



Cinema's Realisms

Room 327, Robert Webster Building, UNSW | 14th, 17th-18th November 2014

Mathew Abbott
Federation University

Rex Butler
University of Queensland

Damian Cox
Bond University

Lisabeth During
Pratt Institute

Hamish Ford
University of Newcastle

Tara Forrest
University of Technology Sydney

Greg Hainge
University of Queensland

Sigi Jöttkandt
University of New South Wales

George Kouvaros
University of New South Wales

Marguerite La Caze
University of Queensland

David Macarthur
University of Sydney

Philip Martin
Macquarie University

Kenta McGrath
Curtin University

Jennifer A. McMahon
University of Adelaide

Julian Murphet
University of New South Wales

James Phillips
University of New South Wales

Robert Pippin
University of Chicago

Richard Rushton
Lancaster University

Richard Smith
University of Sydney

Jane Stadler
University of Queensland

Saige Walton
University of South Australia



Film as Philosophy
Understanding Cinematic Thinking



5th Workshop on Cinematic Thinking: Cinema's Realisms

Workshop Organizers: James Phillips, Robert Sinnerbrink, Lisa Trahair

The fifth cinematic thinking workshop is dedicated to reconsidering cinematic realism. What questions do cinema's realisms pose for understanding cinematic thinking?

Writing during the period of Germany's domination by Nazism, Siegfried Kracauer accounted for the medium's specificity of cinema by aligning its communicative capacities with those of photography. At the outset of his book *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, he observes that the latter 'was born under the lucky star of realism'. The realism of photography, however, differs from its counterparts in the other arts on many levels: rather than simply creating independent imitations of the world it becomes part of that world; it endows cinema with the capacity to retrieve unconscious, 'hitherto unsuspected dimensions of reality' and simultaneously problematises art's habitual intention to externalise 'inner vision'. In the technological age, photography's augmentation of vision (its bird's-eye views and microscopic revelations) works hand in glove with other industrial novelties to throw into question the correspondence between human perception and phenomena. Challenged in their naïve belief that the world is just as they see it, the viewers of photographs furthermore start to doubt the traction of their values when it comes to judging what is around them. As Kracauer sees it, the power of cinema does not lie in realism understood as verisimilitude, or even in the fantasy of the camera's unfettered access to visible reality; rather it establishes the possibility of enacting the process of materialization, and is specifically tied to the conditions of modernity.

In the 1940s, André Bazin latched onto Antonio Pietrangeli's characterization of Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* (1942) as neorealist both to specify an emergent tendency in post World War Two Italian cinema and to identify a drive in aesthetic production that cinema could claim to redefine on its own terms. Thus understood, neorealism was both the latest expression of the medium's adaptation to its developing technology and to the socio-political conditions of the day. Arguably, it is also one of the first signs of practitioners of the medium collectively taking responsibility for its capacities by reining in its appeal to the imagination, and recognizing its need to develop an ethics.

Long interpreted rather naïvely by film studies as proffering a naïve realism, Bazin's writings have been re-examined by film theorists and philosophers in recent years with the aim of re-establishing the complexity of his thinking on the question of the real and realism in cinema. Complicating this recent return to Bazin's often tentative formulations of film's relation to the real, film's two most eminent philosophers hesitated over his claims about cinema's realism: Stanley Cavell displaced the issue of realism by associating cinema's automatism with the question of presence, and more provocatively Gilles Deleuze queried Bazin's overtures about cinema's access to 'a new form of reality', and proposed that the problem that cinema faced was in fact a problem of thought—not a question of form or of content, but of the mental, indeed of cinema's capacity to express and articulate thought.

For this workshop we have asked scholars to reconsider the parameters of cinematic realism along numerous lines: Does the issue of cinema's realism more appropriately derive from the ontology of film or its aesthetics? And how does the attribution of it to one dimension of film rather than the other determine the ethical questions that attach to it? What does a realism look like that is devoted not to representation and verisimilitude but to the exposition of the constituting lack that lies at the heart of encounter with the real, our ability to make sense of it, and to communicate such sense to others? Is it the case that cinema is better able to do this than other media? And what do other media then hope to achieve when they claim to be drawing on the cinematic? What evidence is there in contemporary cinema of the materialist and/or ethical realism associated with Kracauer's and Bazin's thinking about the medium? Is there scope in Bazin's writing to consider cinematic automatism not as an attempt to capture reality but as peculiarly responsive to its irretrievability, to consider realism not as a tendency that strives for an assurance of presence but as an aesthetic devoted to its loss? Is realism the key to cinema's ethical dimension? Should it be equated with style? Does the recent surge in non-fiction film have something to contribute to a renewed interest in cinematic realism and its vicissitudes?

The workshop will close with a lecture by Professor Robert Pippin on "Psychology Degree Zero: On the Representation of Action in the Films of the Dardenne Brothers" on the evening of Tuesday 18th November.

