



# Thinking Cinematically Before Deleuze

Lecture Theatre B, Robert Webster Building | December 14th-16th, 2012

**Damian Cox**  
Bond University

**Hamish Ford**  
University of Newcastle

**Richard Rushton**  
University of Lancaster

**Jean-Philippe Deranty**  
Macquarie University

**Angelos Koutsourakis**  
University of New South Wales

**Robert Sinnerbrink**  
Macquarie University

**Laura D'Olimpio**  
University of Notre Dame, Fremantle

**Paul Macovaz**  
University of Sydney

**Lisa Trahair**  
University of New South Wales

**Lisabeth During**  
Pratt Institute

**Adrian Martin**  
Monash University

**Julia Vassilieva**  
Monash University

**Gregory Flaxman**  
University of North Carolina

**Mairéad Phillips**  
University of Melbourne

**Saige Walton**  
University of South Australia



**Film as Philosophy**  
Understanding Cinematic Thinking



Australian Government  
Australian Research Council

# 2nd Workshop on Cinematic Thinking: Timetable

Friday, Dec. 14th

- 11.00 **Welcome**
- 11.15 **Damian Cox**, 'Plato and Eisenstein on the Significance of Montage'
- 12.15 **Laura D'Olimpio**, 'Where is the place for the thinking viewer in the cinema?'
- 1.15 *Lunch*
- 2.15 **Gregg Flaxman**, 'The Spiritual Automaton: (or why we should learn to stop worrying and love the passivity of the cinema)'
- 3.15 *Afternoon tea*
- 3.30 **Julia Vassilieva**, 'Eisenstein/Vygotsky/Luria's project'

Saturday, Dec. 15th

- 10.00 **Lisabeth During**, 'Narrate or Describe? Film's Struggle with Literature'
- 11.00 *Morning tea*
- 11.15 **Lisa Trahair**, 'Being on the outside: Stanley Cavell's world viewed, cinematic automatism and Michael Haneke's *Caché*'
- 12.15 **Richard Rushton**, 'Cinematic judgment and universal communicability'
- 1.15 *Lunch*
- 2.00 **Hamish Ford**, 'Film-Philosophy As Mutually Challenging Interface'
- 3.00 *Afternoon tea*
- 3.15 **Angelos Koutsourakis**, 'Production versus Reproduction: Rethinking Brecht and Film in a Period of Capitalist Crisis'
- 6.00 *Dinner at Longrain*

Sunday, Dec. 16th

- 10.00 **Robert Sinnerbrink**, 'Early Film-Philosophy: Observations and Conjectures'
- 11.00 *Morning tea*
- 11.15 **Paul Macovaz**, 'Ricciotto Canudo : Cinema Art Language'
- 12.15 **Jean-Philippe Deranty & Mairéad Phillips**, 'Breaking the spirals: the visual dynamics of desire and money in the cinema of Max Ophüls'
- 1.15 *Lunch*
- 2.00 **Saige Walton**, 'Of Flesh, Fabric, Folds: Merleau-Ponty, Raul Ruiz and the New World Baroque'
- 3.00 *Afternoon tea*
- 3.15 **Adrian Martin**, 'Roger Munier and His Heideggerian Vision of Cinema'
- 4.15 **Cinematic Thinking Network: Future Directions**
- 5.00 *Drinks at the Doncaster*

# 2nd Workshop on Cinematic Thinking: Abstracts & Bios

**Damian Cox, Bond University**  
[dcox@bond.edu.au](mailto:dcox@bond.edu.au)

## 'Plato and Eisenstein on the Significance of Montage'

Plato invented the idea of the cinema in *The Republic*, not when he imagined moving shadows projected onto a cave wall, but when he imagined spectators as prisoners chained so that they cannot swivel their heads from side to side. This is the archetypal instance of the compelled image: a reduction of visual experience to the basic condition of auditory experience; an elimination of at least the gross features of agency in visual experience. My aim is to briefly develop the concept of the compelled image, its centrality to film spectatorship in general and its role in the production of cinematic thought in particular. To this end I apply the concept of the compelled image to an examination of Eisenstein's account of the significance of montage in film spectatorship.

**Damian Cox** is a philosopher with research interests in philosophy and film, moral psychology, ethical theory and political philosophy. He has published papers and book chapters in a variety of philosophical areas, including metaphysics, epistemology, philosophical logic, value theory, ethical theory, environmental ethics, and international relations theory. He is a co-author of *Integrity and the Fragile Self* (Ashgate, 2003); *Politics Most Unusual: Violence, Sovereignty and Democracy in the War on Terror* (Palgrave, 2009); *Thinking Through Film* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). He teaches philosophy and film, contemporary political philosophy and the history of ethics and politics at Bond University.

