

Pasi Väliäho: Biopolitical Screens: Image, power and the neoliberal brain

Kotisova, Johana

Published in:
Medijske Studije

Publication date:
2015

Document Version:
Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Kotisova, J. (2015). Pasi Väliäho: Biopolitical Screens: Image, power and the neoliberal brain. *Medijske Studije*, 6(11), 100-103.

Copyright

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, without the prior written permission of the author(s) or other rights holders to whom publication rights have been transferred, unless permitted by a license attached to the publication (a Creative Commons license or other), or unless exceptions to copyright law apply.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document infringes your copyright or other rights, please contact openaccess@vub.be, with details of the nature of the infringement. We will investigate the claim and if justified, we will take the appropriate steps.

Pasi Väliaho

BIOPOLITICAL SCREENS: IMAGE, POWER AND THE NEOLIBERAL BRAIN

The MIT Press, Cambridge, London, 2014, 208 pp

ISBN 9780262027472

In *Biopolitical Screens*, Pasi Väliaho seeks to “chart and conceptualize the imagery that currently composes our affective and conceptual reality, producing and articulating our lived experience, as well as foreclosing alternative ways of inhabiting the world” (p. ix). His critical reflection on imagery emerging within the neoliberal visual economy focuses on diverse screen-based mediations: he explores the way that subjects – while producing, selling/distributing and consuming images – inevitably immerse themselves in the logic of neoliberal apparatus (or the contemporary military-entertainment-financial complex). Similarly to some previous attempts at criticizing media using Foucauldian concepts (starting most probably with Sue Curry Jansen, who compared networked computers with Panopticon; Jansen, 1988), the book does not provide any methodologically systematic analysis of audiovisual representations or of state/economic power reproduction. Instead, it selectively contemplates the power of images, transmitted via game platforms, virtual reality technologies and computer interfaces, over the organization of our minds and bodies. However, Väliaho goes further than many previous applications of Foucault's thoughts in thoroughness and consistency: he defines a “neoliberal brain” that stands for “the dominant form of individuation that composes the circulation of various images and imaginations” (p. xii). In the author's opinion, the brain has replaced reproductive organs in their position of a primary object of biopolitics.

Besides Foucault's concept of biopolitical apparatus or dispositif (referring here to modern visual economy – ensemble of discourses, institutions, propositions – within which images seize human life), the theoretical-epistemological base of the investigation, outlined in the first chapter *Biopolitical Visual Economy: Image, Apparatus, and the Cerebral Subject*, merges several interdisciplinary viewpoints. Not surprisingly, biopolitics is seen as inherent to neoliberalism, in which “the ideals of economic competition, efficiency, profitability, satisfaction, benefit and success are fundamentally generalized into the domain of life itself” (p. 19), creating subjects that are “free” to govern themselves. Moreover, to explain how the war and crisis images intervene in self-governmentality, Väliaho uses the concept of animism/animation. Images, the author says, produce visual truths about who we should become within the biopolitical apparatus, and are able to “animate” our brains: “Images incorporate the future in the present; they make the future a fact lived here and now in our bodies.” (p. 24). This happens because – and here Väliaho adopts neurobiological assumptions – images are able to modify the dynamism and patterns of synaptic connections. The question is, however, if it is appropriate to take over the neurobiological standpoints of James LeDoux or James J. Gibson that represent the behaviourist tradition in media studies, and at the same time criticize the “neurobiologization of self”: the neoliberal reduction of (cerebral) subjects to mere biological beings, more or less functional and capable brains. Is it felicitous to use (ontologically constructivist) poststructuralism as a source of the conceptual framework and simultaneously work on the presumptions of (essentialistic) neurobiological determinism without attempting to bring the perspectives closer together?

Starting from the premise that the neoliberal order is inherently apocalyptic in its expectations, as it applies the logic of constant insecurity and threat which results in the need for permanent growth and improvements, the author focuses on articulations of anomic situations: wars and crises. Nevertheless, his objects of interest originate from various discourses and branches, ranging from video games to psychotherapy or art.

