

# TRANSIT

Germany (2018) 101 minutes

**Director:** Christian Petzold

**Cast:** Franz Rogowski (Georg), Paula Beer (Marie),  
Godehard Giese (Richard)



**Screening 17 November 2021 at Swindon Arts Centre**

Georg is a German refugee in France under a present day Fascist regime. He agrees to deliver documents to persecuted writer Widel. But when he arrives Widel has committed suicide following the rejection of his novel and estrangement from his wife. Georg takes Widel's papers and travels to Marseilles in an attempt to deliver them to the Mexican consulate. Once there he is mistaken for the author himself and his life becomes entangled with Melissa, a North-African mother and her son and Marie who is searching for her missing husband.

## Reviews



Franz Rogowski stars as Georg, a German in Paris during an increasingly tense and violent occupation. Seghers' book was released in 1944 and set in 1942, so the story at that time was about the Nazis, but Petzold boldly chooses to update the story to modern times without really clarifying the threat. We just know that people are being rounded up and the country is increasingly unsafe. Before we've even seen the title card, police sirens have been heard three times. There's a sense of dread and urgency that's amplified by leaving the threat as undefined as active police cars in the street and enhanced discussion of things like travel papers. Especially with our current state of the world and its threats of violence amidst increased polarization, the themes of *Transit* have added resonance by making this a '10s story instead of a '40s one.

*Brian Tallerico, Roger Ebert.com*

There are those who treat melodrama as a dirty word, but no working filmmaker gives it a cleaner, crisper reputation than German auteur Christian Petzold, whose extraordinary anti-historical experiment *Transit* nonetheless registers as his most conceptually daring film to date. A refugee portrait that piles contrivance upon contrivance to somehow land at a place of piercing emotional acuity, this adaptation of Anna Seghers' 1942 novel takes a brazen, bounding risk right off the bat by stripping its story — about a German concentration camp survivor seeking passage to North America in Nazi-occupied France — of any external period trappings, relocating it to a kind of liminal, sunburned present day.

It's a leap not every viewer will readily take, but there's a method to the madness of Petzold's modern-dress Holocaust drama: *Transit* invites viewers to trace their own speculative connections between Seghers' narrative and the contemporary rise in neo-Nazism and anti-refugee sentiment, all while its principal story remains achingly moving. An unexpectedly subversive companion piece in multiple respects to Petzold's last film, 2014's twisty Auschwitz-survivor portrait *Phoenix*, *Transit* should rack up international sales on the basis of its conversation-piece singularity and its characteristically immaculate formal execution — and ought to make a star of superb leading man Franz Rogowski, whose planed, haunted face lingers in the mind as long as the film's surfeit of discussion points.

*Guy Lodge, Variety*

## Film Facts

- Franz Rogowski was named as one of the European Shooting Stars of 2018 by the European Film Promotion during the International Festival in Berlin.
- Christian Petzold also directed *Barbara* and *Phoenix*, both shown in previous SFS seasons.
- *Transit* is based on a 1944 novel by the German-Jewish writer Anna Seghers which draws on her experience as a war refugee.

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