**Jean-Philippe Deranty, Macquarie University**  
**Mairéad Phillips, University of Melbourne**  
[jp.deranty@mq.edu.au](mailto:jp.deranty@mq.edu.au)  
[mairreadphillips@gmail.com](mailto:mairreadphillips@gmail.com)

## Breaking the spirals: the visual dynamics of desire and money in the cinema of Max Ophüls

In this paper, we propose an analysis of the cinema of Max Ophüls based on a general approach to the ontology of film. This approach focuses on the capacity of the film medium, notably through the work of the camera, to present and establish forms of circulation, not just the circulations of objects and bodies in space, but also the movements of affects, symbols and ideas. Early film theorists, in particular Jean Epstein and Béla Balázs, showed that circulation in film occurs not just at the surface of film, that is, is not just the movement of and between the objects presented, but film also has the power to present movements in depth, by revealing fundamental forces at play underneath ordinary visual and narrative moments. Drawing on Epstein and Balázs, the first part of the paper presents the basic features of our approach to cinema as art of surface and depth circulation. In the second part of the paper, we apply this approach to the cinema of Max Ophüls, by exploring the intertwined visual, narrative and symbolic movements in two of his masterpieces, *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and *The Earrings of Madame de*. We seek to show that the fluid mobility of Ophüls' camera work and the complexity of his mises en scène, establish the specifically filmic presentation of female subjects caught up in the logics of erotic, economic and social circuits. Most strikingly, however, the spiraling effects of Ophüls' camera find their points of arrest in his heroines' struggles for autonomy and authenticity.

**Jean-Philippe Deranty** is Associate Professor in Philosophy at Macquarie University, Sydney. He has published extensively in French and German philosophy, in the areas of social and political philosophy as well as in aesthetics, notably around the work of Jacques Rancière. His recent publications include: *Jacques Rancière. Key Concepts* (Acumen, 2010), and *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene* (with Alison Ross, Continuum, 2012). He is currently engaged in two projects at the intersection of social philosophy and film, one on the representation of work in classical Hollywood cinema, and the other on the ontology and aesthetics of circulation in film.

**Mairéad Phillips** is completing her doctoral thesis on the films of Alfred Hitchcock within a Deleuzian framework in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. She has taught cinema studies at an undergraduate, honours and masters level and also teaches summer and winter courses on film at the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy. She provided audio commentary on *Secret Agent* (1936) for a new digital transfer release of Hitchcock's British films by Madman Entertainment.

**Laura D'Olimpio, The University of Notre Dame, Fremantle**  
[laura.dolimpio@nd.edu.au](mailto:laura.dolimpio@nd.edu.au)

### Where is the place for the thinking viewer in the cinema?

Much of the current philosophy of film literature follows Walter Benjamin's optimistic account and sees film as a vehicle for screening philosophical thought experiments, and offering new perspectives on issues that (may) have relevance to everyday life. If these kinds of films allow for philosophical thinking, then they are like other so-called 'high' artworks in that they encourage social, political and economic critique of social norms. Yet, most popular films that are digested in large quantities are not of a high aesthetic or moral quality. Theorists who conceive of cinema as a means of thinking must firstly reply to the objections that most films simply do not encourage active, intelligent, imaginative participation. Prior to the publication of Deleuze's cinema books, theorists such as T. W. Adorno feared the advent of the Hollywood Studio film as akin to Nazi propaganda. Dismissed as elitist, their concern was that mass-produced and distributed artworks portrayed the depicted social norms as immutable reality. If the imagination cannot enter and engage with the messages depicted through the filmic medium, i.e. through montage or similar 'shock' techniques, then viewers cannot critique the moral and social status quo screened; instead, they simply receive it, and it is reinforced.

If we consider how passive cinematic viewers are, voyeuristically ensconced in a darkened theatre, we can see the concern here. If only *some* films allow for critique of social, political and economic norms in society, and these films are attended by those viewers who are already critical viewers, then how is film *more generally* a tool for thinking?

If we are to honestly discuss the filmic medium, we must acknowledge the Hollywood blockbusters that stifle imaginative engagement with their narratives and often depict stereotypes. I argue that we need to read Adorno alongside Benjamin, in order to acknowledge the positive as well as negative attributes of films. In doing this we see the need to focus on the critical attitude of the viewer, as well as the moral messages of the film, particularly when we consider what the majority of consumers willingly ingest uncritically. Adorno and Benjamin both offer a historical account of art whereby their aesthetics require audience reception and are linked to experience. The way art is tied to human experience and the world of sensory perception is through language. Language allows the communication of ideas or referents which convey meaning via signs that contain some kind of 'truth' in the form of a cognitive component that must be interpreted. While there are many different stories being told in contemporary culture, the focus on the critical thinker, the interpreter of the narrative, is vital.