5th Cinematic Thinking Workshop: Cinema's Realisms, November 14, 17, 18, 2014
University of New South Wales, Room 327, Robert Webster Building

Friday 14th November

10.30-11:00: Coffee and Welcome

11.00-12.00: **Lisabeth During**, The Realism Wars

12.00-1.00: **Richard Rushton**, On Deleuze and Metz: Signification and the Real in Cinema

1.00-2.00: *Lunch*

2.00-3.00: **Damian Cox**, Spectator-Based Theory of Cinematic Realism

3.00-3.30 *Afternoon tea*

3.30-4.30: **Julian Murphet**, Labour, Reality, Cinema

4.30-5.30: **Philip Martin**, "You Can (Not) Believe": Anime-Worlds and the Question of Animetic Realism from *Evangelion* to the *Monogatari* Series

Monday 17th November

09.00-10:00: **George Kouvaros**, 'It's Not Quite Right Yet': Realism and Affect in *A Woman Under the Influence* and *A Nos Amours*

10.00-11.00: **Saige Walton**, Film Realism and Rhythm: Apprehending *Stranger by the Lake*

11.00-11.30: *Morning tea*

11.30-12.30: **Jane Stadler**, Felt Realities: Phenomenology, Experiential Realism, and Sound Effects

12.30-1.30: **Tara Forrest**, The Anti-Realism of Feelings: Alexander Kluge's Political Realist Aesthetic

1.30-2.15: *Lunch*

2.15-3.15: **Rex Butler**, The Real of the Spirit/The Spirit of the Real

3.15-4.15: **Sigi Jöttkandt**, Mimesis and Mimicry in Nabokov: The 'Reel' Life of Sebastian Knight

4.15-4.30: *Afternoon tea*

4.30-5.30: **James Phillips**, Anti-Oedipus: The Ethics of Performance and Misrecognition in Matsumoto Toshio's *Funeral Parade of Roses*

5.30-6.30: **Greg Hainge**, Realism, Relativity and (R)egress.

Tuesday 18th November

09.00-10:00: **Richard Smith**, Belief, Perception, Cognition: Bazin and the new sciences of cinema

10.00-11.00: **Jenny McMahon**, Shaping Experience Upstream: Film and the Conditions for Realism

11.00-11.30: *Morning tea*

11.30-12.30: **Marguerite La Caze**, Realism as resistance: The case of *Wadjda*

12.30-1.30 **Hamish Ford**, Realism Reconceived: Altman's Challenge

1.30-2.15: *Lunch*

2.15-3.15 **Kenta MacGrath**, Beyond Slow: The Problem of Realism in Contemporary Minimalist Cinema

3.15-4.15: **Mathew Abbott**, The Realism of Artifice: On Kiarostami's *Five*

4.15-4.30: *Afternoon tea*

4.30-5.30 **David Macarthur**, A Critique of Cavell's Cinematic Realism: Another Route to the Skeptical Condition of Film

6.00-7.30: **Robert Pippin**, Psychology Degree Zero: On the Representation of Action in the Films of the Dardenne Brothers.*

* Venue: Tyree Room, John Niland Scientia Building, UNSW Kensington (map ref G19) To attend this last talk please register separately through the following website: <https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/events/so-what-lecture-professor-robert-pippin/>

Mathew Abbott, 'The Realism of Artifice: On Kiarostami's *Five*'

mathewabbott@gmail.com

In *Abbas Kiarostami and Film-Philosophy* I present a defence of film-philosophy through the cinema of Abbas Kiarostami. I argue that the philosophical propensity of film in general consists less in its ability to make a 'positive' contribution to theorising than in how it challenges, beguiles, goads, and resists it. And this tendency of film, I work to demonstrate, has been exploited in a fascinating, charming, and often devastating way by Kiarostami. This paper develops my deflationary and anti-theoretic account of cinematic thinking with an analysis of 2003's *Five*. Shot on digital cameras, *Five* is split into five episodes, each (or so it seems) consisting of a single long take. At first blush, the film appears to add weight to a certain rather canonical reading of Kiarostami's project, where his primary concern is taken to be the dignity and drama of the everyday. I refine this reading by following up on the questions *Five* raises about its own status.

As I work to show, the philosophical power of the movie consists not only in how it captures small contingent details of reality that could never have been intended by the director, but also – and more fundamentally – in how it forces us to question the metaphysical assumptions underlying our desire for access to unmediated reality. Kiarostami's achievement in this film is to have identified – and worked to liquidate – a certain fantasy: the notion that, for something to be regarded as really real, it has to be unmediated by human intention, the notion that the presence of the human disturbs a reality that, were it not for the incursion, would have remained pristine. It indicates that we are unlikely to find a general account of the epistemic privilege of photographic media. Or rather, it is not quite that we'll never find a general account, insofar as this implies we are lacking something. Complicating Roland Barthes's notion of punctum and Michael Fried's concept of theatricality, I argue *Five's* foregrounding of artifice allows it to achieve a certain kind of realism: one attentive to the non-epistemic nature of the claim reality makes on us.

Mathew Abbott is Lecturer in Philosophy at Federation University Australia. His book on the philosophical significance of Kiarostami's cinema – *Abbas Kiarostami and Film-Philosophy* – is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press.

Rex Butler, 'The Real of the Spirit/The Spirit of the Real'

r.butler@uq.edu.au

Of course, one of the profound enigmas of Realist and Neo-Realist cinema is its emphasis on matters of the "spirit". The greatest theorist of Neo-Realism in cinema, André Bazin, was a Catholic and many of the best-known "realist" films directly address matters of religion (Roberto Rossellini's *The Flowers of St Francis* and Ingmar Bergman's *Winter Light*). But shouldn't the real and the spirit be strictly opposed? This paper will argue, on the contrary, that the real is only to be accessed through the spiritual, while the spiritual is only to be attained through the real. A number of contemporary films addressing the intersection of the flesh (the real) and the spiritual will be examined, from Jean-Luc Godard's *Hail Mary* to Lukas Moodysson's *A Hole in the Heart* to Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac*.