The second chapter, *Future Perfect: First-Person Shooters, Neuropower, Preemption*, deals with the biopolitical effects of video games imagery. It investigates the way first-person shooter games diminish players' critical distance, who thus become immersed, mentally absorbed and emotionally involved in the game, accepting and embodying the neoliberal subjectivity and political reality that the game implies. According to the author, by exercising "neuropower" (biopower based on the modulation of the cerebral focus of values and feelings), the video games create people in and for the future¹, having the same future aspirations as the "wars on terror": to promote a neoliberal way of life by the visual preemption of dangers and threats, resulting in their embodiment. In this sense, war represented by video games is preemptive: "instead of reacting to actual facts, it operates by simulating future potentialities [...]. And this futurity made present – the perceptual production of indistinct forms of threat and fear – is the motor of its actions" (p. 51). In other words, the anticipation of indefinite and constant threats means waging a perpetual war on the affective level – translated into the feeling of fear that becomes the anticipatory (present) reality of a threatening future. "Securitization", the author says, "by countermimicking future catastrophe, actually brings it about and even hastens it" (p. 57). Although the idea that (not only screen-based) media define a constant threat and turn it into unceasing fear and ontological insecurity is a familiar one, as it corresponds to Anthony Giddens' notion of reflexive modernity (Giddens, 1991) and Ulrich Beck's concept of risk society (Beck, 1992), the persuasive idea that communication technologies are able to foresee the future at the level of human body is more provocative. Yet, there have been some – usually less committal and explicit – conceptions of future contained in presence, albeit emerging from very different epistemological backgrounds. Media researchers and sociologists have worked with future-presence dialectics mainly while applying concepts such as self-fulfilling prophecy and other modifications of the Thomas theorem² (Merton, 1948, Thomas and Thomas, 1928, see also Cohen, 1972, Jewkes, 2004).

If the second chapter deals with the screen-based fabrication of the strategically deployable neoliberal brainhood, the third chapter *Contingent Pasts: Affectivity, Memory, and the Virtual Reality of War* investigates a therapeutic technology Virtual Iraq, developed to be used when the killing machines become psychologically dysfunctional, paralyzed by feelings of guilt, fear and anxiety. This therapeutic tool, the author shows us, is just another means of (re)producing the subjects usable within the neoliberal military-industrial complex, readapting them to the continuous state of potential war. As there is "no questioning of what the patient saw or did – such issues are deemed irrelevant or even incomprehensible" (p. 81), the virtual reality interface that rearranges, "reprogrammes" memories of war and related emotions is nothing else than another technology of governmentality. A problem emerges, though: the persistent state of emergency, made possible by the technologies

¹ After all, the military-entertainment complex has also embraced games as tools for training and therapy (see e.g. Der Derian, 2000).

² Psychoanalysis and anthropology provide more examples of the theoretical notion of present future: Carl Gustav Jung's idea that the future is made present by "leaks" of collective unconscious (see Jung, 1970); the "anthropology of future", a sub-discipline promoted by Akhil Gupta or Arjun Appadurai (see Appadurai, 2013).

that see the psyche as a war zone, inverts into an autoimmune crisis. Protecting life from what threatens it turns into its destruction – Väliaho speaks about “a suicidal project”, within which “the imperative of protecting and promoting life is pursued so aggressively that it turns against itself” (p. 86).

While in the third chapter the author himself offers an eschatological vision, affirming the logic of constant threat and danger, the fourth chapter *Emergent Present: Imagination, Montage, Critique* provides an optimistic view of a particular interruption of the current logic of power. The author shifts his focus to screen-based attempts at questioning and redesigning the neoliberal imageries when exploring three experimental artworks that seek to deconstruct the biopolitical economy. The artworks (montages and video installations) that the author analyzes attempt to undermine the dominant models of visual subjectivation by producing an alternative kind of understanding of images. All the pieces are, nevertheless, rather far from Väliaho's original point of interest. As if he had to, while seeking examples of emancipative aspirations of screen-based mediations, step outside the military-entertainment network (if we agree that isolated and unusual art does not belong to the network). The artworks he focuses on in the fourth chapter, however interesting they are, confirm the absolute character of the neoliberal order, as they either represent tactics, powerless within the strategies of dominant modes of subjectivation, or they belong to a different (oppositional, artistic) discourse/network. If the author looked for individually produced representations of crises within the military-entertainment-economic complex, he would probably find just confirmations of the neoliberal-catastrophic logic, see e.g. Kari Andén-Papadopoulos' analysis of soldiers' YouTube videos from Iraq (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2009).

Despite this inconsistency (caused by wishful thinking), *Biopolitical Screens* is an exceptionally important analysis for at least two reasons. First, it provides a fresh viewpoint on the Heideggerian question concerning technology, integrating the spheres of human body, the role of technological artifacts and their content: “It is human bodies and minds, in addition to technological platforms, that carry images, reproducing them in gestures, clothes, thoughts, beliefs, politics, and rituals.” (p. 5). *Biopolitical Screens* understands human beings (and bodies) and technologies as mutually cooperative in mediating and reproducing the neoliberal order, which resides in imageries. Second, the book specifies in a straightforward manner the urgent problem of the autoimmune crises of the world dominated by the logic of twenty-first-century capitalism.