Dr **Laura D'Olimpio** is a full-time lecturer in Philosophy and Ethics at The University of Notre Dame Australia. Laura completed her PhD *The Moral Possibilities of Mass Art* at The University of Western Australia. Her Thesis examines the moral impact of mass artworks, particularly film, in

society. Laura has published in the area of philosophy and education and assists with the *Philosophy and Ethics* WACE course of study. She is President of the Australasian Association for Philosophy in Schools, Inc. (APIS, WA). Laura also runs courses in ethics, aesthetics and philosophy and literature for UWA Extension.

**Lisabeth During, Pratt Institute**  
[during.lisabeth@gmail.com](mailto:during.lisabeth@gmail.com)

## **Narrate or Describe? Film's Struggle with Literature**

"The novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God." (Lukács)

"The reason film today is capable of taking on the domains of literature and theatre is because, first of all, it is master in its own house and has enough confidence in itself to yield to its subject." (Bazin)

The relations of film to literature, and film to theatre, suffer from an unnecessary legacy of shame. Did the cinema, struggling for its identity as an art, need the authority of the literary "patrimony" as André Bazin called it? And was the absorption of literature a blessing or a curse? Bazin comes down positively on the side of adaptation, but has a number of qualifications that help us think more carefully about literary influence and the way film can also be a kind of writing. Against Bazin, the stern defender of realist autonomy, Georg Lukács, views the modern history of expressive forms as doomed to degradation and banality: having lost the universality of the epic, literature and film compete to see who can be the first to lose their soul. Modern storytelling collapses into the bad infinite of description, unconcerned for social density and critique. I argue that Lukács is wrong and that cinematic storytelling has a gift denied to modern literary fiction. In film narration and description are not at odds. Bazin's notion of cinematic realism is impure, generous and full of grace. In his understanding of the writerly film, fidelity does not have to mean servility.

**Lisabeth During** studied theology at Cambridge University, taught for many years in the Philosophy Department at the University of New South Wales, and now works at Pratt Institute of Art and Design in Brooklyn. She has published on Hegel, Artaud, George Eliot, Surrealism and André Bazin. Most recently, she co-edited with Lisa Trahair a special issue of *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* on *Belief in Cinema* which revisits themes from André Bazin (17.4, December 2012). Her "The Book of Chastity: Studies in an Ascetic Ideal" will be out soon.

**Gregory Flaxman, University of North Carolina**  
[gflax@email.unc.edu](mailto:gflax@email.unc.edu)

## **The Spiritual Automaton: (or why we should learn to stop worrying and love the passivity of the cinema)**

Among the many anxieties media studies has inspired, perhaps none is as significant or persistent as the suggestion that film is an essentially "passive" medium. In the trajectory that ostensibly concludes with new media and the celebration of interactivity, the cinema seems to belong to an older regime that remains predicated on a submissive spectator. Notwithstanding its precedents in "grand" film theory of the 1970s, this critique is buoyed today by the apotheosis of a "user" next to which the cinema-goer appears both archaic and ideologically suspect. There are good reasons to be suspicious of the emancipatory narrative of new media, but in this talk I want to explicitly address and ultimately revalue the sense in which the cinema is assailed for producing a passive viewer. But what do we really mean by passivity and is this automatically a defect that forecloses thinking?

Early critics of the cinema often remarked on the way its images forced themselves on perception and insinuated themselves in thought. Historically, the cinema possessed unprecedented powers to captivate spectators and render a captive audience, and we would be foolish to discount the ideological force of its images. But by the same token, early film theorists like Epstein, Eisenstein, and Faure argued that the cinema exerted an intellectual and ideation force that shattered preconceptions and provoked thought itself. In particular, this talk returns to Antonin Artaud's remarkable if slender writings insofar as they augur the sense of cinema as an experimental and schizophrenic machine. The cinema "steals thought", Artaud suggests, by routing images directly into the brain. While Artaud turned away from the cinema, his brief affirmation provides the impetus for grasping how the medium dispatches the habits of staid cognition and compels us to think anew. Hence, I contend, the pursuit of a film-philosophy should begin by returning to the Artaud's singular sense of cinema.

