“Memory for the Future/the Future for Memory” in John Hillcoat’s The Road

John Hillcoat’s The Road, made from Cormac McCarthy’s powerful novel, is a study of environmental disaster, traumatic loss, and human caring. In a critical analysis of the film, Kaplan asks questions about the traumatic world spectators are invited to share. Is Hillcoat interested in “memory for the future,” that is, in asking us to remember what we might lose? What does the film offer as regards “the future for memory” once the environment has collapsed? What does it show about the role of memory, gender, and caring in human life as we move into the Anthropocene Era? This talk examines the dramatically evolving discourses about what used to be “landscape” and is now “environment” as part of studying the changing relationship of humans to a natural world that has hitherto sustained us.

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