References

- >Andén-Papadopoulos, Kari (2009) US soldiers imaging the Iraq war on YouTube. *Popular Communication: International journal of media and culture* 7 (1): 17–27.
- >Appadurai, Arjun (2013) *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. New York, London: Verso.
- >Beck, Ulrich (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity*. New York, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.
- >Cohen, Stanley (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panic*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.
- >Der Derian, James (2000) Virtuous War/Virtual Theory. *International Affairs* 76 (4): 771–788.
- >Giddens, Anthony (1991) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- >Jansen, Sue Curry (1988) *Censorship*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- >Jewkes, Yvonne (2004) *Media and Crime*. London: Sage.
- >Jung, Carl Gustav (1970) *Analytical Psychology: Its theory and practice (The Tavistock Lectures)*. New York: Vintage.

- >Merton, Robert K. (1948) The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. *The Antioch Revue* 8 (20): 193–210.
 >Thomas, William I. and Swaine Thomas, Dorothy (1928) *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Johana Kotišová

 Christian Fuchs

SOCIAL MEDIA: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Sage, London, 2014, 304 pp

ISBN 978-1-4462-5731-9

Social media have been one of the most popular subjects in media studies since the emergence of early social media platforms. In academic discussions the term Web 2.0 was initially used, characterising users' interactions and participation on these media. Academic studies as well as periodical reports have extensively covered the new interactive features of the technology and users' practices. However, new media have been relatively immune to critical theories, unlike more traditional electronic media that have been widely studied critically since the emergence of the Frankfurt School.

Social Media: A Critical Introduction declares its critical approach to new media in its very title. Its author, Christian Fuchs, who has been enthusiastically working on expanding the scope and depth of critical new media studies, first suggests that we need to be aware of the true meaning of *social* in social media, which has been treated as a value-neutral term stressing networking and participatory characteristics by so-called social media optimists such as Henry Jenkins, Clay Shirky, and Manuel Castells. Fuchs calls for the strict application of critical social theories to social media studies in order to comprehend complex socio-cultural impacts and the political economies of corporate social media platforms. Thus, three essential components of critical theories – power, political economy, and ideology – must be considered in order to reveal the true, critical meanings of *social* in social media. In Chapters 3 and 4, Fuchs points out what mainstream social media studies have overlooked, criticizing the notion of participatory culture (Jenkins) and network society (Castells). According to Fuchs, mainstream social media studies use theoretical terms like *participation* in a superficial way. Participatory culture refers to such behaviour in a simplifying manner as active consumption, information sharing, and community building. Such understandings ignore the real meaning of participation, which is reflected well in the notion of participatory democracy that fully covers the political economy and power relationships around corporate social media platforms. Grounded in a Marxist conceptualization of production, Fuchs argues that social media use is also labour (called digital labour) that generates surplus values for corporate social media platforms rather than participation that realizes grassroots democracy, extractive power, and democratizes market structures. This argument embodies Fuchs' basic position from which he develops further criticisms about different corporate social media platforms. Similarly, he criticizes the notion of network society that “lacks an engagement with social theories that conceptualize power, autonomy, society, sociality and capitalism” (p. 87), a notion that leads Castells to fall back on technological determinism that overstates the role of social media in recent social movements, such as the Arab Spring.

In Chapter 5, Fuchs applies critical theories to the analysis of social media platforms. First of all, he demonstrates that corporate social media platforms also accumulate capital by selling targeted advertisements based on the amount and the pattern of individual users' activities on their services. Like traditional capitalists – who pursue capital accumulation by prolonging the workday and by pushing workers to increase productivity – corporate social media platforms capitalise surplus value. Users generate surplus value for corporate services by providing unpaid labour, that is to say, posting messages, generating their own content, and interacting with other users on social media.

In the remaining chapters, Fuchs' critical view focuses specifically on specific corporate social media platforms, including Google, Facebook, Twitter, WikiLeaks, and Wikipedia. Reflecting on the features of each social media platform, Fuchs criticizes (1) economic surveillance of users' activities, backed by Google's privacy policy, (2) Facebook's privacy strategy aiming at maximum profits, (3) slactivism (slacker + activism) on Twitter, alerting to the limited potential of Twitter as a new public sphere, (4) WikiLeaks' liberal bias focusing on good governance that ignores the political economy and power relationships in capitalist states, and (5) the danger of the potential commercial use of Wikipedia's content, which may undermine the emancipatory (communist) aspect of Wikipedia based on cooperative labour and Wikipedians' common ownership.