**Gregory Flaxman** is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. He is the author of *Gilles Deleuze and Fabulation of Philosophy: Powers of the False, Volume 1* (Minnesota, 2012) and the editor of *The Brain is the Screen* (Minnesota, 2000). He is currently completing a compendium of philosophical writing on the cinema "from Bergson to Badiou", and working with Lisa Trahair and Robert Sinnerbrink on a book about cinematic thinking.

**Hamish Ford, University of Newcastle**  
[hamish.ford@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:hamish.ford@newcastle.edu.au)

## Film-Philosophy As Mutually Challenging Interface: Cinema And Adorno

For many years, German Frankfurt School philosopher Theodor Adorno was of little interest to film scholars. The early 1980s translation of his brief but important "Transparencies on Film" essay (originally published in 1966) saw some increase in attention. However, what Adorno has to say about cinema both in this one publication devoted entirely to film and throughout his work (most notoriously along with Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* from 1944) could not have been more out of step with the majority critical and theoretical tenets of 1980s and '90s scholarly discourse, and was thereby commonly either ignored or invoked so as to be summarily dismissed as malevolent "elitism" *par excellence*. Today Adorno has made a qualified but substantial comeback in the Humanities due to the growth of interest in both modernism and critical theory, yet his work's potential for a philosophical interrogation of cinema and vice-versa remains underdeveloped.

I argue that Adorno offers one of the richest and most radical sources for film-philosophy scholarship both in provoking a rigorous critique of cinema's (like philosophy's) often deeply reactionary aspects but also a very different vision of what film can be. Unlike in the case of Deleuze, this exchange between film and philosophy is a scattered one requiring active charting and "fleshing out" of connections across many books and articles. This is not only because Adorno's seemingly blanket dismissal of film calls for some contextual, ethico-political and philosophical "defence" or qualifying, but more importantly as the most fecund points of mutually illuminating intersection lie, I argue, less often with the philosopher's comments on film and more with his highly developed theory of modern aesthetics.

This paper will specifically chart the usefulness of Adorno's work for film-philosophy discourse through its fundamental challenging of cinema's and philosophy's responses to contemporary history; his unique articulation of modern art both in terms of aesthetic form and a critique of post-war reality that never claims any romantic position entirely outside the culture industry; and in offering a highly developed account of negativity as arguably the key driver of film's potential for necessary ontological violence. Citing examples of films that might enact the kind of aesthetic and conceptual assault on post-war life while concurrently exemplifying its most self-conscious expression that Adorno suggests marks a critical culture, the paper offers a very particular, radical and less commonly charted film-philosophy interface pre-dating both the Deleuzian turn and cinema's discovery by the analytical tradition.

**Hamish Ford** is Lecturer in Film, Media and cultural Studies at the University of Newcastle, Australia. He has written on Adorno's usefulness for the film-philosophy exchange in *New Takes in Film-Philosophy* (Palgrave, 2011), *The Sage Handbook of Film Studies* (Sage, 2008) and in his book *Post-War Modernist Cinema and Philosophy: Confronting Negativity and Time* (Palgrave, 2012).

**Angelos Koutsourakis, University of New South Wales**

[a.koutsourakis@unsw.edu.au](mailto:a.koutsourakis@unsw.edu.au)

## **Production versus Reproduction: Rethinking Brecht and Film in a Period of Capitalist Crisis.**

During the 1970s film theorists writing for the British Journal *Screen* employed Brecht's theatre theory as a means of envisaging a counter-cinematic aesthetic. While their writings have stimulated thinking regarding Brecht's position in radical film practice, one can take issue with the fact that Brecht's theory was treated as a series of formal devices (e.g. montage sequences and defamiliarised acting) and not as a dialectical method that intends to reveal what Brecht described as "die Vorgänge hinter den Vorgängen" (the processes behind the events). Currently, there is an ongoing discussion amongst film scholars which centres on the ways Hollywood has de-radicalised certain formal experiments, such as self-reflexivity, which are associated with Brecht's theory. While Hollywood's absorption of political modernist experiments aims at a new way of commodification, which strives to serve the needs of diverse audiences, Brecht's understanding of realism as a process of demystification is pertinent in the current crisis of capitalism. In a historical period in which economic activity is treated as 'a natural process', dialectical analysis becomes the prerequisite for those dissatisfied with the current political circumstances. Brecht's theory can be a way of questioning the "naturalisation" of capitalism but in ways that can deal with the different historical conditions. Drawing on classic political modernist objects, such as *Kuhle Wampe, oder: Wem gehört die Welt?* (1932) and *Brecht die Macht der Manipulateure*, as well as on Yorgos' Lanthimos' and Costas Zapas' contemporary films made in the crisis-plagued Greece, this paper investigates the shift from Orthodox Brechtian practices rooted in Marxist epistemology, to post-Brechtian ones, which reconcile dialectical film practice with epistemological uncertainty.

