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## Book Review

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Alexa Weik von Mossner (ed.), *Moving Environments: Affect, Emotion, Ecology, and Film* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), 287 pp., \$42.99 (pbk), ISBN: 978-1-77112-002-9.

At the interface of film, affect, and ecocritical studies, *Moving Environments* 'explores the role played by affect and emotion in the production and reception of films that centrally feature natural environments and nonhuman actors, both real and animated' (p. 1). Along with others in Wilfrid Laurier's Environmental Humanities series, including Adrian J. Ivakhiv's *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature* (2013), Bron Taylor's edited collection *Avatar and Nature Spirituality* (2013), and Tonya K. Davidson, Ondine Park, and Rob Shields's collection, *Ecologies of Affect: Placing Nostalgia, Desire, and Hope* (2011), *Moving Environments* is intended to be interdisciplinary and provocative. It delivers on its promise to open up 'new discursive space' at the intersection of film, emotion, and ecology via the kinds of rich questions that ferment only in deep commitments to cross-disciplinary intimacy (p. 2).

Growing from a 2011 Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society workshop that Alexa Weik von Mossner organized as a Carson Fellow, the collaborative volume brings together scholars in ecocriticism to consider the 'affective and emotional impact of cinematic representations of natural environments' (p. 4). Affect theory, building on the more-than-linguistic turn in cultural criticism, can be very loosely defined as inquiry into bodily capacities to affect and be affected (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 2). It is impossible, however, to offer readers a more substantial definition that would also definitively characterize all the work within this wide umbrella for two reasons. One, affect's theorization is in process within many disciplinary approaches—some that are in conversation but nevertheless have their differences—including philosophy, cultural studies, psychology and psychoanalysis, cultural anthropology and geography, neurosciences and science studies, gender, queer, and critical race theories, and most recently religious studies. Two, there is much contention within this scholarship on whether or not to draw strong divisions between affect and emotion. Donovan Schaefer's *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* helpfully addresses this disagreement by tracing a dual genealogy for contemporary affect theory tied to two seminal texts, Brian Massumi's (1995) essay 'The Autonomy of Affect', and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank's (1995) *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvano Tomkins Reader*.

Massumi's text crystallizes 'a particular intellectual lineage—from Spinoza to Nietzsche to Deleuze to contemporary neuroscience' via Baruch Spinoza's sense of affects as 'a multitude of forces that are the plural, heterogeneous materials of subjectivity' (Schaefer 2015: 24-25). For Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze, 'affect dislocates

the anthropocentric perspective, opening up onto a multiplicity of animal ways of being organized around the variety of “natures” making up the bodies of different organisms’ (2015: 24–25). Massumi uses terms like *compulsion*, and *intensity* but insists that affect and emotion are distinct. For Massumi, the *‘autonomy of affect: its escape from structures of capture and control, its formal indiscernibility to conscious awareness’* makes affect ‘ontologically incompatible with the structuring grid of personal experience’ (2015: 26).

Here, feelings are ‘personal and biographical’ and emotions are ‘socially expressed feelings’ characterizing what is stable, structured, and detectable about social life; captures that affect slips beyond (2015: 26, 60). The other strand, Schaefer writes, traces from psychologist Silvan Tomkins’s theory of *‘affects as an ensemble of psychological engines—as emotions that rise to the level of the personal, even if they are not reducible to language’* (2015: 28). This model draws from phenomenological traditions in philosophy, and approaches affects as ‘woven into the textures of experience, hovering around, rather than beneath, the line of “conscious awareness” of named emotions (shame, happiness, fear, anger, etc.) and the ‘as-yet-unnamed emotions of embodied affective palettes’ (2015: 28). For Tomkins, affect theory ‘diagrams a complex and transitory landscape, in which language and embodied histories interface with evolutionary, affective, and cognitive structures—the shifting material repertoire of embodied life’ (2015: 30). Thus, for those reading Tomkins like Sedgwick and Frank, Teresa Brennan, Elspeth Probyn, Lauren Berlant, and Kathleen Stewart, the way we feel ‘has a complex, heterogeneous history’, and affects are ‘something that rises into embodied spheres of awareness’ (2015: 32).

The essays in *Moving Environments* engage both trajectories with David Ingram’s ‘Emotion and Affect in Eco-Films: Cognitive and Phenomenological Approaches’, Belinda Smail’s ‘Emotion, Argumentation, and Documentary Traditions: *Darwin’s Nightmare* and *The Cove*’, and Janet Walker’s ‘Moving Home: Documentary Film and Other Remediations of Post-Katrina New Orleans’, offering potent contrasting additions to the dialogue on affect vs. emotion. Considering ‘different aspects of our emotional engagement with various kinds of film texts’, the collection is divided into four parts (p. 9). Part I examines various ‘theoretical approaches to cinematic affect and emotion in the context of ecocritical film analysis’ (p. 9). Part II considers the risks and benefits of strategic anthropomorphism, or the ‘projection of human emotions onto non-human beings’ (p. 10). Part III explores the ‘cognitive and affective impacts’ of animation, paying particular attention to the distinct potentialities of animated films to ‘engage viewers’ empathy’ (p. 12). Finally, part IV engages space, place, community, and cinematic time by considering films that portray specific locations.

At its best, this collection acknowledges that affects are inherently social and embodied, pushing beyond strands of film theory centered on the intellectual and visual elements of the interactions between moving images and an ideal viewer, and toward the corporeal, public, and cultural resonances of ecofilm. For readers interested in religion within this mix, *Moving Environments* offers diverse opportunities for engagement with the possibilities affect theory lends to the rich nexus of religion, nature, and culture. Essays in this volume are relevant for numerous projects including: religious environmental ethics and moral emotions; space, place, and attachment to environments; nonhuman affinities and intimacies; and the religious resonances of emotional encounters with nonhuman others like deeper readings of awe, wonder, reverence, hope, disgust, apathy, melancholy, and despair.

## References

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