Developing the Marxist media studies tradition, Fuchs has long criticized technological determinism and optimism about new digital media while shedding light on the hidden yet dominant power and capital relations among multiple power players. His and many other books and articles emphasize that the notion of digital labour is crucial for a critical approach to social media. According to Fuchs, individual users, who have been widely regarded as active participants in producing Web content, are actually exploited to generate surplus value and to become an important means of capital accumulation by corporate social media platforms. The notion of digital labour intersects with the prevailing dualistic concepts of producer and consumer. However, it is still controversial if an individual user's time spent with social media is working hours that can be directly transformed to increased profits of corporate social media platforms. However, Fuchs overlooks the notion of consumptive production with which Marx demonstrated how reproduction could be made by consumption. People consume their time and resources to reproduce their labour, which is eventually put in the production process and thus consumptive production does not necessarily contribute directly to an increase in profits. While individual users help corporate social media platforms sell targeted advertising and increase corporate profits by spending their own time, they also accumulate different kinds of human capital of their own, such as cultural and social capital, by posting content, consuming multimedia content, and building networks. Many users spend a large amount of time with social media to develop themselves in many ways. If needed, this process can be explained in terms of the Marxist notion of political economy; it is a process of increasing exchange value in a (labour) market rather than doing unpaid labour that directly increases surplus value. Therefore, more nuanced applications of Marxist political economy are called for to define the notion of digital labour correctly.

Throughout the book, Fuchs' main criticisms and arguments are assertive rather than persuasive. His arguments are based on the premise that Marxist political economy is the only theoretical means of revealing that the logic of media capitalism is not different from

other capitalist industries. This premise often forces him to interpret others' positions to his own advantage by simplifying their arguments or by negating their premises. Still, his critical approach has enriched the discussion concerning the political economy of digital media industries. Moreover, the notions that he extrapolates from Marxist political economy can still explain a variety of overlooked aspects of the new media industries and markets. The discussion about the political economy of social media would be developed further if his argument is persuasive and communicative rather than merely assertive. He has recently published a book titled *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. I expect that he elaborates his analysis of the political economy of social media and provides a more sophisticated definition of digital labour in a more persuasive manner in the new book.

Tae-Sik Kim

David Bartram, Maritsa V. Poros and Pierre Monforte

KEY CONCEPTS IN MIGRATION

Sage, London, 2014, 184 pp

ISBN 978-0-8570-2079-6

What is migration? What does it entail? What are its consequences for the country of origin and for the destination one? What do forced migration, brain circulation or cumulative causation mean? How should we treat ethnic minorities or migrants? Who are the people who migrate and why do they do so? These are all questions to which *Key Concepts in Migration* attempts to find accurate answers.

A typical dictionary entry defines migration as a movement of people from one place to another, in a global sense a movement over long distances and from one country to another. This kind of a typical explanation omits more in-depth aspects of migration. To be precise, migration is not a new phenomenon, rather it has been with us throughout history. However, contemporary migration differs from historical ones due to its diversity. The nature of migration has changed, nowadays it is linked to demographic developments, economic and family-related factors and also to reasons unrelated to an individual's own decisions or wishes (e.g. displacement etc.).

There is a bulk of information available about migration. For example, in their book *Exploring Contemporary Migration*, Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson (1998) introduce different aspects of population migration using quantitative and qualitative methods and various theoretical approaches. Moreover, in the book *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Castles and Miller (2009) "provide an understanding of the emerging global dynamics of migration and of the consequences for migrants and non-migrants everywhere" (p. 16). Both books offer quite a wide spectrum of themes dealing with migration and an in-depth understanding of migration-related processes but they deal less with specific terms connected to migration. And this is where *Key Concepts of Migration* comes into play by offering specific and compressed information. The authors of *Key Concepts in Migration* argue that migration is a complex phenomenon and has a fundamental position in social sciences. They dissect migration, its components, influences and consequences and although the title refers to migration, it conceals the fact that a

range of related topics is covered including different aspects of migrants' adaptation into societies, questions related to ethnicity and the nation overall, ongoing debates in this field (e.g. migration stocks and flows) as well as references to theoretical frameworks and legal regulation (e.g. displacement, forced migration).

