

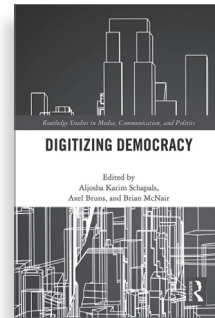
Book Reviews

Editor: Maarit Jaakkola

***Aljosha Karim Schapals, Axel Bruns
& Brian McNair (eds.)***

Digitizing Democracy

New York: Routledge, 2019, 230 p.



Today, the world is experiencing increasingly sophisticated new communication technologies. As a result, there is a rise in the access and active participation of citizens across the globe in the political process. Significantly, this is leading to an alteration in the relationship between the media, politics and democracy (Fenton, 2014). The altering of this relationship leads to a ‘radical reversal’ (Benkler, 2006: 30) and to the decentralization of information production and dissemination in political communication. As a result of this radical reversal, *Digitizing Democracy*, a book edited by Schapals and colleagues (2019), makes a germane contribution to the scholarly debate on the challenges and impact of a global digitized democratic practice. This contribution is the outcome of a symposium held at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia in September 2016.

From the outset, the editors sought to provide answers to two overarching questions: ‘What are the key challenges facing our increasingly digitized democracy? And how might we as citizens contribute to resolving them?’. With these questions clearly outlined, the book draws widely from examples in Australia as well as analyses of different cases

in the United States of America, Egypt, the United Kingdom, and Indonesia. Despite the exclusion of examples of digitized democracy in Nordic countries, the enriching discourse in the book remains relevant for readers in the Nordic region. In the build-up to the national elections in Sweden (September 2018), Finland (April 2019) and Denmark (June 2019), strategic measures were instituted to fight the menace of fake news. The 16-chapter book draws upon the expertise of the contributors in unpacking the different challenges currently faced by the media and the democratic process, and the impact of the digital age, as well as projections for the future of a digitized democratic society, are highlighted.

The advent of a digitized democracy has led to the term ‘fake news’ becoming popular. This popularity is a result of the ‘political rise of Donald Trump as the President of United States of America in 2016’ (p. 12). This view aligns with the numerous submissions made by political communication scholars on the rise of fake news globally (McNair, 2018). Specifically, the term ‘fake news’ is used to describe false news that is intentionally disseminated, or a particular news item that is unfavourable to a politician and with which

he or she disagrees (p. 16). This second type of fake news continues to gain prominence among politicians globally. Through social networking platforms, politicians wield the fake news tool to sway the unsuspecting populace. Meanwhile, the first type has continued to clog the wheels of democratic progress. This has led to conscious efforts by stakeholders in academia, the media and government to eliminate the problems associated with fake news (Cheruiyot & Ferrer-Conill, 2018).

Apart from the challenge of 'fake news', empirical studies from Australia and Indonesia reveal the slow adoption of digitized platforms by politicians as a means of engaging electorates and citizens. Specifically, Indonesian politicians are yet to develop the ability to use these platforms to listen to the public and to provide good governance (p. 152). Meanwhile, electorates and citizens are becoming increasingly engaged in the use of these social media platforms. On the other hand, Australian politicians are yet to 'exploit these channels in a considered or strategic way' (p. 41). In summary, this has 'failed to translate into full and meaningful citizen participation in public policy decision-making' (p. 68).

Notwithstanding this, in a digitized democracy 'an average citizen is less likely to be silenced' (p. 52). According to the authors, this has occurred as a result of unfettered access to social media platforms, which facilitates expression. As a result of this, platforms have rapidly moved from being social to being 'primarily political' (p. 1). In Egypt, this led to the effective 'amplification of civic voices' (p. 169) and the successful revolution in 2011. In the same vein, the rise of alternative media in the United Kingdom made an impact during the 2017 general election. This development can be termed significant and vital in a society saturated with partisan mainstream media outlets (p. 50). The rise, as some authors remind us, can also be linked to the continuous increase in media studies scholarship in alternative media across the globe (p. 78).

