what had hitherto given them the greatest, most bitter pleasure—they would have to retreat. They stood under the flickering neon lights of the corridor at the very limits of silence (the distant screaming of the nurses was faintly audible behind closed doors) then, instead of seizing upon their prey again in fury and confusion or continuing their ravages on the upper floors, they waited for the last of their group to rejoin them then staggered out of the building like some ragtag army….."

[54] John Hodgkins sees the film as an allegory for Hungarian complicity during the Holocaust, but such a reading is reductive, because it fails to take into account how the film problematizes chronology by bringing together the past and the present. See Hodgkins, "Not Fade Away: Adapting History and Trauma in László Krasznahorkai's *The Melancholy of Resistance* and Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies*," Adaptation Studies 2, no. 1 (2009): 49-64.

[55] Tamás, npg.

[56] Erzsébet Szalai, "The Crisis of the New Capitalism in Eastern Europe: The Hungarian Example," *Jaargang* 44, no. 4. 134–150, 147. Tarr also confirms that the film is about the present. As he stated in an interview, "I have a hope, if you watch this film and you understand something about our life, about what is happening in middle Europe, how we are living there, in a kind of edge of the world." Eric Schlosser, "Interview with Béla Tarr: About *Werckmeister Harmonies*," *Bright Lights Film Journal* (2000), accessed November 2, 2020, https://brightlightsfilm.com/interview-bela-tarr-werckmeister-harmonies-cannes-2000-directors-fortnight/#.X6BTQFj7SM-

[57] Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York, Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2016), 8. Jacques Rancière's point that Tarr's films register the temporal reality following the end of Communism can be seen in this light although it has an ahistorical tone. As he says, "The time after is not the morose, uniform time of those who no longer believe in anything. It is the time of pure, material events, against which belief will be measured for as long as life will sustain it." Rancière, *Béla Tarr, the Time After*, trans. Erik Beranek (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2013), 9.

[58] See, Helen Fehervary, *Anna Seghers : the Mythic Dimension* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2001), 197-8.

[59] Vikram Murthi, "Christian Petzold on Transit, Kafka, His Love for Den of Thieves and More,", accesses November 3, 2020, https://www.rogerebert.com/interviews/christian-petzold-on-transit-kafka-his-love-for-den-of-thieves-and-more

[60] Anna Seghers, *Transit*, trans. Margot Bettauer Dembo (New York: New York Review Book, 2013), Kindle.

[61] Peter Conrad, "Introduction," in *Transit*, npg.

[62] See Fehervary, 170.

[63] Ibid., 47.

[64] Christian Petzold, "Wartime out of Joint," trans. Becca Voelcker *Film Comment* 55, no. 1 (2019): 6.

[65] See Philipp Brunner, "Filmkritik: Transit," *Filmbulletin: Zeitschrift für Film und Kino* 3, (2018): 31-32. Olivia Landry, "The Beauty and Violence of *Horror Vacui*: Waiting in Christian Petzold's *Transit* (2018)," *German Quarterly* 93, no. 1 (2020): 90-105; Alice Bardan, Europe, Spectrality and 'Post-mortem Cinema': The Haunting of History in Christian Petzold's *Transit* (2018) and Aki Kaurismäki's *Le Havre* (2011), *Northern Lights*, 18, no. 1 (2020): 115-129; Max Nelson, " "Our Contemporary Winds": Christian Petzold's *Transit*," *Salmagundi* 204 (2019): 38-48;

[66] See Rosalind Galt, *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 194-196.

[67] Tamás, npg.

[68] Daniel Casman, "A Citizen Without Civilization: Christian Petzold Discusses "Transit,"" accessed November 6, 2020, https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/a-citizen-without-civilization-christian-petzold-discusses-transit

[69] See Marco Abel, *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2013), 70; Jaimey Fisher, *Christian Petzold* (Chicago, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 4.

[70] Seghers, npg.

[71] Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Pluto, 2013).