So, as I mentioned, Bartram, Poros and Monforte are dealing with migration and more. First, the book brings us closer to understanding different concepts of migration. Second, as already suggested, the authors do not only consider migration, but also related processes and they offer a variety of thematic insights and suggestions for further reading. The authors show which challenges migration entails and that both in the countries of origin and destination, however, mostly, the immigration perspective is taken into account.

The style is typical of a handbook, the book is divided into 39 chapters, each of them 3-4 pages long. Approximately half of the book explains different forms of migration (brain drain, labour migration, illegal, gendered or return migration etc.) and the other half deals with the social background of people's movement (integration, acculturation, social cohesion, denizens etc.). All these approaches are observed at a global level. The explanations for different concepts are not purely theoretical, rather the authors describe specific phenomena and provide easy to understand examples.

The authors also provide a brief overview of the field's main authors and subjects, illustrating these with numerous (international) comprehensible examples. In addition, in some cases a brief historical overview and historical examples are given. The wide range of references provides a good basis for those wishing to further examine an approach or some approaches. *Key Concepts in Migration* is a good starting point for further reading.

The book's authors are sociologists and this is somewhat reflected in the writing, however, it is clear that the book was written by experts on migration. Migration represents a social, cultural as well as an economic phenomenon and the relevant disciplines are taken into account when explaining migration. Traditionally, it was the discipline of human geography that concerned itself with different migration processes and I would have welcomed a greater focus on the geographical dimension in *Key Concepts in Migration* as migration is above all a spatial process. Nevertheless, I do not consider this a particular weakness or shortcoming. There are, however, some issues that caught my attention. When discussing acculturation, it would have been desirable to include more about the sociopsychological approach, for example John Berry's conceptualization of acculturation which I consider relevant in this case, especially because he was one of the founders of the field. Also, when dealing with immigrants' adaptation into a new society, more "beneficial" strategies like assimilation or integration are discussed at length while an exploration of separation (or social exclusion or marginalisation) is missing completely. There have been ongoing debates about segregation in immigrant receiving countries, but unfortunately the book does not discuss segregation as one of the key terms. The absence of the term cosmopolitanism from the list is my only other criticism.

To conclude, there is much to like about this book. It focuses mainly on international migration and its purpose is to show how migration - as a social phenomenon - crosses different disciplines. It is written in an easy-to-comprehend manner and it definitely provides valuable and solid readings especially for students and scholars interested in a range of issues linked to migration. In addition, the book is also useful for non-academics interested in the topic as it does not require previous knowledge of the subject.

References

- >Boyle, Paul, Halfacree, Keith and Robinson, Vaughan (1998) *Exploring Contemporary Migration*. London: Routledge.
- >Castles, Stephen and Miller, Mark J. (2009) *The Age of Migration, 4th edition*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Marianne Leppik-----
Amy B. Jordan and Daniel Romer (eds)**MEDIA AND THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

Oxford University Press, New York, 2014, 288 pp

ISBN 978-0-19-998746-7

Evidence from significant amounts of research shows the growing importance of media in the lives of today's children and adolescents. The number of technologies to which the youngest generations have access is constantly increasing, as well as the amount of time they spend consuming and using media. It is no exaggeration to say that children' and teens' leisure time is completely dominated by media of all kinds. Even very young children are frequent media users gaining their first experiences of media at an increasingly lower age. Under these circumstances it is obvious that questions concerning the impact of media technologies and contents on children's and teenagers' wellbeing and healthy development are becoming more and more pressing.

A collection of up-to-date answers is proposed in the new book *Media and the Well-Being of Children and Adolescents*. The publication brings together chapters from media scholars as well as practitioners offering various perspectives on the role that media play in young people's lives. As the editors emphasize in their preface, the purpose of the book was neither to focus only on the harmful effects of media, nor to praise media's benefits for children's development, but to offer a balanced approach which pays attention to different media contents, various contexts in which communication occurs and different stages of child development.

The book opens with two chapters outlining the main features of the contemporary media environment of children and youth. The first chapter by Amy Bleakley, Sarah Vaala, Amy Jordan and Dan Romer, *The Annenberg Media Environment Survey: Media Access and Use in U.S. Homes with Children and Adolescents*, brings fresh empirical data about media trends in U.S. households with children and teenagers. As the authors from the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania conclude, the rapidly evolving media landscape and young people's ability to quickly incorporate new platforms, devices and technologies into their lives make growing demands on researchers who aim to capture these developments and understand their nature and implications. In the second chapter titled *Learning in a Digital Age: Toward a New Ecology of Human Development*, Lori Takeuchi and Michael Levine use Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory to distinguish different factors shaping children's settings and to describe various dimensions of the relation between media and children's lives.