**Angelos Koutsourakis** is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Centre for Modernism Studies in Australia/University of New South Wales. He has previously taught at the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton. In 2010-11 he received a grant from the Danish government and he acted as a guest researcher and lecturer at the University of Copenhagen. He has published articles in numerous journals and his book *Politics as Form in Lars von Trier: A Post-Brechtian Reading* will be published by Continuum in 2013.

**Paul Macovaz, University of Sydney**

[paul.macovaz@sydney.edu.au](mailto:paul.macovaz@sydney.edu.au)

## **Ricciotto Canudo : Cinema Art Language**

As early as 1908, in an article entitled "Triumph of the Cinématographe" published in Florence, Ricciotto Canudo sketched out the thematic structure of what would become his most famous article "The Birth of a Sixth Art" published in French in 1911. Canudo's reputation rests for the most part on his "prevision", Apollinaire referred to him as the "the one who sees first". Not only was he amongst the first to consider the cinema worthy of being integrated into the "System of the Arts" that had appeared at the end of the eighteenth century, and that had dominated much nineteenth century philosophy of Art, but in doing so, he also imported much of the accompanying problematic of modern aesthetics. Cornelia Klinger calls this problematic "the aesthetic ideology of modernity"

and divides it into three components: the autonomy, the authenticity and the sacrality of aesthetic experience. For Canudo then, the cinema in 1908 is the "nave" of a new "Temple" of collective universal experience, a "nouvelle Fête", not unlike the dithyrambic processions of sixth century Attica, a "new dance of expression", an "art plastique en mouvement".

Canudo, like many of his contemporaries was also concerned with the related question of language. The relationship between art and language has a long history: from the ecphrastic writing of late antiquity (Philostratus for example) via Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, Lessing's *Laocoön* to Kant's third critique and beyond. It is this long history that Canudo and others, having accepted cinema's status as art, bring to their writings. What specifies cinema's own "language" with respect to the other arts, in particular with respect to music, painting and poetry? What kind of language is capable of speculating about the cinema given the autonomisation of art and aesthetic experience? Before the systematisation, academicisation of the study of cinema, a more supple vocabulary of figures, metaphors and wildly speculative images characterised a certain group of writers on the cinema of which Canudo was the first.

**Paul Macovaz** is writing a doctoral dissertation on circularity and language in the work of Jean Epstein. Wider research interests include the philology of early film theory, proto- and para-cinematic concepts and myths.

**Adrian Martin, Monash University**  
[adrian.martin@monash.edu](mailto:adrian.martin@monash.edu)

## Gone and Forgotten: Roger Munier and His Heideggerian Vision of Cinema

Roger Munier (1923-2010) is an almost completely lost and forgotten name in the annals of philosophically-inflected film theory. A French philosopher who was a friend and translator of Heidegger, he was the author of 50 (!) books, covering essays, poetry and autobiography. Yet, at one time and in at least one place, he did make an impact. In his *Poetics of Cinema* series, the great filmmaker Raúl Ruiz remarks of the effect of Munier's groundbreaking pamphlet of 1963, *Contre l'image*, during his young adult years spent in Chile: it "brought down a storm of declarations, counter-declarations, and reprimands, enough to fill dozens of volumes". And this work was not absent from English-language circulation; a lengthy excerpt appeared in *Diogenes* in 1962, and is readily available today in that journal's on-line archive. Munier's early '60s vision of cinema is robustly Heideggerian and beautifully argued, with some twists and turns that have not yet recurred in our philosophical discourse on film. The objects and beings captured by the cine-camera and arranged by montage become (in Munier's account) mute, self-enclosed, "self-manifesting" in their "unconceptual hitherness"; and when something falls within this new aesthetic regime, "because it is represented, divided in two in the image, it is already signified, already offered in itself ... A thing was being said here which did not have, could not have its equivalent in nature". As much a fascinating, overlooked piece of critical history as a proposal that still remains lively and provocative, Munier's manifesto calls out to be, once more, encountered today.