Associate Professor **Rex Butler** is Reader in Art History and currently Director of Research for the School of EMSAH. His current research projects include *A History of UnAustralian Art* (with A.D.S. Donaldson), a critical biography of Colin McCahon (with Laurence Simmons) and a book on Stanley Cavell. He has recently completed a book on Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* and edited a *Dictionary on Slavoj Žižek*.

Damian Cox, 'Spectator-Based Theory of Cinematic Realism'

dcox@bond.edu.au

I describe a theory of cinematic realism(s) that starts from the concept of adopting a realist stance. There are two basic kinds of realist stance: those towards the object of cinematic depiction and those towards the depiction itself. Spectators take a realist stance towards a depicted object (e.g. event, character, narrative world) when they treat its existence as if it were a mind-independent fact, i.e. a fact independent of the spectator and independent of artistic invention. By contrast, spectators adopt a realist stance towards a depiction when they disregard artificial features of the depiction; they see through the artifice as if it weren't there (e.g. they allow non-diegetic music to do its work without noticing it; they regard a montage sequence as revelatory – as tracking a sequence of events with spatio-temporal coherence – without taking account

of the fact that it matches no coherent spectatorial perspective). There are three main challenges in setting up a theory on this basis. One is to account for the two realist stances: their psychological and phenomenological characters; their relation to epistemic and metaphysical forms of realism. Another is to show how the stances function in film spectatorship: for example, how and when they come apart; how they interact with other aspects of film spectatorship such as identification, engagement and moral judgment. A third challenge is to use the concept of the realist stance to develop an account of realism as cinematic style. In this paper, I wish to make a start on responding to each of these challenges. I use a number of films to aid my discussion, including *Waltz with Bashir*, *Un Chien Andalou*, *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*.

Damian Cox is a philosopher with research interests in philosophy and film, moral psychology and ethical theory. With Marguerite La Caze and Michael Levine, he is a co-author of *Integrity and the Fragile Self* (Ashgate, 2003); with Michael Levine and Saul Newman, he is co-author of *Politics Most Unusual: Violence, Sovereignty and Democracy in the War on Terror* (Palgrave, 2009); and with Michael Levine he is co-author of *Thinking Through Film* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). He teaches philosophy and film, contemporary political philosophy and the history of ethics and politics at Bond University.

Lisabeth During, 'The Realism Wars'

lduring@pratt.edu

Of all the political battles of the 1930s, the shouting match between Lukács and Brecht may not have been the worst in terms of actual casualties. But its bitterness was instructive, and some aspects of the issues the Marxist aesthetes fought over are still unresolved in contemporary critical theory.

Brecht and Lukács disagreed about history, dialectics, form and naturalism. And they believed they had incompatible positions on the question of art's transparency and its power to appeal to the mind, the senses and the will. What they neglected to pause over was the very difference that made all the difference: Brecht's realism was poetic, Lukács believed literature lived or died with the narrative form. Telling was progressive, description reactionary. But realism can be poetic without falling off the train of revolutionary critique. Further, the aesthetic road Brecht opened led not backwards towards the novel as degenerate epic, but forwards. Its movement (progressive, edifying, dialectical and of course, revolutionary) led towards epic as a new way of thinking aesthetics – beyond representationalism and beyond social realism – and thus, in ways he and Benjamin saw rather clearly, away from the novel and towards popular cinema.

I want to revisit these old debates about political truth and poetic form by applying some of the Lukácsian and Brechtian themes to the art Lukács did not understand: cinema. In so doing I will be comparing the literary realists to our greatest theorists of cinematic realism (Bazin and Kracauer), and correcting the misjudgment of film realism associated with the Brechtian theses of *Screen* in the 1970s.

Lisabeth During teaches philosophy at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, where she convenes the Critical and Visual Studies Program. She is finishing a book *Chastity Test: Studies in an Ascetic Ideal*.

Hamish Ford, 'Realism Reconceived: Altman's Challenge'

hamish.ford@newcastle.edu.au

Despite their rather elaborate and distinct emphasis on style, the films of Robert Altman have often been described as marked by strong links to realism. In particular the prominence of improvisation, at the heart of which is a trademark use of the zoom lens that seems to suggest the camera's representational deference to unpredictable pro-filmic reality, and a keen eye for the social (and spatial) details of a given milieu, suggests a formal kinship with documentary and *cinéma vérité* traditions. Yet in important ways Altman can also be seen as a true 'formalist', stressing the plasticity of celluloid per se and its inherently unreliable, even violent nature when it comes to assumptions about film's representational and epistemological power. In this understanding, his work explores the image as the only 'reality' by suggesting cinema's undermining of the very social world rendered on screen and the question of meaning within and beyond the films. Altman's extensive zooms throughout his 1970s work arguably unmoor a typical sense of realism by making vertiginous any sense of camera-subject proximity and frame definition. In concert with the films' characteristically soft image texture, here we can see a cinema concurrently defined by 'process' and as reflexive material-

ist 'stuff' (to recall Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's description of Godard's revolution). My paper shines a light on this side of Altman's work at the heart of which lies the importance of style. The aim is not to assert realism's eclipse by modernism, but rather contribute to the long-standing discussion – the origins of which can be found in both Bazin and Kracauer, then drawn out more explicitly and extended in re-readings of Italian neorealism by Peter Brunette as well as Deleuze – contending that in the very special case of cinema, such oppositions are dialectically uncomfortable but entirely proper bedfellows.