The next part of the book consists of six chapters focusing mainly on possible negative effects of media on children's development or behaviour. *Examining Media's Impact on*

Children's Weight by Dina Borzekowski offers a brief overview of up-to-date scientific knowledge about media's influence on children's weight and body size. The promotion of unhealthy food and beverages which is considered the main cause of children's weight problems and obesity is elaborated upon in detail in the next chapter *Demonstrating the Harmful Effects of Food Advertising to Children and Adolescents*. Here Jennifer Harris writes not only about the negative effects of food advertising but is also concerned with potential policy solutions (industry self-regulation, expert guidelines, regulation etc.) that can help to protect children and teens. Victor Strasburger in his contribution *Wassssup? Adolescents, Drugs, and the Media* explores how advertising and other media content (movies, TV-series etc.) affect teenagers' cigarette, alcohol and illicit drug use. The author gives an informed overview of studies convincingly demonstrating the influence of media on teenager's use of tobacco and alcohol products. He also suggests possible remedies to this situation, such as a complete ban on tobacco advertising in all media, more aggressive and better counteradvertising or increased media literacy programmes in schools. The subsequent three chapters each deal with media contents and activities which can be risky but can also have various benefits. *Growing up Sexually in a Digital World* written by James Brown, Sherine El-Toukhy and Rebecca Ortiz offers profound insights into the role media in the process of adolescents' sexual socialization. Based on a review of a large body of studies, the authors show how exposure to sexual media affects adolescents' sexual behaviour. Today, we already have strong evidence that exposure to sexual media content has a largely negative impact on teenagers' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (e.g. sexual relationship stereotypes, earlier sexual initiation, risky sexual behaviour); however, in some cases, media can also be beneficial to sexual socialization (e.g. media campaigns promoting healthy sexual behaviour have a proven impact on teenagers' more positive attitudes about engaging in safe sex). The next chapter *The Positive and Negative Effects of Video Game Play* (by Sara Prot, Craig Anderson et al.) discusses the theme that stands in the centre of today's public debate concerning negative and positive effects of media on children and adolescents. As the authors point out, views expressed in this debate have often been extreme because the critics and the proponents of video games tend to ignore research evidence supporting the views of the opposing camp. The findings of contemporary research support the notion of mainly harmful effects of violent video games as well as positive effects of prosocial or educational video games. However, the line between "good" or "bad" games and their effects is not clear: "even a single game can have multiple effects on a person, some of which are harmful and some of which are beneficial (e.g. a violent game which improves visuospatial functioning, but which also increases the risk of physical aggression)" (p. 123). Finally, the last chapter in this section of the book, *Risk and Harm on the Internet* by Sonia Livingstone, presents the main findings and policy recommendations emerging from the EU Kids Online project.

The final section of the book focuses on different ways in which media can be used for the enhancement of children's and adolescents' development. Beside the contributions on frequently discussed issues (e.g. *Early Learning, Academic Achievement and Children's Digital Media Use* by Ellen Wartella and Alexis Lauricella), the chapters presented here deal mainly with topics often underrepresented in the current debate about media influences on children and teens. Michele Ybarra, for example, summarizes the benefits and drawbacks of media technology in public health. In her chapter *Technology and Public*

Health Interventions she also describes in detail two projects where media technology was successfully used to affect youth behaviour change, namely an internet-based HIV prevention program CyberSenga in Uganda and a text messaging-based smoking cessation program Stop My Smoking (SMS) in Turkey and in the United States. Two chapters focus on how media can aid children in difficult life circumstances. Dafna Lemish in her contribution *Using Media to Aid Children in War, Crisis, and Vulnerable Circumstances* documents a number of media initiatives striving to help children that have been caught in crisis (e.g. war conflict, loss of parents due to AIDS, loss of the home in an earthquake) to cope with these situations and to improve their lives. The chapter *Sesame Workshop's Talk, Listen, Connect* written by David Cohen, Jeanette Betancourt and Jennifer Kotler then introduce the multiple-media project aimed at military families with young children. In the United States, there are more than 700,000 children under six years old who have parents that serve in the military, and many of them experience high rates of trauma as well as mental health problems. The Talk, Listen, Connect initiative was developed to address the critical needs of military families with young children and as the trio of authors point out, the results of the project show the potential for media to make a positive difference for these families experiencing traumatic or disruptive events. Another interesting chapter *Behind the Scene* by Marisa Nightingale describes the efforts of The Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy to work with television production companies to create more realistic and prosocial messages about sex in American TV shows. Overall, the whole collection of sixteen contributions offers an interesting and informed insight into the variety of connections between media and its young users and consumers. The editors conceived this book not as an exhausting encyclopaedia but as a case-based volume covering both publicly known and popular issues and less well known ones. Although the book seems to be meant primarily for the American audience, it could be a useful resource for students, scholars and media professionals all around the world.

