

This talk connects the writings of Hannah Arendt and Stanley Cavell to questions of thinking: what it is and how it appears in the world and on film. For both philosophers, thinking may be understood as a form of leave-taking, roaming, even of straying; the mind wanders while the body stays put. That is, thinking is a form of errancy or *errans*. Arendt argues that thinking, which deals with 'invisibilities and is itself invisible', poses a challenge to representation (there is, she writes, a 'scarcity of documentary evidence'). In contrast, Cavell turns to the camera's 'knowledge of the metaphysical restlessness' in the fidgety body whose mind is at work. When it catches the body in thought, cinema may even 'prove thinking', albeit through the body's least intelligent activity. Whereas Arendt is concerned that thinking defies representation, Cavell worries that with the arrival of cinema the mind, betrayed by the body, is in a state of perpetual visibility and subject to misunderstanding (a concern related to his career-long interest in 'the problem of other minds'). In his reading of *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, Cavell explains how cinema phenomenalizes the errancy of thought and dramatizes errors of interpretation. In connection to ICI's core project, this talk takes up the idea of errancy as a property of thinking in cinematic environments from Capra to Wiseman and Peele.

Jennifer Fay is Professor of Film and English at Vanderbilt University where she also directs the Program in Cinema & Media Arts. She is the author/co-author of three books, most recently *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene* (Oxford UP, 2018). Her current book project is tentatively titled 'Sincerity and the Media of Appearance'. She was supposed to start a research fellowship at Cinepoetics — Center for Advanced Film Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin in 2020, which had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

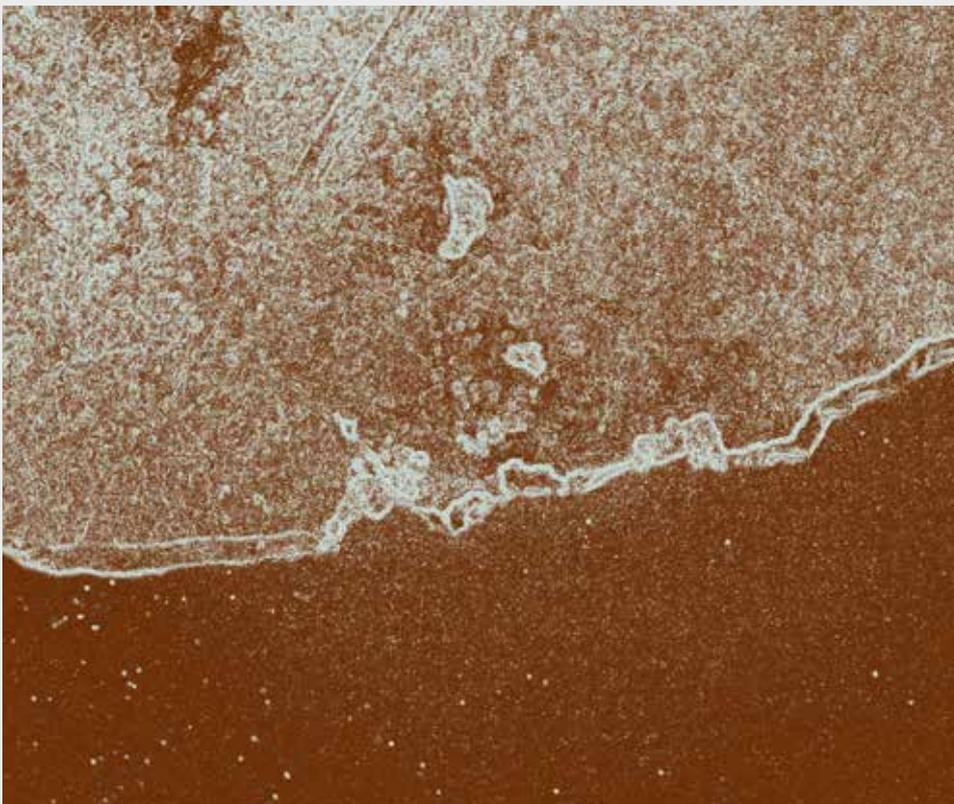
Followed by a discussion with Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky and Gertrud Koch

ICI Lecture Series **ERRANS environ/s**

There is hardly a discipline, field, or discourse within the natural and social sciences nor the humanities that hasn't long been touched and transformed by the notions of milieu, environment, or Umwelt. The recent revival and proliferation of ecological discourses can be understood, at least in part, as a response to the increasingly complete immersion in technologically in-formed environments.

The transdisciplinary impact of these new concepts has not yet been captured, nor is it clear that it can be captured, but while the life sciences play a prominent role in them (having adopted, in the 19th century, concepts from physics and transgressed into the social sciences, for example, as racist discourses and social Darwinism), they don't operate as the leading science in this transformation. Instead, this process appears to be a multidirectional, non-hierarchizable, and errant movement, itself constituting a complex ecology of knowledge.

ERRANS environ/s contemplates aspects of this frequently divergent, potentially errant, and certainly ongoing transformation of not only the sciences or cultures of knowledge, but also cultural and artistic production at large. It will investigate the ways in which an attention to environments can have the effect of dissolving boundaries or making them permeable, questioning clear-cut distinctions, undermining naive ontologies, decentering the subject, folding nature and culture, and producing complex political ecologies attuned to far-reaching entanglements.



Online Lecture **Jennifer Fay**

**Thinking on Film
with Arendt
and Cavell**

ici KULTURLABOR
BERLIN INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL INQUIRY