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).

Tara Forrest, 'The Anti-Realism of Feelings: Alexander Kluge's Political Realist Aesthetic'

tara.Forrest@uts.edu.au

In the *Poetikvorlesungen* he delivered in Frankfurt in 2012, Alexander Kluge argues that the Frankfurt School tradition of Critical Theory is underpinned by an antagonistic conception of realism. Kluge himself is a contemporary heir to that tradition and this political realist aesthetic is a defining feature of his experimental film, television and literary work. As Kluge makes clear, his approach is "antagonistic" because it is pitted against the pervasive idea that the reality in which we live accurately reflects the myriad possibilities inherent in existing circumstances. For Kluge, "reality" (in this restrictive sense) is not a "natural state" that exists autonomously outside the subject. On the contrary, he argues that it is manifested in a mode of thinking that has been imposed on the subject via ideology; an ideology so pervasive that it has overridden the instinctive capacity – inherent in our feelings – for distinguishing not only between right and wrong, but between that which works for or against our own interests. "If", he argues, "I levy a protest against the reality principle, against that which this reality does to me, I am realistic." It is thus not the reality principle but "the realism of the human brain with its reshaping reaction to reality" that is "the fundamental condition of realism." Focusing on Kluge's films, this paper will analyse the degree to which the realistic method underpinning the experimental form of his work is driven by a desire to "motivate feelings"; to break through the ideological straitjacket imposed by the reality principle in an attempt to facilitate thinking, discussion, and debate about the possibilities for cultural and political change.

Tara Forrest is Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. She is the author of *The Politics of Imagination: Benjamin, Kracauer, Kluge* (2007), co-editor (with Anna Scheer) of *Christoph Schlingensief: Art Without Borders* (2010), and editor of *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials For the Imagination* (2012). She is currently completing a book entitled *A Realism of Protest: Kluge, Schlingensief, Haneke* (forthcoming 2015).

Greg Hainge, 'Realism, Relativity and (R)egress'

g.hainge@uq.edu.au

Many debates about cinema's realism, as noted in the provocation for the fifth cinematic thinking workshop, begin from a reflection about the photographic base of the cinema as a technological medium and the direct or indexical access that this allows to reality. There are a number of problems with this. Firstly, to believe that photography provides a direct indexical print of reality, even in the analogue era, is fundamentally to misunderstand the photochemical ontology of the medium. Secondly, whilst the cinema may indeed have relied in large part on technologies that have their origins in technologies developed for still photography, its specificity lies in its more complex spatio-temporal dimensionality. This, in turn, renders it all the more problematic to talk about realism in the cinema if, in using this term, we extrapolate that there would be something called "reality" that the cinema was able to access, representing it at a distance, fixing it in place – much like the indexical fallacy believes that the photochemical process of analogue photography fixes the world in place as it is in such a way that it coincides with itself.

If we infer from this, however, that the ontology of the cinema derives from its aesthetics rather than from its technological and material qualities, we risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Rather, I wish to

contend that the ontology of the cinema needs to be considered as emanating from both a particular technological configuration – that, of course, has undergone major changes throughout the history of the medium – and from its aesthetics, by which I mean cinema’s capacity to express itself as a function of its historically-situated technological configuration in a projected environment. To maintain this is to emphasise the necessarily expressive nature of cinema’s ontology that is unable to relate to a “real” that would be separate from it. It may indeed then be possible to talk of cinema’s “realisms”, but only if this plural brings into the fray an infinite regress or, rather, egress.

Greg Hainge is Reader in French and Deputy Head of the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. He is the author of *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise* (Bloomsbury Academic 2013), numerous articles on film, philosophy, literature, sound, music and the visual arts, and is currently preparing a monograph on Philippe Grandrieux to be published as part of a new series he is co-editing for Bloomsbury entitled “ex:centrics”. He serves on the editorial boards of *Culture, Theory and Critique*, *Studies in French Cinema*, *Contemporary French Civilization*, *Études Céliniennes* and *Corps: Revue interdisciplinaire* and has recently been working with the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, on a major David Lynch exhibition and retrospective to be held there in 2015.

Sigi Jöttkandt, ‘Mimesis and Mimicry in Nabokov: The “Reel” Life of Sebastian Knight’

s.jottkandt@unsw.edu.au

Vladimir Nabokov’s *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* is a detective story that traces the narrator’s attempts to write a biography of his famous half-brother, the dead novelist Sebastian Knight. Over the course of the novel, the identities of the two brothers gradually morph into one another, as the novel we are reading starts to uncannily resemble Sebastian’s fiction. By the end, the narrator (“V”) declares “I am Sebastian Knight”. This paper explores the role of cinema in Nabokov’s work as a figure that challenges the logic of mimetic representation, along with its hierarchies of real and ideal. For Nabokov, cinematic representation resembles a Moebius strip that imperceptibly undoes these hierarchies carried over from Newtonian concepts of space and time, along with its Cartesian coordinates of representation. In *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, cinema’s sinuous “reel” life discloses a logic that precedes distinctions of self and other, original and copy, real and semblance, which reveal themselves - along with the representational systems they spawn - as symptoms of a more archaic force: the uncontainable power of letteration.