Associate Professor **Adrian Martin** teaches in Film and Television Studies, and is Co-Director of the Research Unit in Film Culture and Theory, Monash University (Melbourne, Australia). In 2013/4 he will be Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Goethe University, Frankfurt. A practicing film critic since 1979, he is the author of six books (*Phantasms*, *Once Upon a Time in America*, *Raúl Ruiz: sublimes obsesiones*, *The Mad Max Movies*, *Qué es el cine moderna?*, *Last Day Every Day*) as well as several thousand articles and reviews. He is co-editor of the on-line film journal *LOLA* ([www.lolajournal.com](http://www.lolajournal.com)) and the book *Movie Mutations: The Changing Face of World Cinephilia* (British Film Institute, 2003). His most recent work *A Secret Cinema* is forthcoming from re:press in 2013.

Richard Rushton, University of Lancaster  
[r.rushton@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:r.rushton@lancaster.ac.uk)

## Cinematic judgment and universal communicability: on Benjamin and Kant with Metz

This paper examines a range of speculative intersections in the writings of Walter Benjamin, Immanuel Kant and Christian Metz. Primarily I argue that what Benjamin termed "distraction" in his essay "On the Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" can be put into contact with what Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* called "aesthetic judgment". For Kant, such judgments, which are also judgments of beauty, rely on the feeling that everyone should agree with such a judgment. In other words, they give rise to the sense of a "universal feeling". When engaging in acts of aesthetic judgment, therefore, I engage a "capacity to judge" and this capacity is a sense or feeling that others might feel in the same way that I do, that what I am feeling might potentially be universal.

Thus, I claim that Kant opens the door to a properly modern conception of aesthetic judgment, one which does not rely on ideals of beauty nor on the grandeur of aesthetic traditions. It falls to the arts of photography and especially cinema to exemplify this new conception of judgment. It is here, I claim, that Walter Benjamin makes his mark. By calling upon the decline of aura and the replacement of aesthetic contemplation which were associated with the "traditional" arts with the states of distraction and mass engagement fostered by photography and cinema, Benjamin shows us how Kant's revolution in aesthetic philosophy was realized by the arts of mechanical reproduction. At least, that is what I claim in this paper.

I rely to some extent on the writings of Jean-François Lyotard to interpret Kant's conception of beauty. Lyotard writes that aesthetic judgment emerges when "we try to feel what others should feel on the same occasion". This attempt to feel what others should feel is what makes these judgments, for Kant (according to Lyotard's commentary), universally communicable: they make a claim to be potentially shared by all human beings. Furthermore, for Lyotard, the feeling of beauty is non-subjective. At the same time, however, "the feeling of the beautiful", Lyotard writes, "is the subject just being born". It is here that I link Kant with both Benjamin and thence to Christian Metz: that the feeling of the "subject being born" is also that strange subject-spectator at the cinema who, Metz claimed, "comes before every *there is*".

**Richard Rushton** is Senior Lecturer in Film at Lancaster University. He is the author of *The Reality of Film* (Manchester University Press, 2011), *Cinema After Deleuze* (Continuum, 2012), and *The Politics of Cinema* (Palgrave, forthcoming 2013).

Robert Sinnerbrink, Macquarie University  
[robert.sinnerbrink@mq.edu.au](mailto:robert.sinnerbrink@mq.edu.au)

## Early Film-Philosophy: Observations and Conjectures

The recent "philosophical turn" in film theory is often described as commencing during the 1990s, thanks to the growing film studies' reception of works by Stanley Cavell (*The World Viewed* (1971/1979), *Pursuits of Happiness* (1981)) and Gilles Deleuze (*Cinema 1* (1983/1985), *Cinema 2* (1985/1989)). Thomas Elsaesser (2010), for example, credits Deleuze's *Cinema* books as having inaugurated the current wave of interest in the intersection between film and philosophy. Although it is true that Cavell and Deleuze are key sources for what is often called the "film and philosophy" or "film as philosophy" approach, what I am calling "film-philosophy" in fact has a much longer and more complex history that can be traced back to the very origins of film theory.

Drawing on recent work by Francesco Casetti, I shall make some observations and conjectures about the conceptual “logic” at work in the history of what we might call “early film-philosophy” (1907-1930). This period, spanning the consolidation of early cinema, emergence of avant-garde cinema, and the transition to talkies, produced an array of fascinating philosophical texts on film by figures such as Giovanni Papini, Ricciotto Canudo, György Lukás, Jean Epstein, Emile Vuillermoz, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, and Béla Balázs. As Casetti argues, many of the key figures, tropes, and concepts that we can identify in contemporary film theory are already articulated and explored in early film-philosophy. These include the idea of cinema as mind, cinema as writing, cinema as brain, cinema as thinking, cinema as philosophy, and cinema as gesturing towards the overcoming of traditional philosophical discourse. My conjecture is that reflecting on the “logic” of the history of early film-philosophy yields theoretical insights that should prove very instructive for contemporary practitioners of film-philosophy.