Marek Šebeš

Angus Phillips

TURNING THE PAGE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE BOOK

London, Routledge, 2014, 156 pp
ISBN 978-0415625654

People's strangely heightened willingness to mark and reflect on various changes in different social systems is often understood as an essential feature of modernity. In his new book, Angus Phillips, a leading UK-based academic, author and experienced professional in book publishing, joins this line of thinking. In the introduction to *Turning the page: the evolution of the book*, Phillips writes: "This is an exciting period for the book, a time of innovation, experimentation, and change. It is also a time of considerable fear within the book industry [...]" (p. xi) These words make you, the reader, feel that this is neither the work of a naively enthusiastic proponent of technological determinism, nor of an obstinately conservative critic of any technological improvements that followed the printing press. Precisely this ability to perceive and rigorously describe the highly ambivalent nature of

trends such as globalization or digitalization and their possible consequences in different geographical and cultural contexts is the strongest trait of Phillips' study.

The book consists of six chapters, dealing with issues of authorship, readership, copyright, digital capital and the changing logic of the global cultural industry. These topics intentionally reflect multiple facets of the "big themes" currently dominating the discourses of the book publishing business, namely disintermediation, globalization, convergence and searchability. The study builds upon theory and research across a wide range of subjects, from business and sociology to neuroscience and psychology. The data gathered from research reports, news articles or institutional reports are supplemented with information from Phillips' interviews with industry professionals (such as Mike Shatzkin and Miha Kovač).

Let me turn to the "big themes" more closely and explore some of the questions that they prompt. As for *disintermediation*, Phillips observes that with the arrival of digital production and distribution, the traditional players in the value chain of publishing may easily find themselves bypassed, if not left out completely. At first glance, this might appear to be a great liberation for both writers and readers, as they are no longer subordinated to those greedy and snobbish publishers or booksellers and finally can publish whatever they want and read whatever they want. To those enchanted by this notion Phillips puts a simple yet ultimately unsettling question: why is it, then, that really successful writers are often so keen to be signed up with a major traditional publisher? Definitely there are self-published authors who emphasize the advantages of their position greatly. But the "lure" of the publishing houses continues to be huge and they attract many like a magnet, especially when the author wants to dedicate his time to writing rather than promotion or rights selling, not to mention the key role of the editor in getting the manuscript into a proper shape. Taking Bourdieu's theory of social action into account, we can argue that the relationships, investments or position-takings in the game of books are far more complex than often suggested in the black-and-white picture of the winners and losers of the digital revolution.

In a similar vein, Phillips, referring to *globalization*, notes that with the arrival of e-books, readers on the other side of the world do not have to wait for a book to be spotted, bought and translated by a local publisher. This, too, seems to increase readers' and writers' freedom. As a reader, you can now read the coveted book at once and as a writer you can extend your fan club without an extra effort. Of course, adequate linguistic competence is essential, if this is to work for both parties. According to Phillips, a proper ability to speak the language in question can be expected vis-à-vis English, which is today's lingua franca of the book business and in some cases also the "bridge language" for translations from minor languages. But how many people speak Danish, Lithuanian, Czech or Bulgarian? What are the chances of writers from those relatively small linguistic communities of "winning" a translation into English? Is the readers' and writers' freedom really extended? We must bear in mind that while on the one hand, the digital revolution can significantly contribute to greater diversity in books (anyone can publish anything, anyone can read anything), at the same time when we leave the land of unlimited possibilities and review these in light of the dominant position of English, e-books and their global reach could appear as another driver of homogenization of cultural markets. Again, the challenges of digitalization are not straightforward.