The book also lends its expertise to the ongoing discourse on the impact of digital and social media on traditional media. Using

the environmental coverage and campaigns by *The Guardian Australia* as a lens, Susan Forde analyses the use of podcasts in advocating an improvement in the quality of life in society (p. 85). Significantly, the analysis highlights how mainstream media are reinventing their practice in this digital era to ensure advocacy.

Aside from advocacy journalism, Amanda Gearing and Rodney Tiffen posit the positive impact of the digital era in aiding investigative journalism (pp. 111, 205). Drawing upon the network theory of Manuel Castells (1996), Gearing notes that journalists 'have the opportunity to extend the scope of their influence...' (p. 111). In the same vein, Tiffen examines the various leaks that were made possible because this decade falls within the digital era – Wikileaks, 2010, the Snowden Files, 2013, the Panama Papers, 2016, and the Russian/Wikileaks Democrats leaks, 2016. In summary, Tiffen argues that the digital era provides 'enhanced democratic benefits' (p. 209).

Significantly, some of the contributors touch on the growing scholarly discourse about the future and sustainability of traditional journalism. This discourse has continued to dominate media studies scholarship in the last decade. With the rise of digital platforms, advertisers' revenue in traditional outlets is dwindling (Newman, 2009), with predictions of a greater decline in revenue and an eventual shift in the business model for the mainstream media (Newman, 2019). Based on this ongoing debate, Kristy Hess argues that local media can be sustained through the exploration of the 'depleted "rivers of gold" of classified advertising' (p. 88). On the other hand, David Fagan predicts that by early 2020, weekday publications of newspapers will cease (p. 189). Based on his long experience as a newspaper editor in Australia, Fagan notes that the revenue hole for media organizations is getting 'deeper' with the disruption in the industry caused by technology (p. 185). As we inch towards 2020, it remains to be seen whether Fagan's prediction comes to pass. The future of journalism, as posited by Fagan, is based on the collaboration of

journalists and technologists to ‘discover and tell stories’ (p. 194).

Unpacking the role of citizens in taking charge of a digitized democracy, John Keane advocates keen attention to the issues surrounding the ownership, control and taxation of automated machines (p. 223). Furthermore, Keane notes that in this era of an ‘unfinished robots revolution’, there is a need for citizens to ensure that the social inequality currently experienced across the world is solved. Most importantly, this calls for a sincere resolve to proffer solutions in these grey areas before the advancement of this age is determined by machines and robots.

Generally, it is important to note that, besides seeking to answer the questions mentioned above, the book spares some thought for the successes recorded in the digitized democracy – the impact of alternative media in the United Kingdom (p. 45), the advocacy, sustainability and social news genre of journalism (pp. 75, 88, 114), the 2011 Egyptian revolution (p. 163), and the use of digital media for education by the indigenous peoples in Australia. While this is laudable, the book fails to provide insights into the challenges of digitized democracy in sub-Saharan Africa or in Southern and Central America. These gaps might be valuable for a holistic understanding of the interaction between media, politics and technology across the globe. Hence, this could be considered by the editors if they were to venture to publish a sequel to this book.

Undoubtedly, this contribution to political communication scholarship is invaluable, timely and relevant. Most importantly, it is relevant for every graduate student, academic, policymaker and advocate of political communication.

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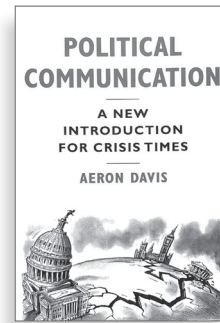
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Political Communication: A new introduction for crisis times

Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019, 262 pp.



Teaching political communication courses at universities can be a challenging task these days. When reading about well-known theories like agenda-setting or mediatisation, students are prone to ask how valid the underlying assumptions are today. Do the mass media still reach the majority of the population? Do politicians really depend on the media when they can bypass journalists and communicate directly with their followers on Twitter or Facebook? At the same time, existing theories often fall short when explaining the role of political communication in recent developments such as the Brexit vote, the election of Donald Trump as US President, or the rise of populism in Northern Europe.