Sigi Jöttkandt teaches in the English Department at UNSW. She is the author of *Acting Beautifully: Henry James and the Ethical Aesthetic* (2005), *First Love: A Phenomenology of the One* (2010) and several edited collections and articles on psychoanalysis and literature.

George Kouvaros, “It’s Not Quite Right Yet”: Realism and Affect in *A Woman Under the Influence* and *A Nos Amours*’

g.kouvaros@unsw.edu.au

This paper will examine two films that straddle the distinction between realism and modernism: John Cassavetes’ *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974) and Maurice Pialat’s *A Nos Amours* (1983). In both films, we find a dual agenda whereby the telling of a story occurs simultaneously with the exploration of different affective states. My concern is with mapping how the interaction of these two agendas transforms and revitalizes understandings of realism from simply a copy of things to a form of demiurgic praxis.

George Kouvaros is Professor of Film Studies in the School of the Arts and Media, UNSW.

Marguerite La Caze, ‘Realism as resistance: The case of *Wadjda*’

m.lacaze@uq.edu.au

In political terms, cinematic realism can be associated with ideological reinforcement of the status quo or propaganda for an oppressive regime. This paper explores the contrary potential of realism in the cinema to resist oppression. While this phenomenon can be observed in a range of recent world cinema, *Wadjda*

(2013) presents a special case in appearing from a place with no film industry and no film distribution system: Saudi Arabia. The director, Hafaā Al-Mansour, has been praised for making the film there at all. Yet this ignores the power of the film itself, which takes a slice of time in the life of a young Riyadh girl and focuses on the everyday desire of a child: to own a bicycle. With reference to the neo-realist fate of a certain bicycle, the film uses a realist style to provide a description of the oppressive nature of life and at the same time to affirm hope in gradual change through the natality of a young child who does not see life's restrictions as insurmountable obstacles. Set in the specific time and place of contemporary Riyadh, the realism of the film demonstrates the possibility of thinking otherwise.

Marguerite La Caze is Associate Professor in philosophy at the University of Queensland. She has research interests and publications in European and feminist philosophy in the fields of ethics, political philosophy, and aesthetics, including philosophy and film. Her publications include *The Analytic Imaginary* (Cornell, 2002) *Integrity and the Fragile Self*, with Damian Cox and Michael Levine (Ashgate, 2003), and *Wonder and Generosity: Their Role in Ethics and Politics*, (SUNY, 2012). Her work in philosophy and film includes papers on *The Sixth Sense*, *Tesis*, *D'ailleurs*, *Derrida*, and *A Separation*.

David Macarthur, 'A Critique of Cavell's Cinematic Realism: Another Route to the Skeptical Condition of Film'

david.macarthur@sydney.edu.au

Cavell is famous for arguing "that the medium of movies is photographic and that a photograph is of reality or nature" (*The World Viewed*, 16). In this talk I take issue with the causal-indexical notion of the real that Cavell exploits on the basis of what he calls the automaticity (or mechanical production) of photographic images. This fact of photography is understood in terms of "the removal of the human agent from the task of reproduction" (23). I argue instead that photography does not straightforwardly confront us with the real precisely because we cannot tell, simply from a photographic image, where to draw the line between the intentional and the merely causal. Cavell's cinematic realism is thematized as a reality from which we, as audience, are displaced, as we are skeptically displaced by Cartesian doubts from the external world of our experience. Although I do not accept this derivation of the relation between film and modern skepticism or its implications, I think Cavell's basic intuition is worth salvaging. On my re-reading of the skeptical implications of film, the fact that we do not know whether the actors of film are present to us emblemizes our general worldly condition of living with other minds skepticism.

David Macarthur is a senior lecturer in the Philosophy Department at the University of Sydney. He works at the interface of contemporary pragmatism, Wittgenstein and the philosophy of art. In addition to these topics, he has published articles in leading philosophy journals and books on liberal naturalism, skepticism, common sense, perception, language, philosophy of architecture, and philosophy of photography and film. He has co-edited three collections of papers with Mario De Caro (Roma Tré): *Naturalism in Question* (Harvard, 2004); *Naturalism and Normativity* (Columbia, 2010); and *Philosophy in an Age of Science: Physics, Mathematics and Skepticism* (Harvard, 2012).

Philip Martin, "'You Can (Not) Believe": Anime-Worlds and the Question of Animate Realism from *Evangelion* to the *Monogatari* Series'

philip.martin@students.mq.edu.au

Contemporary film and philosophy debates feature detailed and diverse engagements with the ontology of 'live-action' film, owing to its intriguing relationship to reality when compared to other art forms. However, although non-live-action alternatives to traditional film are beginning to be explored, some film media are still neglected by philosophy. One such medium is Japanese *anime*. In this paper, I intend to explore some instances of the ways *anime* can be philosophical, in particular through its intriguing 'ontology'. Specifically I will draw on the work of animation theorist and philosopher of technology Thomas Lamarre and film philosopher Daniel Yacavone to develop a philosophical notion of '*anime*-worlds'. Such an idea can be used to unify the narrative, aesthetic and technical elements of film and illuminate the philosophical qualities of individual *anime* and *anime* generally. In doing so I will seek to elucidate the complex relationship between *anime* and questions of cinematic realism. I will argue that the question of the relationship of the image to

reality is subtly different for *anime* and that a notion of *anime*-worlds is indispensable in reckoning with it. This has many consequences for situating *anime* with respect to the history and genres of live-action cinematic film. I suggest that *anime*-worlds, unlike cinematic film-worlds, have an anti-realist orientation, severing and undermining the epistemological connections and aesthetic conditions sometimes used to characterise the realisms of film. In order to understand the realisms of film we must develop a picture of its anti-realisms – anti-realisms of which *anime* represents a particularly extreme mode. I will discuss these issues with regards to two influential contemporary *anime* film-makers, Anno Hideaki and Shinbou Akiyuki.