**Robert Sinnerbrink** is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Macquarie University, Sydney. He is the author of *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images* (Continuum, 2011), *Understanding Hegelianism* (Acumen, 2007), co-editor of *Critique Today* (Brill, 2006), and is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Film-Philosophy*. He has published numerous articles on film and philosophy, critical theory, and cinema aesthetics, including essays on the work of David Lynch, Terrence Malick, Michael Haneke, and Lars von Trier, in journals such as *Angelaki*, *Film-Philosophy*, *Screen*, and *Screening the Past*.

**Lisa Trahair**, University of New South Wales,  
[L.trahair@unsw.edu.au](mailto:L.trahair@unsw.edu.au)

### **Being on the outside: Stanley Cavell’s world viewed, cinematic automatism and Michael Haneke’s *Caché***

Jacques Rancière’s opening to *Film Fables* cites Jean Epstein extolling the virtues of cinema over and above other narrative arts because of its unparalleled power to convey the real truth of life in its illogical, non-teleological, open-ended, and infinitely mutating glory. What makes cinema adequate to this truth is the non-interference of the human-being in the capture of that reality. For cinema is “an art” in which human intelligence “is subject to another intelligence, the intelligence of the machine that wants nothing, that does not construct any stories, but simply records the infinity of movements that gives rise to a drama a hundred times more intense than all dramatic reversals of fortune”. The name given to this power is cinematic or cinematographic automatism. Between Epstein and Rancière numerous other thinkers—Walter Benjamin, André Bazin, Stanley Cavell and Gilles Deleuze to name a few of them—have focussed their consideration of the cinema on understanding the power of this automatism. And Cavell is the thinker that most explicitly takes it on and makes it the point on which his entire argument about the ontology of cinema pivots. In this paper I want to examine the version of automatism presented by Cavell in this 1971 monograph, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*. In order to consider the continuing efficacy of Cavell’s thinking on this matter I will put his precepts into action in an analysis of Michael Haneke’s film of 2005, *Caché*.

**Lisa Trahair** is Senior Lecturer in the School of the Arts and Media at the University of New South Wales. She is author of *The Comedy of Philosophy: Sense and Nonsense in Early Cinematic Slapstick* (SUNY, 2007) and is currently working on an ARC funded project entitled “Film as Philosophy: What is Cinematic Thinking?” with Robert Sinnerbrink and Gregory Flaxman. Most recently, she co-edited with Lisabeth During a special issue of *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* on *Belief in Cinema* which revisits themes from André Bazin (17.4, December 2012).

Julia Vassilieva, Monash University

[j.vassilieva@monash.edu](mailto:j.vassilieva@monash.edu)

## Eisenstein/Vygotsky/Luria's project: cinematic thinking and the integrative science of mind and brain.

The contribution of Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), a revolutionary Soviet film director and film theorist, to "cinematic thinking before Deleuze" is well recognized, not least by Deleuze himself, specifically in *Cinema I*. However, the role played in Eisenstein's theoretical work by "Eisenstein's circle" that included a vast range of scholars, intellectuals and artists within and outside Russia is rarely interrogated.

This paper focuses on a collaboration between Eisenstein, the philologist academician Nikolai Marr (1856-1934), and the psychologists Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Alexander Luria (1902-1977). The latter two surely rank near the top of the list of the most influential psychologists of the 20th century and moreover, belong to those few whose influence is likely to endure well into the 21st. While Luria was instrumental in creating the field of neuropsychology, or cognitive neuroscience, Vygotsky forged cultural-historical theory providing an insightful paradigm to address the emergence and development of thought, language and consciousness as culturally and historically specific phenomena.

Eisenstein first started to discuss psychological problems of the "theory and psychology of expressiveness" with Luria and Vygotsky around 1925-beginning of 1926. In the early 1930s, Eisenstein, Marr, Vygotsky and Luria formed a research seminar to systematically analyze the "problems of the nascent language of cinematography". And while the untimely death of Vygotsky (in June, 1934) and Marr (in December, 1934) put an end to this four way collaboration, regular meetings and discussions between Eisenstein and Luria continued till Eisenstein's death in February 1948. The range of topics addressed in the seminar (as the author's research in Luria's archive demonstrates) ranged from the analysis of the historical processes through film to the basic structures of consciousness and the dynamics of personality. This joint theoretical effort was instrumental in Eisenstein's work on *Method*, his Opus Magnum, published in Russian in 2002 and still not translated into English.