Similar teaching experiences led Aeron David, Professor of Political Communication and Co-Director of the Political Economy Research Centre at Goldsmiths, University of London, to set himself a daunting task: to write a book which introduces the reader to the broadly understood subject of political communication and, at the same time, documents how broad societal developments challenge long-held assumptions about the subject.

The result is the new book *Political Communication: A new introduction for crisis times* (Polity Press, 262 pp.). In twelve chapters, the book addresses (1) normative assumptions about good political communication, (2) the main actors in political communication, and (3) trends which challenge and disrupt democracy. Each chapter first describes scientific debate and key concepts within each of these areas, and then reassesses this established knowledge in light of new trends and recent developments. Not only does the book bridge old and new debates

in political communication, it also brings together insights from a wide range of disciplines, ranging from economy and sociology to political science and international relations.

Chapter 2 is a good example of the way the discussions are presented. The chapter sets the normative framework for the book. It first introduces the reader to ideals of democracy, tracing these ideals back to the French Revolution. It then goes on to discuss the role of communication, focusing on Habermas's public sphere ideal. The final part of the chapter discusses these normative ideals in light of recent research on comparative politics and media systems, supplemented by empirical indicators of the state of democracy and the media across the world.

Like Chapter 2, Chapter 3 sets the scene for the following chapters in the book. It brings up the question whether we are currently truly experiencing a crisis in political communication and democracy, or whether the present state of affairs is 'just another temporary dip in the long advance of democracy' (p. 34). Reviewing earlier discussions of this question by scholars like Norris and Inglehart and contrasting the current situation with the crises of the 1930s and 1970s, the chapter argues that tipping points for democracy have been reached due to disrupting trends. These tipping points fundamentally change the nature of political communication.

Chapters 4 to 8 discuss the current democratic crisis from the perspective of the main actors of political communication. Chapter 4 discusses how *political parties* have developed from traditional political to electoral-professional parties and links this to the current rise of populist parties. Chapter 5

discusses the *mainstream media*, primarily through the lens of political economy and critical sociology. It shows how the commercial and organisational influences which have always shaped journalism have become more influential over the last decade, leading to more market- and entertainment-driven news. The next chapter discusses the often symbiotic relation between *journalists and politicians*, going back to the work of Gans, Tunstall and Hall, followed by a discussion of mediatisation. The rise of populist politicians challenges both perspectives. Chapter 7 focusses on a third key actor in political communication: the *citizens*. It challenges ideas of a 'crisis' in public engagement by showing that political participation has not fallen but is now primarily lived through new forms of democratic engagement. The chapter also shows how the fragmentation of media audiences challenges long held assumptions about media effects research. While Chapters 4 to 7 deal with well-researched political communication actors, Chapter 8 discusses actors which are regularly overlooked in mainstream political communication literature and textbooks: *interest groups and civil society*. The chapter shows that, although the current media system and political climate offer an opportunity structure for the rise of new social movements which challenge the status quo, this has not led to broad progressive change in practice.

After thoroughly discussing these key actors in political communication, the book continues with a close look at three broad forces which are presented as challenges or disruptors to democracy: economic developments (Chapter 9), the rise of digital media and online political communication (Chapter 10), and globalisation (Chapter 11). Chapters 3 to 11 primarily describe and discuss recent trends and the current state of political communication, without giving an explicit normative evaluation. In the final chapter, Davis takes a clearer stand and describes the negative democratic consequences of what is labelled 'the Fourth Age of Political Communication': growing instability of democratic institutions, the breakdown of national public

spheres, the decline of traditional authorities, and a disconnect between public and private politics. Interestingly, Davis points to the Nordic countries as a place to start looking for solutions to these global challenges, as he tentatively argues that 'the odds of a strong democracy enduring might be improved if following the Scandinavian template' (p. 212).

The merit of this book can best be discussed in relation to the two objectives which the author sets in the beginning of the book: (1) to introduce the reader to the broadly understood subject of political communication and (2) document how broad societal developments challenge long-held assumptions about the subject. While pursuing two objectives necessarily comes with trade-offs, the book overall does a good job balancing between these two goals. Not only does it convincingly show that changes in political communication are so profound that there is indeed a need to revisit dominant theories and common knowledge in the field, but the book also naturally weaves broad debates in political communication together into one coherent narrative. Hypodermic needle effects, media logic, elite news sources, and media-party parallelism are just some of the key concepts in the discipline which are introduced in this volume. I could not think of a key debate in the field which was missing from the book.