Philip Martin is a completing Masters of Research student at Macquarie University. His thesis, *Fate, Freedom and Anime-Worldliness: From Heidegger and Nishida to Anime-Philosophy*, is an extension of film-philosophy into the domain of anime aided by the philosophies of Martin Heidegger and the Kyoto School. This is his first entry in a series of ongoing investigations into the relationship between anime, film and philosophy. He is currently preparing to start a PhD research project, which will be a critical comparative study of the Kyoto School, Gilles Deleuze and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, specifically focussed on aesthetics.

Kenta McGrath, 'Beyond Slow: The Problem of Realism in Contemporary Minimalist Cinema'

kenta.mcgrath@gmail.com

Today there exists a well-documented cinematic trend, practised by a diverse group of filmmakers worldwide and commonly referred to as 'slow cinema' – a minimalist mode of cinema characterised by heavily de-dramatised narrative and formal approaches that foreground emptiness, silence, stillness and duration. Concurrently, there is a growing tendency within film criticism to view these filmmakers as torchbearers of the realist tradition, which can be attributed to their films' predominantly realist narratives and images, and their use – and expansion of – strategies that have precedents in existing realist cinematic models. Indeed, their broad preference for often extremely long takes over montage evokes and expands on Bazin's realist model, while their use of non-actors, narrative ambiguity, as well as their focus on social realities and the quotidian draw heavily on the legacy of neorealism and the documentary tradition. A closer analysis, however, reveals a more complex, and even paradoxical approach to realism. Contemporary minimalist filmmakers rely on other key, yet often overlooked approaches, such as the innovative use of offscreen space and sound, the blending of documentary and fiction, and the accentuation of the inherently reflexive and abstract qualities of minimalism (as previously articulated in Minimal Art, literary minimalism and structural film). They also frequently integrate non-realist narrative elements into realist formal structures, and vice versa. In so doing, contemporary minimalist filmmakers create highly reflexive films that can be simultaneously perceived as realistic and not, and which accommodate fluctuating, and seemingly incongruous, levels of realism within the same film. This paper examines the ways in which a series of contemporary filmmakers (Lisandro Alonso, Pedro Costa, Abbas Kiarostami, Apichatpong Weerasethakul) use minimalism to enhance, detract from and interrogate the realism of their films, in order to investigate new approaches to the century-old dilemma of how reality can be represented on screen.

Kenta McGrath is a filmmaker and lecturer based in Perth, Australia. He currently teaches Screen Arts, and is completing his PhD, at Curtin University.

Jennifer A. McMahon, 'Shaping Experience Upstream: Film and the Conditions for Realism'

jenny.mcmahon@adelaide.edu.au

Mohan Matthen's Sensory Classification Thesis challenges the idea that sensory input is structurally unmediated by prior learning. The particular details of his thesis suggest that perception is based on internalised models or heuristics which are in a continual state of development. While this development involves structures set in place through the sensory motor system's interaction with the world, and hence can be said to be based in universals, the classification involved extends to the role understanding can play in shaping experience upstream in a continuous feedback loop. Arguably only determinate exchanges, such as those engaging community and environment, provide the basis of classification capable of shaping experience. Extending this to cinematic thinking, this paper explores whether we can derive new ways of thinking from

film (new classifications or revisions), or whether film is merely a catalyst for new models which emerge within more determinate environmental and community interactions. Film as fiction is experienced in an indeterminate way in the sense that it does not engage the kind of means-end dynamic in our actions and projects which produce new or revised classifications. However, taking Gilles Deleuze's approach to the problem of film one step further, a consideration will be given to film's capacity to develop new modes of thought in virtue of new connotations, attitudes and outlooks. The argument will draw upon Matthen's thesis to ground a kind of critical realism; borrow from Stanley Cavell concerning the constructivist nature of what we take to be real; while uncoupling constructivism and relativism after Alain Badiou. The "realism" which anchors the paper refers to a structure of belief concerning the parameters of our intentions; that is, belief constrained by its effectiveness in the world for satisfying intersubjective requirements. As such, there is scope for a robust sense of cinematic realism if film could be said to provide metaphors, tropes, models and other heuristics for understanding and, in turn, shaping experience. Testing this possibility with further insights from Cavell, it will be argued that film can actualize the constructed and universal nature of reality like no other medium.

Associate Professor **Jennifer A. McMahon** lectures in philosophy at the University of Adelaide where she is also Director of Graduate Studies for the Faculty of Arts. McMahon has authored two monographs: *Art and Ethics in a Material World: Kant's Pragmatist Legacy* (Routledge, 2014) and *Aesthetics and Material Beauty: Aesthetics Naturalised* (Routledge, 2007). She has also published three reference works on "Beauty" in *Oxford bibliographies Online* (2012), and the *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (2005, 2001). McMahon is the Secretary for the Australasian Association of Philosophy.

