

## ABSTRACT

### **REALISM AND EXPERIENCE: ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POETICS AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN SIEGFRIED KRACAUER AND ALEXANDER KLUGE**

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The goal of my research project is to reconstruct thoroughly the oeuvre of Kracauer and Kluge as a nonconformist strand of a theoretical and artistic realism. In order to reinterpret systematically these authors I understand their realism as a specific configuration of poetics and social critique. Due to its intertwinement of aesthetic and conceptual elements, the work of Kracauer and Kluge seems to hold an exceptional position within both Critical Theory and literary realism. The gravitational center of their genuinely original form of dealing with historical, social and political conditions is, I argue, the concept of experience, which is situated at the intersection of social philosophy, epistemology, and aesthetic theory. Like the protagonists of the first and second generation of Critical Theory, Kracauer and Kluge assume that the modern way of existence is based on fundamentally deficient modes of experience and relationships, theoretically as well as practically. However, in contrast to Adorno and his peers, Kluge and Kracauer react to the disastrous history of modernity with a variety of realism whose obstinate arrangement of theoretical and aesthetic procedures facilitates innovative forms of critique. These forms can be located between a poetically enriched branch of science and a kind of art that focuses particularly on social reality. I want to trace the specifics of Kracauer's and Kluge's methods of production and writing in their mediation of documentary and life-world oriented elements with those of (historical) philosophical cartography, in the narrative trait of their realism, in their sensually enriched concept of rationality, and their specific methods of depicting and representing reality. I will thus analyze the poetical and theoretical models induced by Kluge and Kracauer regarding both their critical and alternative meaning for human forms of experience and relationship. Furthermore, I want to reflect on the practical interweaving of their works with social reality. I consider Kracauer's and Kluge's critical practice of realism as an intervening mode of production that addresses forms of human experience and relationship while it is also, paradoxically, always part of the concrete social, historical and political context that it aims to scrutinize.