

# Ecranomanie



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FILM CRITICISM AS A WAY  
OF UNDERSTANDING  
CONTEMPORANEITY:  
**ECRANOMANIE** BY  
**VICTOR MOROZOV**

*Écranomanie*

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by Victor Morozov (Author)  
Foreword by Radu Jude

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**Abstract:** *Ecranomanie*, Victor Morozov's debut volume (House of Arrows, 2025) consists of a collection of essays that expand film criticism into the vast domain of contemporary visual culture. With a foreword by filmmaker Radu Jude, the volume explores how the analytical tools of film critics can illuminate the political, aesthetic and social stakes of a contemporaneity saturated by images. Written between 2022 and 2025, in the context of global crises like the large-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, or the Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip, the essays discuss a wide range of phenomena like AI-generated imagery, televised sports, social media reels of politicians, drone footage and advertisements in a style of writing which resists both academic rigidity and the superficiality of online discourse, blending journalistic urgency with theoretical rigour. Despite its fragmentary composition, the volume remains a compelling contribution to our understanding of how images shape contemporary experience.

**Keywords:** film criticism, hermeneutics of media imagery, cinephilia, visual culture.

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*Ecranomanie* represents Victor Morozov's debut volume, a collection of essays, published by House of Arrows in 2025. With a preface written by Romanian filmmaker Radu Jude, the volume focuses on extending film analysis beyond the borders of the cinematic paradigm, into the ever-expanding terrain of contemporary image.

Originally written for *Films in Frame*, *Matca* and *Scena 9*, and published between 2022 and 2025 Morozov's collection of essays appeared in the context of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine, Donald Trump's second term in office and the FIFA World Cup organized in Qatar in 2022.

The tone of the essays can be described as oscillating between two poles: journalistic immediacy and academic essayism. Some imbued with urgency, emerged as a response to current events, others grounded in historical depth and theoretical rigor.

The essays are characterized by an openness to mixing references, contexts and registers. Following the footsteps of Serge Daney, Morozov collapses through his writings hierarchies between "high" and "low" cultural forms, between cinema and television or art and commercials.

More than a stylistic choice, the "median terrain" on which Morozov places this volume can be seen as a way of resisting both the academic monopolization of cultural analysis and the leveling of opinion in social media.

At a first glance, the democratization and equalization of public opinion through social media may challenge the legitimacy of film criticism as a proper profession, but Victor Morozov's *Ecranomanie* makes a strong claim against such cliché premonitions arguing that in the context of the ever-growing ubiquity of

images, the toolbox of the film critic becomes invaluable for anyone looking to make sense of the contemporary world.

In an ecumenical fashion, Morozov's collection of essays propose a fragmented overview of a world experienced through images, from political reels on social media, live televised sports spectacles, through the paintings of Gustave Caillebotte, or the advertising strategy of Apple, the essays discuss AI-generated images, war footage or the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, the principle uniting these texts being not the object of study *per se*, but rather the cinephile's gaze applied to them. In this sense, Morozov's method consists of applying the tools of film analysis to adjacent audiovisual territories.

Perhaps the biggest influence at play here are the writings of Serge Daney, which shaped an ecumenical gaze which could be described as a "film criticism of life" (Morozov, 2025, p. 6). For Daney, cinema was never confined to the screen alone, rather it was a way of deciphering reality itself, a grammar through which we can make sense of a world increasingly saturated by media.

Events like the attempted assassination of Donald Trump or Volodymyr Zelensky's and Olena Zelenska's Vogue photoshoot are understood here first and foremost as mediated events, thus we need the analytical toolkit of film criticism to make sense of and understand the stakes of a continuously evolving audiovisual landscape.

As cultural critics have frequently warned at the turn of the century of a "derealization of the world" (id. p. 7) under the pressure of proliferating images, Morozov instead aligns with philosophers such as Élie During, who, in analyzing *The Matrix* (1999), argues that virtual reality should not be seen as a spectral double of reality but rather as its extension, amplification, and complexification (id, p. 8).