Julian Murphet, 'Labour, Reality, Cinema'

j.murphet@unsw.edu.au

Cinematic realism has, since the Lumières' *Leaving the Factory* (1895), turned repeatedly to the scenographies of labour to suture the medium to the lived experience of work. It is impossible to imagine Soviet cinema, Italian neo-realism, Godard's Dziga Vertov Group, or any number of other decisive movements and achievements, without their aesthetico-political commitment to the dignity (mostly under threat) of the labouring body – a commitment tethered, in the last instance, to the indexical and documentary claims of film. Two historical developments would seem to have challenged the associative links, and thus the political aesthetics, of such "working-class cinema" in recent years. First, the relative decline (or decimation) of traditional industrial labour among the workforces of the advanced capitalist world (leading, among many other perversities, to the "working-class nostalgia film"); and second, the absolute decline of film as the mediatic support of cinema itself, given the rise of DV technologies in both recording and distribution. What role might the "cinema of labour" play in a present and a future of digital image-production and the displacement of manual labour outside the spaces of Western everyday life?

This paper surveys a selection of recent significant achievements in the cinema of labour, and in the traditions of realism, in order to hazard some tentative answers to those questions. It will consider Wang Bing's colossal *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* (2003); Michael Glawogger's *Megacities* (1998) and *Workingman's Death* (2004); Noël Burch's and Allan Sekula's *The Forgotten Space* (2010); and Lucien Castaing-Taylor's and Verena Paravel's *Leviathan* (2012); in order to propose that the working body is becoming more visible in serious cinema precisely to the degree that it is located outside the gates of the First-World city, and inasmuch as it is delivered over from the cumbersome apparatus of film to the lightweight mobility and clandestinity of digital video.

Julian Murphet is Professor in the School of the Arts and Media at UNSW and director of the Centre for Modernism Studies in Australia.

James Phillips, 'Anti-Oedipus: The Ethics of Performance and Misrecognition in Matsumoto Toshio's *Funeral Parade of Roses*'

j.phillips@unsw.edu.au

Matsumoto Toshio's film *Funeral Parade of Roses* (*Bara no sōretsu*, 1969) memorably reworks the tragic catastrophe of *Oedipus Tyrannos* for the Shinjuku counter-culture of the late 1960s. More telling than the

substitutions – Oedipus becomes Eddie, a cross-dressing hostess at the Bar Genet, while Jocasta is discernible in the figure of Gonda, the drug-dealing club manager – is the treatment of the recognition scene that forms the climax of Sophocles' tragedy. It is through its deflection of the psychological truth of the Oedipus complex that the film lends itself to being discussed in conjunction with Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*. The critique that Deleuze and Guattari develop of the psychoanalytic mapping of the unconscious is motivated by the desire to uncover investments and productions more primordial than the Oedipus complex: following Deleuze and Guattari, the ultimate truth cannot be said to come to the surface in the dénouement of Sophocles' tragedy. In *Funeral Parade of Roses*, the recognition scene is deprived of certain crucial triggers (Gonda kills himself before revealing anything to Eddie) and hence when Eddie blinds himself it is a matter of pure performance rather than the intolerable insight into the truth of incest with his father. Performance and resistance overlap in Matsumoto's film, which constitutes a further intervention in his critical rethinking of documentary realism.

James Phillips is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of New South Wales. He is the author of *Heidegger's Volk: Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford UP, 2005) and *The Equivocation of Reason: Kleist Reading Kant* (Stanford UP, 2007) and has published widely on aesthetics, political philosophy, film and literature.

Richard Rushton, 'On Deleuze and Metz: Signification and the Real in Cinema'

r.rushton@lancaster.ac.uk

In his writings on signification in the cinema, Christian Metz devised a semiology of film that offered neither a fusion of film with the real ('realism'), nor a complete and distinct severing of film from the real in the name of signification ('simulacrum'). Rather, what Metz wanted to account for was the 'sense' of the filmic event. And yet, this 'sense', for Metz, came to be founded on the real, the famous 'impression of reality' so central to the experience of film, and thus on the fact that the experience of film seems to forgo the double articulation typical of human languages. For Metz, therefore, the experience of film finds itself caught between the real, on the one hand, and signification, on the other, and it is this struggle between the real and signification that defines most singularly the quest for a semiology of the cinema.

Gilles Deleuze, despite his criticisms of Metz's reliance on models of language, offers a very similar account of the experience of film as one that is caught between signification and the real. Deleuze builds a powerful conception of signification in *The Logic of Sense* based on the triad of denotation, manifestation, and signification. This triad can be placed alongside the 'three theses on movement' that Deleuze derives from Henri Bergson right at the beginning of *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*. If this is done, then a unique approach to cinematic signification can be discovered. There, as with Metz, filmic matter finds itself caught between the real, on the one hand, and signification, on the other.

Richard Rushton is Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University, UK. He is the author of *The Politics of Hollywood Cinema* (2013), *Cinema After Deleuze* (2012) and *The Reality of Film* (2011).