In addition, the book truly lives up to its goal of taking a broad perspective on political communication. Throughout the book, and particular in Chapters 3, 8, 9 and 11, the book clearly goes beyond the media-centric perspective which often characterises books on political communication. These chapters draw strongly on insight from political science, economics, sociology and international relations and clearly present the relevance of this insight to the understanding of political communication today. It is rare to find such broad perspectives synthesised into one coherent narrative by a single author. This is refreshing, as generalists have become increasingly rare in today's academic world, which values specialisation and narrow expertise over broad perspectives, and where different dis-

ciplines primarily meet in multi-disciplinary teams or edited volumes. While the breadth is a key strength of the book, this at times comes at the expense of the depth of the discussions presented. In discussions of, for example, audience polarisation, fake news or the rise of entertainment-driven news, some nuance is lost, and concepts could have been defined more rigorously. It would therefore be beneficial to supplement with primary literature if the book is used as a textbook in university courses. Davis offers plenty of references to further readings on the topics introduced.

The book also delivers on its second objective and clearly documents how broad societal developments challenge long-held assumptions about political communication. This is done by reviewing current research, supplemented with sharp observations about the current state of democracy around the world. Reflecting the broader state of the field of political communication, the book draws most strongly on Anglo-American literature and debates here. These debates are put in an international perspective by presenting data from sixteen countries from all parts of the world throughout the book. Following the logic of a most-different systems design, Davis shows, with data about democratic attitudes and media systems, that the trends described are present around the world. Here

the focus is more on commonalities than differences across countries, which is defensible given the argument that the book is making.

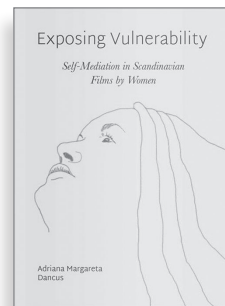
The strength of the book is more in challenging and questioning existing theories and concepts than in introducing new theories and concepts to replace them. Current trends in political communication are clearly described in the book, but the author does not present a coherent theoretical or conceptual framework which explains how political communication is changing and where it is heading. Surely this would be too much to ask of an introductory book written in the middle of rapid changes. In any case, the book gives a clear diagnosis of the current state of political communication and will undoubtedly inspire future political communication scholars to develop new concepts and theories to better understand the developments described. *Political Communication: A new introduction for crisis times* could therefore become an agenda-setting book for political communication research in the years to come.

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Adriana Margareta Dancus

Exposing Vulnerability: Self-Mediation in Scandinavian Films by Women

Bristol: Intellect, 2019, 158 p.



Adriana Margareta Dancus' concise book *Exposing Vulnerability* opens up discussion on several film projects that challenge and complicate ideas of self-representation, ethical filmmaking, and the relationship between the audience and the film subject. Through

the lens of vulnerability – conceptualised predominantly in relation to the ideas of Judith Butler – Dancus explores the way that contemporary female filmmakers working in Norway and Sweden have deployed the art of self-representation through film – which she

refers to as self-mediation – to capture and make sense of their struggles.

Each of the six chapters examines one or two case studies which mostly fit into the category of first-person cinema by and about a Scandinavian woman. Exceptions include works for which the credited director is not the subject of the film, such as in *Idas Dagbok* (*Ida's Diary*) (2014), directed by August B. Hanssen and not Ida Storm about whose life the film is made. Additionally, chapter two compares Aslaug Holm's *Brødre* (*Brothers*) (2015) with American filmmaker Doug Block's *The Kids Grow Up* (2009) which falls outside the parameters of the focus on women in Scandinavia.

In fact, Dancus does limit her research on Scandinavian films to those emerging from Norway and Sweden, almost completely skipping Denmark as a potential site of self-exploration through cinema. This feels like an oversight, with Norway and Sweden conflated as broadly similar interventionist welfare states, while Denmark is largely ignored. The exclusion of Denmark would have been less noticeable in the absence of Block's US film, which is anomalous on account of both the production context and the gender of the filmmaker.

