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Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature by **ADRIAN J. IVAKHIV**
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Reviewed by **EDIE STEINER**

Adrian Ivakhiv's *Ecologies of the Moving Image* is an exquisite, complex journey through film's capacity to produce worlds, which signals how images are active agents of change in environmental thought. Ivakhiv introduces cinema's co-productive nature with a discussion of Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's 1979 film *Stalker*—a canonized artifact in the vault of great art film, and possibly one of the most ecologically significant films ever produced— which Ivakhiv presents as a vehicle for "metaphysical inquiry." Tarkovsky himself wrote that a film is an emotional experience, one that requires no mediating language, thus refuting semiotic approaches or constructions of "cinema as a system of signs." In Ivakhiv's analysis of *Stalker*, the film's central location and key metaphor, the Zone—a place both material and psychological, even psychic—expresses multiple and open significances, at once spiritual, ecological, and political, located in a "semiotic undetermination" where interpretation and cinematic technique are such mobile exchanges that imagination bridges representation and what is unrepresentable. As a multiple-perspective reality, this Zone, like cinematic emplacement itself, is one where the stalker/seeker enters a world that is also acting with reciprocal agency, and so cinematic worlds are always worlds of "becoming-with." This introductory discourse on Tarkovsky's visionary approaches, reinforced and revived at other points throughout the text and again at its conclusion, confirms Ivakhiv's premise that film has the capacity to produce and expand a viewer's "ecological ontology," moving us towards an "ecophilosophical cinema" and viewing practice.

The text responds to diverse literatures and scholarships. Theoretical influences—in particular, Deleuze and Whitehead and Peirce—along with numerous film studies experts inform our understanding of cinematic experience, which Ivakhiv maps in a triadic model over three dimensions: the geomorphic, the biomorphic, and the anthropomorphic. The geomorphic is a reproduction of what film theorist Bill Nichols calls the "profilmic event," a quality of cinematic realism prevailing "outside the grip of textual organization," as events and objects preceding what is captured on film. The biomorphic dimension produces a film's subjectivity, the relationship between the spectator and the cinematic objects seen and heard, or as Ivakhiv describes: "[the] ways in which film shapes our seeing and sensing of the worlds it produces and, in turn, of the world we live in." The anthropomorphic dimension reveals recognizable character types, social subjects, and categories of human or "non-, in-, sub-, or other-than-human" others like or unlike "us." Characters populate films as agents of anthropomorphic possibility and capacity for action, within socio-ecological worlds and actor networks contained in the film's diegesis. These three ecologies are located in a theory of process-relational thought that rejects "closed binary" systems and structures, working over fields of materiality, sociality, and perception. Ivakhiv's triadic model further configures cinematic experience into categories of firstness (film as a sound/image spectacle), secondness (narrativity), and thirdness (exoreferentiality—including a film's social

codes, historical references, and political economies). Roland Barthes once said that a cinematic image has more power than a photograph, and Ivakhiv similarly argues against Heidegger's notion of the world we inhabit as a "world picture," suggesting instead that it is a "world *motion* picture," as image and world are in constant, circulating movement.

Ivakhiv includes key elements of visual culture history and its optical artifacts, tools, tropes, and technologies, from Renaissance linear pictorial perspective to digital database visual networks, tracing how visuality achieved a privileged position among the senses in its service to science, commodification, and geopolitical domination and distribution systems. Through a detailed historical analysis of cinema's contribution to shaping ideas of land and landscape, geopolitical divisions, and territorializing structures, we understand how film can make palpable the shattering consequences of human infringement on the natural world and on social well-being. In an extensive technical and critical analysis of specific films in classifications including mainstream (capital-intensive) productions and 'alternative' or self-reflexive models in a wide range of genres, Ivakhiv demonstrates how image systems, bonded through cinematography and montage, are in constant flux—always emerging, becoming, and between. Visual media allow us to experience what unmediated vision cannot, through its technical capacities to slow or accelerate time, to enlarge, expand, and enhance detail, and through other forms of manipulation of its material and contextual attributes. In particular, Ivakhiv points to cinema's capacity for revealing "the unfolding materiality of the world" in various means of episodic duration and

relation that makes it "a powerful tool for ecophilosophy."

Ivakhiv's text is a detailed ecocritical guide to cinema studies that will trouble our film viewing habits and perceptions. As an intricate, historically comprehensive edition, it comprises a wide selection of key producers and productions. Diverse filmmaking practices and forms of spectatorship—from the fragmentary clips we may grasp and speedily digest while navigating the internet, to the extended, attention-demanding, experimental works of artist projects and reflexive essay films, to mainstream spectacles and box-office hits—are analyzed throughout the text. Whether from a Bazinian ethics of photographic realism or through the lure of cinema's exhibitionist qualities as defined by Tom Gunning's "cinema of attractions," we engage with each film as a journey. The continually transfiguring visual and auditory objects presented to us in filmic space disperse a generative fusion of emotions, phenomena, and interpretation as enduring world-producing "carriers of affect" whose possibilities, as Ivakhiv says, are endless.

Works Cited

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[1] The spelling of Tarkovsky's first name here is as by the translator.

EDIE STEINER is an independent filmmaker and photographer who recently completed her doctoral thesis in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. Her research and creative practice involve films and photographic studies exploring themes of place, memory, and landscape.