Richard Smith, 'Belief, Perception, Cognition: Bazin and the new sciences of cinema'

r.smith@sydney.edu.au

The spectatorial event has attracted renewed theoretical interest in recent years. The instant wherein light and sound strike the senses is the focus of concerted scientific explanations of cinematic experience. Cognitive psychology, evolutionary biology and neuroscience have all ventured into the cinema to discuss those immaterial and non-conscious dimensions of perception and cognition. One effect of these ventures is that the sensual instant of spectatorship has gained an ever deeper temporal span: the individual history of the viewer, the organic structures and neurological mechanisms of cognition, and the speciation of vision and hearing have been crowded into the transient and fleeting instance of contact between medium and subject.

By and large these scientific functional, or mechanistic explanations of spectatorship distance themselves from apparatus theory and the so-called grand theories of the 1970s and 1980s, and have arisen concu-

rent with a renewed interest in Bazinian aesthetics. Bazinian ideas about cinema have not figured in this new science in any meaningful way. In particular the deep temporality implied in the psychological defence against time would seem to be an important facet of these considerations.

This paper seeks to bring Bazin's ideas about "belief" into contact with the new sciences of cinema. Its principal aim is to use the concept of belief to interrogate the new models of cinematic experience and subjectivity and particularly the self-evidence of taking the sensual moment of perception as the starting point of theoretical consideration of the cinematic experience. The burgeoning field of film economics offers some interesting ideas about the spectatorial context.

Richard Smith is Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Sydney. He has a PhD from the School of Theatre film and Dance at the University of New South Wales (2002), and a Masters in Literary Theory from The University of Queensland (1994). Richard's research interests range from film theory, history and genre.

Jane Stadler, 'Felt Realities: Phenomenology, Experiential Realism, and Sound Effects'

j.stadler@uq.edu.au

Theories of cinematic realism have dealt almost exclusively with the moving image rather than the sonic dimensions of screen texts, yet sound can contribute a gut-wrenching sense of reality, just as it can create a sense of space, movement, and atmosphere that significantly augments verisimilitude and affective engagement. In this paper I critique the way film theorists, particularly those from the cognitivist tradition, often overlook sound and embodied affect. I conduct a phenomenological investigation of the felt effects of screen aesthetics, concentrating on how ultra-low frequencies of sound work in concert with other stylistic techniques. I contend that sound that travels near or below the threshold of perceptual awareness functions as a type of special effect that carries a powerful affective charge.

One of the strengths of the phenomenological method is its focus on affect and the embodied experience of spectatorship. This makes phenomenology well suited to analysing the cinematic soundscape, since sound waves physically touch the eardrum and resonate through the body's fluids, viscera, and bone. However, with the exception of Julian Hanich's investigation of the collective viewing experience of the audience, phenomenological accounts of film typically focus on and generalise from the subjective experience of the researcher or offer purely theoretical accounts of spectatorship. This study incorporates insights from another research paradigm that takes the physical body as its focus, but that produces knowledge that is usually bracketed aside in phenomenological studies: empirical audience effects research. It puts cognitivist and phenomenological analyses in conversation with eye-tracking research and neuroscientific studies of both sound and image in order to provide a fuller account of experiential realism, as felt by audience members whose meaning-making processes are informed by their physiological sense-making capacities.

Jane Stadler is Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland. She is author of *Pulling Focus: Intersubjective Experience, Narrative Film and Ethics*, co-author of *Screen Media* and *Media and Society*, and co-editor of *Pockets of Change: Adaptation and Cultural Transition*.

Saige Walton, 'Film Realism and Rhythm: Apprehending *Stranger by the Lake*'

Saige.Walton@unisa.edu.au

Over the past decade the 'sensuous' turn of cinematic thinking has involved a turn towards tactility. Following the work of scholars such as Vivian Sobchack, Laura Marks and Jennifer Barker, much of this scholarship has also modeled itself on or after the literal sense of touch: by approaching film as a situation of immediate contact or by arguing for the relationship between film/viewer as akin to two bodies or skins 'in touch' - whereby the roles of the touching and the touched become confused.

Bringing together the tactile concerns of recent embodied film theory with work on realism, rhythm and the aversive emotions, this paper will move towards a different conceptualization of us feeling-film. Concentrat-

ing my analyses on *Stranger by the Lake* (Alain Guiraudie, 2013), I want to advance an account of cinematic 'apprehension' that arises from the indifferent or uneasy conjunctions that might exist between film and viewer. As I will detail - 'apprehending' *Stranger by the Lake* arises not only from our engagements with character or plot but also what Brigitte Peucker terms the 'body' of the text. Here, Peucker is not referring to representational bodies nor to what film-phenomenological theory understands as the film's body but the dynamics of film form: its shape and materialities; the expressive properties of rhythm, tempo, movement, and so on.

Rather than a tactile sympathy that is shared between bodies - the mutuality of bodies in touch - Guiraudie's film configures cinema as a site of missed or mis-aligned connection. Despite its narrative focus on gay male cruising and its scenes of explicit sex, the film fosters experiences anxiety and discordance as much as desire and eroticism. Film and viewer move in and out of 'synch' with one another here, also echoing the rhythmic alternations between desire and disinterest that occur amongst the men.

Saige Walton is Lecturer in Screen Studies at the University of South Australia. Her research areas include film/media aesthetics, visual culture, baroque studies, genre, embodiment, phenomenological philosophy, and film-philosophy. Her work appears in such journals as *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies*, *Senses of Cinema*, *Screening the Past*, and *Screen*, and also in edited collections such as *Playing with Memories: The Cinema of Guy Maddin* (University of Manitoba Press, 2009) and *The Contemporary Comic Book Super Hero* (Routledge, 2008).