To pre-empt such critique, Dancus could have acknowledged Denmark as a Scandinavian nation with potentially relevant case studies and proceeded to explain why she limited her analysis to the texts featured in the published book. For example, Mette Carla Albrechtsen and Lea Glob's 2016 documentary *Venus* utilises filmed interviews to explore contemporary Danish women's experiences of sexuality and intimacy, while Kristian Levring's 2008 fiction film *Den du frygter* (*Fear Me Not*) is about the use of diary-keeping to track emotional changes during a course of antidepressant medication: both are thematically aligned with the texts featured in *Exposing Vulnerability*. The book would not necessarily be stronger for their inclusion, but greater justification of her geographical and formal interests would have explained the omission of Denmark.

Dancus acknowledges Lauren Berlant and Sara Ahmed as sources of inspiration

and positions her own study next to Patricia White's *Women's Cinema, World Cinema* (2015), which only briefly mentions Scandinavian filmmakers; thus, *Exposing Vulnerability* marks an important and timely contribution to the study of Nordic media, particularly given the continual underrepresentation of women in the directing and screenwriting professions. Each case study's narrative speaks to broader themes of mental illness, parenthood, bullying, stigma, and cultural heritage. The introduction leaves the reader with three questions which guide the remaining chapters; these broadly relate to the 'staging of vulnerability', which flags that the close readings will examine both the politics underlying the content of each film as well as the constructed and self-conscious nature of the films as edited selections of material presented for an audience.

Chapter one discusses *Flink pike* (*Good Girl*), a 2014 first-person film by Solveig Melkeraaen to which Dancus self-reflexively responded as an audience member who was both fascinated and made uncomfortable by the images on-screen. As the first case study, the concept of vulnerability is further dissected and its meanings applied to the film in which Melkeraaen documents her struggle with depression, including confronting scenes in which she is treated with electroconvulsive shock treatment. The filmmaker's positionality as a Norwegian woman with major depressive disorder is framed as both intimately personal – rendering the experience of viewing her footage ethically complicated – and widely familiar to the many people who can relate to the painful effects of depression or a similar mental illness.

Dancus situates Melkeraaen within the phenomenon of 'good girl syndrome', which is understood as the pressure that women in contemporary societies like Norway feel to be outwardly successful. The very creation of *Flink pike* is an example of the pressure that women are thought to put themselves under to achieve, as the project appears to be detrimental rather than therapeutic for Melkeraaen. The viewer bears witness to her descent into a period of depression which is

no doubt exacerbated by the persistent need to complete the film. Dancus uses Berlant's concept of cruel optimism to understand Melkeraaen's seemingly rootless depression in a section of the chapter that would have benefited from a longer discussion of this complex notion.

Chapter two opens with a vignette about the unprecedented modern tendency for parents to document the lives of their children in a preamble to the analysis of *Brødre* and *The Kids Grow Up*. In a departure from the other case studies, these texts feature footage of the filmmakers' children, while the parent remains behind the camera. If *Brødre* appears to reflect more on her children than on the filmmaker Aslaug Holm, Dancus points out that it is driven by Holm's difficulty in accepting that her children will grow up and leave her. She underscores Holm's dual role as mother and filmmaker, using scene analysis to pinpoint moments in which this conflict between the selves is palpable.

While chapter one scrutinises vulnerability as a concept, chapter two deploys the term with little clarification of how *Brødre* stages vulnerability. Phrases like 'the vulnerability of childhood' (p49) and 'Holm's vulnerability as a mother' (p47) warrant further explanation as it is unclear how this film, more than any other text about the precarity of parenthood, stage and grapple with vulnerability and the particular meaning that 'vulnerability' has here.