Thus, the abundance of screens (smartphones, billboards, television etc.) today does not flatten reality, rather it "contributes to the accelerated reshaping of our perceptual abilities consistent with the evolution of imagery" (ibid.).

Some of the memorable chapters include the one discussing a collection of Gustave Caillebotte's paintings featured at an exhibition dedicated to the impressionist artist at Musée d'Orsay and centered around his masterpiece *Rue de Paris, temps de pluie*, 1877. Morozov's formal and socio-historical analysis situates Caillebotte's works as an anticipation of cinematic language—a gesture which reminds us of Sergey Eisenstein's unfinished *Notes for a General History of Cinema*.

Or in another chapter entitled *Look at the sky! On the image of Clouds in Art* Morozov carries us on a complex journey showcasing the different functions of the representation of clouds in renaissance paintings of El Greco and Andrea Mantegna, referencing Hubert Damisch's monograph *Théorie du nuage. Pour une histoire de la peinture* (1972) and discussing films like *Ten Skies* (2004) by James Benning and Lawrence Abu Hamdan's short documentary *The Diary of a Sky* (2024).

The volume was generally well received, prominent Romanian film critic and university lecturer Andrei Gorzo describing Morozov as a remarkably gifted young film critic, whose work rejuvenates the Romanian journalistic criticism, with its literary elegance and analytical rigor not burdened by academic pretension (Gorzo, 2025).

Gorzo situates Morozov within the French theoretical lineage, inaugurated by André Bazin, noticing the influence of *Cahier du Cinema* critics like Éric Rohmer, Serge Daney or Jean-Louis Comolli, while also placing Morozov in dialogue with Romanian writers like Victor Ieronim Stoichiță, Andrei Pleșu, Radu Cosașu and especially Alex. Leo Șerban (ibid.).

While Gorzo's review is overwhelmingly admiring, it also features a series of nuanced critiques. He points out how sometimes Morozov's intellectual agility leads to a certain speculative looseness, how his elegant phrasing may at points conceal a lack of analytical depth or the occasional historical imprecision, as a result of his overly fluent reasoning and rhetoric (ibid.).

In another review, Nona Rapotan identifies the volume's central shortcoming as the lack of structural and conceptual coherence. Rapotan notes the lack of methodological clarity and that of a well-defined analytical framework, which make the book difficult to follow while also undermining its credibility as a hermeneutic project of media imagery. Rapotan concludes her review with her main objection regarding the volume's failure to articulate a coherent reflection on "the relation between image and reality, media and reality reflected by it" (Rapotan, 2025), despite its promise to do so.

*Ecranomanie* is then a compelling proposal, its greatest strength being its ability to navigate disciplinary boundaries without sacrificing a consistent intellectual identity, navigating the broad range of contemporary visual phenomena, from televised sports, Romanian politicians' TikTok videos, to AI generated imagery, marked by intellectual playfulness and aesthetic curiosity.

At the same time, the volume's fragmentary nature, given the disparate origins of the essays, marks its principal weakness, as it results in a lack of an overarching coherence and methodological clarity. Morozov himself acknowledges this, refusing to call his approach a "method". Rather, the volume can be regarded "as a journal documenting the formation and affirmation of an attitude toward contemporaneity" (Morozov, 2025, p. 5).

By extending the tools of film analysis to domains such as advertising, social media or political imagery, Morozov reimagines the role of the film critic as an interpreter of contemporaneity, as refracted by today's landscape of imagery. *Ecranomanie* demonstrates how film criticism, when liberated from the constraints of academic writing and journalistic ephemerality alike, can become a powerful instrument for understanding the mediated world we inhabit.

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**Victor Morozov** is a film critic, having published articles in international publications such as *Cahiers du cinéma*, *Libération*, *Variety*, *MUBI Notebook*, and is a regular contributor for domestic publications *Scena9*, *Films in Frame*, and *Dilema Veche*. Morozov has also worked as a curator for One World Romania Film Festival and is currently pursuing doctoral studies at Trinity College Dublin, where his dissertation focuses on the Romanian Revolution as an audiovisual experiment.