This paper critically analyses how early concepts proposed by Eisenstein, Vygotsky, Luria and Marr anticipate the current problematics of film theory. Specifically, I argue that their shared constructivist attitude allows us to understand film as a tool of thinking, both from the point of view of authorship and reception. Moreover, the unique aspect of Eisenstein, Vygotsky and Luria's approach was their holistic understanding of consciousness and creativity. As such, Eisenstein/Vygotsky/Luria project transcends current divide in film theory between cognitivism on the one hand and focus on affect and phenomenology on the other by forging productive links between film and the integrative science of mind and brain.

**Julia Vassilieva** is Lecturer in Film and Television Studies at Monash University. Her research interests include historical film theory and criticism, intersection of film, politics and philosophy, and contemporary Russian cinema and popular culture. She has conducted extensive research in S. Eisenstein's archives in Russia and has published widely on Eisenstein in English and in Russian. Her publications include "Between Utopia and Event: Beyond the Banality of Local Politics in Eisenstein", *Film-Philosophy*, 15, "Capital and Co: Kluge, Eisenstein, Marx", *Screening the Past*, 31, "Sergei Eisenstein's *¡Qué viva México!* through Time: Historicising Value Judgment", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 24.5. Among her recent publications are also "Religious Discourse as an Empty Signifier in the Post-Communist Russian Cultural Space", *Aesopic Voices*, 2011, and "Artavazd Pelechian's Distantial Montage: Before and After", forthcoming in *LOLA*. She is co-editor, with Con Verevis, of *After Taste: Cultural Value and the Moving Image*, Routledge, 2012.

## Of Flesh, Fabric, Folds: Merleau-Ponty, Raul Ruiz and the New World Baroque

This paper takes its inspiration from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy – in particular, his later ontology of the "flesh". As I will argue it, the thought of Merleau-Ponty provides us with a productive means of approaching the baroque of art and film. While the notion of a "cinematic" baroque has contributed to the perceptual/aesthetic variety of film, it tends to be conflated with a spectacular or hyperbolic model of vision. Concentrating upon Chilean director Raúl Ruiz' last work, *Mysteries of Lisbon* (2010), this paper will foreground the baroque as an innately sensuous, deeply thoughtful and culturally-hybridized phenomenon whose impact continues to be felt across trans-cultural screens today.

Adopting a phrase taken directly from Merleau-Ponty, Christine Buci-Glucksmann has characterized the baroque as espousing a "madness of vision" that embraces many possible points-of-view. Writing of Ruiz, Buci-Glucksmann has spoken, eloquently, of Ruiz' "baroque eye of the camera" as it encourages a mobility and multiplicity of vision. While Buci-Glucksmann is correct in identifying the sense of perpetual dispersal that marks both baroque aesthetics and Ruiz' cinema, she elides the broader sensuous connections that unite Merleau-Ponty's philosophy with the baroque. Furthermore, her insistence upon the baroque as a "madness of vision" fails to consider the ways in which the baroque might function as a coherent and consciously invoked aesthetic experience, no matter how "maddening" its perceptual activity might become.

As it was re-configured in Latin American contexts, the baroque became a pre-eminent means by which to materialize, envision and express complex processes of artistic and cross-cultural exchange. Similarly, as I will detail, in Ruiz, European and Latin American influences, Old World and New World baroque styles at once sensuously and self-reflexively combine. As Gilles Deleuze points out, the dialectics of seeing/seen that Buci-Glucksmann articulates delimits the baroque to a singularly "optical fold", whereas "the criterion or operative concept of the Baroque is the Fold, everything that includes and in all its extensiveness" (*Fold*, 38). While the Deleuzian "fold" has been taken up by film theory and contemporary baroque scholarship, yet to be considered in the nexus between cinema, the baroque and sensation is the thought of Merleau-Ponty. Bringing together the cinema of Ruiz with the embodied vision, movement and materiality of phenomenological philosophy, this paper seeks to develop a cinematic-thinking of the baroque via Merleau-Ponty – a philosopher whose interest in the "flesh", "folds" and "fabrics" of perception pre-empts Deleuze.

**Saige Walton** is Lecturer in Screen Studies at The University of South Australia. Her work on film/media aesthetics appears in *Playing with Memories: Essays on Guy Maddin* (University of Manitoba Press 2009), *The Contemporary Comic Book Superhero* (Routledge 2008), *Lounge Critic: The Couch Theorist's Companion* (Latrobe 2004), *Screen, Senses of Cinema* and *Screening the Past*. She is currently at work on a book manuscript that deals with the historic and cinematic baroque, as well as a forthcoming project on the topic of grace.