Chapter three looks at *Återträffen/The Reunion: Parts One and Two* (2014), a staged representation of artist Anna Odell's interaction and confrontation with the people who formerly bullied her in school. The motif that Dancus identifies and interrogates is the tracking shot, a charged cinematographic choice which is utilised at the beginning of the film and in pivotal moments throughout. As with the previous chapter, statements like, 'Odell's tracking shots place the viewers in a position to contemplate not only the vulnerability of bullying, but also the vulnerability of the act of viewing' (p66) would benefit from greater exposition. The strength of the Dancus' analysis emerges when she writes: 'The tracking shots in *The Reunion* place us into the director's em-

bodied experience with bullying, at the same time that they distance us from it' (p66). This distance is facilitated by the tenuous distinction between reality and fiction in the film.

It becomes especially clear, by chapter three, that each case study brings with it markedly different discussion points, techniques, and concepts. The depth of Dancus' research and knowledge is apparent as the book progresses, but each introduction of a new methodological lens somewhat disjoins the chapters from each other: a minor weakness that could be allayed with consistent reference back to the three questions Dancus poses in the introduction.

Chapter four's focus returns to the self-documentation of mental illness, using *Idas Dagbok* to draw attention to the prevalence of self-harm amongst youths. The framing of Ida Storm's story through the notion of youth culture's tendency to film and publish personal images is astute. As the only film that I have personally watched, however, I do feel that the film need not be reduced to a text by and for youth. Here, I note a departure between my experience of viewing *Idas Dagbok*, and Dancus' more contextually informed yet still subjective response. I did not, for example, 'feel urged to give Ida a hug and tell her everything will be all right', and neither was I 'terrified by the self-destructive force that takes over Ida' (p79), as Dancus suggests of viewers. These comments reflect an interesting dichotomy between Ida and the viewers of her film, which may be more complex than this chapter suggests.

Chapter five uses as its case studies *Min mors hemmelighet/Suddenly Sami*, a 2009 first-person film by Ellen-Astri Lundby, and Yvonne Thomassen's *Familiebildet/My Family Portrait* (2013), though it begins with a vignette about *Sameblod/Sami Blood* (2016), a fiction film by Amanda Kernell. The latter is set in Sweden and the main studies are Norwegian, though their analysis foregrounds how (Sami) race, culture, and heritage are sought, explored, reified, and challenged, especially through contemporary DNA and ancestry technologies. The chapter gives as much attention to *Sameblod* as the first-person

films, and, while fascinating, it is perhaps the least cogent in the book.

Chapter six looks closely at *Skörheten* (*Fragility*) (2016), a Swedish film by Ahang Bashi, a first-generation Swede of Iranian descent whose experiences with anxiety and panic motivate her to create the film. Bashi navigates her mostly forgotten memories of being a small child whose family sought political asylum in Sweden, and her present feelings of despair and stress of which her parents try to talk her out. This consolidated focus on a single text and on a film which converges the contemporary Scandinavian landscape of both ethnic and immigrant Swedes with the themes of anxiety, panic, vulnerability, and despair common to all chapters provides a compelling final study in this rich and exploratory book.

The brief conclusion draws attention to how these films are situated in cultural discourses of belonging, individualism, and

selfhood in Scandinavia and specifically in Norway and Sweden. It is a rewarding book that exposes the reader to films they may otherwise never discover and is a valuable resource for researchers in sociology, anthropology, gender studies, and cultural studies.

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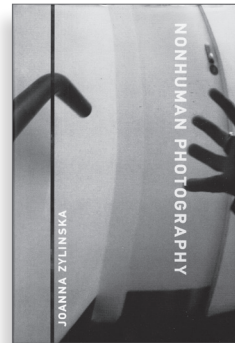
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Joanna Zylinska

Nonhuman Photography

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017, 257 p.



Joanna Zylinska's book *Nonhuman Photography* questions human vision, doing so by defining nonhuman vision through the example of nonhuman photography. Nonhuman photography is photography that is taken by, has the agential properties of, or centres on a nonhuman, in a human and nonhuman reticular web of material relation. The book opens with an example of a type of photography that emerges from this networked relationality, giving an account of James Balog's *Chasing Ice*. This set me off on what was one of many internet searches to check the book against the internet to get a visual reference for the

example mentioned. The practice of reading a book with a computer or phone to hand is probably not unusual, and it is explicitly encouraged by Zylinska, who directs the reader to the website accompaniment of the book at www.nonhuman.phtography. The website shows the pictures in the book in full colour, and also has a number of films and animations that accompany the book.

The book's physical multi-medium outlook, with the website accompaniment, is carried over into its identification of its interdisciplinary audience. *Nonhuman Photography* is set in a 'conjuncture of media, com-

munications, and cultural studies' (p. 6), and through these various lenses it focuses on the 'theories of mediation, media ecology, and posthumanism' (p. 4). This use of interdisciplinarity broadens the scope from the 'typical orientation of photography theory toward indexicality, representation, and the preservation of memory traces' (p. 4). *Nonhuman Photography* looks to cultivate a materialist understanding of the photographic process that centres around an embodied awareness of the medium and the production that constitutes it, in order to 'embrace an imaging process in which the human is absent' (p. 7).

In Chapter One Zylinska elaborates on how nonhuman vision can develop ethical and political modes of practice in order to tackle 'the debates on climate change, extinction, and the Anthropocene' (p. 15). Zylinska states that nonhuman vision is aligned with human vision, as both are a technological product that forms an 'assemblage of perception' (p. 14). Nonhuman vision does, however, differ from human vision in that the former is 'an ethico-political response to what Haraway calls the "god trick" of infinite vision' that is necessarily a masculinist gaze of domination and occupation, 'seeing everything from nowhere' (p. 14). Positing a binary distinction between nonhuman vision and human vision would not be an inaccurate way of portraying the author's argument, as Zylinska states that there is no such binary division, and aims to put forward 'the inherent nonhumanity of all vision' (p. 15). By this Zylinska means that human vision is always a constructed state; that is, we consider our 'perception as active, or even world-making, rather than just secondary and responsive' (p. 42).

Chapter Two looks at the agency of non-human photography and how it affects perception. Zylinska examines her own work, entitled *iEarth*, in relation to classic examples of 'a view subjugating the nonhuman eye of the space camera to the visual mastery of the human' (p. 56). Included in these classic examples are *The Blue Marble*, 'taken during the Apollo 17 mission, 1972', where colour was manipulated 'to align with cul-

tural expectations' (p. 56). Also, *Earthrise*, 'taken during the Apollo 8 mission, 1968', was rotated from portrait to landscape (p. 57). The overall result of these manipulations is a perpetuation of the narrative of humanity attempting to control nature, treating it as something that can be mastered and conquered. Zylinska states that her *iEarth* gif looks to inject some irony into the idea of a totalising grasp of nature, opening up 'a less masterful and less self-aggrandising visuality of the Anthropocene' (p. 58). The comparison between the two types of image creation leads into Zylinska's central theme in her chapter on the role of photography as philosophy. According to Zylinska, photography can be seen to have a philosophical role because it goes beyond simply being a reference of indexicality and has 'ontological, or world-making (rather than just representational), capabilities' (p. 59).

In Chapter Three Zylinska moves from ontology to time, and specifically a time 'after the human' (p. 81). This needs to be done, Zylinska states, to formulate the human 'in a series of dynamic relations with other non-human entities and the process of geo- and biosphere' (p. 81). This conceptualisation is then not just a 'straight-forward material disappearance or conceptual overcoming' of the human in the future, but a present look at how 'that disappearance as a prominent visual trope' is manifested in art photography and other cultural practices (p. 81). For Zylinska, the trope of the ruin embodies the idea of disappearance in the present, and she looks at the concept of 'ruin lust' or 'ruin porn'. Zylinska states that within photography there are 'good' and 'bad' ruins. The exhibition at Tate Britain called *Ruin Lust* gives examples of 'good ruins', ruins that become aestheticised and carry within them a message of societal control that attempts to 'ward off the total ruination and annihilation of the earth' (p. 86). By contrast, a bad ruin is something unseen. Zylinska asks: 'What kind of apocalyptic event would then constitute their "bad ruin" counterpart?' (p. 88). Zylinska offers a way out of the 'good ruin' and the unseen

'bad ruin' in her concept of 'better ruination', which is an attempt 'to reimagine our relation to the world just before the ruin' (p. 89).

In Chapter Four Zylinska takes a geological look at how photography can capture ecological change and act 'as a warning against environmental excesses by humans and a call for us humans to consider our political responsibility' (p. 103). Zylinska states that we 'dwell under the horizon of extinction' and, simultaneously, 'after extinction' (p. 103). Zylinska means first that the Earth has already seen five extinctions, according to the geological designation, and therefore that humanity can be said to be living after extinction. Furthermore, geologists who analysed 'extinction rates among amphibians across geological epochs', have seen 'similarly catastrophic' events that can be classed as a 'Sixth Extinction', so that it can be said that we 'dwell under the horizon of extinction'. Nonhuman photography captures this idea of being simultaneously after and under extinction, as it highlights the 'derangements of scale' of human-centric discourse (p. 124). Nonhuman photography allows humans to see a greater scale of time, in which our civilisation is just a small part.

One of Zylinska's key themes running throughout the book is that photography is a medium that is centred towards death, typified by Barthes and his book *Camera Lucida*. Barthes, Zylinska states, 'arguably ends up confining photography to a permanent struggle against death' (p. 113). This death has been not only the subject of photography, but also the fate of the medium, that is the 'death of photography'. However, in Chapter Five Zylinska posits the 'death of photography' not as the death of the medium but as 'the multiple deaths of cameras and other equipment – and to the piles of e-waste' (p. 129). In this chapter Zylinska addresses the waste of visual imaging technologies, perhaps in a similar vein to Jussi Parikka in *A Geology of Media* (2015) or Sean Cubitt in *Finite Media* (2017), but specifically targeting technology that is responsible for image creation, and its resultant waste, rather than broadly discussing

the hidden waste of what can be described as digital media.

In the final chapter, 'We have always been digital', Zylinska unifies analogue and digital photography in the idea of 'liquidity' (p. 169). Further unification of the two formats comes from the fact that they both have a material basis. Zylinska states that the 'supposed immateriality of the digital' is only upheld by ignoring 'the materiality of the screen', the parts that make up the apparatus, and 'the network cables that participate in its transfer' (p. 172). Zylinska describes the construction of the final chapter as a 'Heraclitean or ... Deleuzian' argument in which 'everything is indeed in flux or flow' (p. 175). The two facets of unification for digital and analogue formats, materiality and liquidity, operate to explain how the archive functions in human–nonhuman photography. The chapter 'We have always been digital' describes the liquidity of the two formats bleeding into one another, to the point where Zylinska claims it is 'tragic' to refer to digitalisation as 'different from photography' (p. 176). She supports this when she states that analogue photography has always recorded 'binary pattern: the presence and absence of light' (p. 176). Here the author aligns digital binary code with analogue photography's ability to capture binary pattern, suggesting continuity over schism within the medium.

The book's adherence to registering the ongoing traces of photography within other forms of media is certainly one of its strong points, in terms of drawing a wider analytical framework of understanding, yet on occasion this leads the author to place too high an emphasis on this framework:

The question therefore is not whether to be inside or outside the network – whether to tweet to not to tweet, to post on Instagram or not – because such spatial differentiations do not apply in the interlinked era in which we are all becoming (social) media. The question, rather, is how to envision a new mode of thinking and acting in the world in which we humans are increasingly positioned as a

function of images and media – as their producers, consumers, distributors, clients, corporeal apparatuses, kinaesthetic machines, and reflexive surfaces. (p. 30)

The idea of looking for new solutions to new problems is admirable, and, furthermore, the wish to address those issues that are systematic and tacit is, of course, pertinent. However, negating individual action in favour of a speculative outside removes the idea of working through structural change, be that as an individual or as a collective.

Overall, *Nonhuman Photography* offers a good mixture of theory and evidence, in the form of photographic work from the arts and the sciences, to illustrate how nonhuman and human photography are captured by and as-

sembled within one another. Zylinska shows the importance throughout the book of seeing, and challenging, how human vision is necessarily made from nonhuman vision.

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