The third big theme in today's publishing trade is *convergence*. Phillips borrows Henry Jenkins's definition of the term: "convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content" (p. 126). Convergence and the newly-found praxis of bricolage are big threats to the traditional concepts of "copyright" and "text" (as a unit clearly separated from other units). As for texts, the transition from the vanilla e-book (plain text) to the enhanced e-book or the renaissance of short story as a genre particularly suitable for reading on mobile phones are viewed with optimism. When mapping the discussion on copyright, the picture is rather fuzzy. Phillips writes: "industry experts believe that the best solution is to make it as easy as possible to download content in a legal manner" (p. 60). However, there does not seem to be a widely shared agreement upon what "as easy as possible" actually means. The tension between the institutional frameworks and the less powerful individuals outside these structures, usually readers and writers, is much greater over copyright and piracy than in any dispute mentioned above. Phillips comments: „The problem today is that measures necessary to combat piracy have come to seem merely to defend the interests of the media corporations, which have pressed for action from governments and technology intermediaries. Furthermore, some of the measures proposed to control the internet, including blocking websites at the domain level, start to appear reminiscent of those earned out by totalitarian regimes.“ (p. 64) According to Phillips, the threat of Big Brother is always present and many times, it takes on rather covert forms. For instance, the e-book not only allows you to carry your library anywhere, it also enables producers to track your reading habits and possibly exploit these in their marketing strategies.

Finally, the fourth big topic is *searchability*. Certainly, there is a vast overproduction of books, fuelled by, although not restricted to, self-publishing, print on demand or specific logics of media conglomerates. Also, with the possibilities offered by the internet book distribution and selling are changing as well. Simultaneously, the authority of traditional opinion-leaders in the realm of books, mostly of dedicated booksellers, is diminishing. In this context, Phillips mentions the rather striking paradox of choice, as firstly observed by Barry Schwartz: many readers find an abundance of choice dissatisfactory, for if choice is more limited, they often feel less responsible for their decisions. Furthermore, he explains how publishers can deal with the problem of abundance of books and the general distraction of attention: they may work closer with book metadata, explore the possibilities of semantic web or emphasize their role as an active player in their local community.

To conclude, Phillips's book offers a neat and understandable overview of the current state of affairs in the book publishing business. The range of topics covered is quite remarkable. Although the depth of their description varies and the examples are mostly from the Anglo-American world, the book still serves as a great guide, especially when the area under study is a terra incognita for the reader. Sometimes the text even leaves you with more new questions raised than answered. But ultimately, this is a feature to be enjoyed, for it stimulates your own thinking rather than confuses it.

Suzanne Franks

WOMEN AND JOURNALISM

I. B. Tauris, London, New York, 2013, 85 pp
ISBN 978-1-78076-585-3

Women and Journalism is the latest book by Suzanne Franks who currently works at City University London and who used to work as a producer of BBC's flagship programmes like Panorama, Newsnight and Watchdog. It provides an overview of the current situation and key problems that women often face in the media and journalism. The author focuses mainly on the cases of the United Kingdom and the United States but she also provides findings from other countries. The book is organized thematically and consists of five chapters which build on existing research and on current examples from UK media that are based on Franks' interviews with media practitioners working in a variety of fields. Franks provides an overview of a wide range of research and the appendices list the key ones of these.

The first chapter provides a historical overview of women's involvement in journalism since the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries when with the development of the mass press, the first women started working in media and they often faced stereotypes and had to negotiate their place in the organization. The chapter suggests that the process of establishing women in the media was slow, with a number of obstacles and reversals. Rachel Beer is an example in this respect, she became an editor at the Sunday Times already in 1893, however, since then no British newspaper had a female editor. The chapter also discusses contradictions in education and its relevance for securing jobs in journalism; some of these contradictions are still relevant. Franks describes how women outnumbered men as journalism students and shows that their academic achievements were better, yet, in contrast with men only half of women secure employment in the media and eventually the majority of them abandon this career path. The author believes that this is the consequence of the so-called ivory tower syndrome when women gain journalistic skills as part of their education but they do not acquire skills that would help them succeed in the media.

The second – and longest – chapter deals with a number of phenomena that are more or less linked to the horizontal and vertical segregation of the whole media scene. Franks first addresses global gender inequalities in pay which she thinks are the more striking the higher we look in the media hierarchy. Another topic that she covers is age discrimination in the media when ageing female journalists are marginalized in particular and once they reach a certain age, they are forced to leave not only television stations but also other media. Franks then turns her attention to the gendered clustering of journalistic topics and types of media and shows that the fields in which women and men develop their careers can be significantly different. As a consequence of stereotypes, female journalists can find themselves in pink ghettos – magazines, regional or local newspapers or soft lifestyle topics and they find it difficult to be promoted. In comparison, most men tend to work in prestigious fields of journalism – politics, sports and columns which are difficult for women to get into as editors tend to view them as feature bunnies rather than as newshounds. Nonetheless, Franks shows on concrete examples (such as economics and war reporting) that the gendering of topics is not always easy to predict and that it can diverge from cultural expectations.

The third chapter opens with a critical evaluation of the much used term glass ceiling which refers to obstacles that women face in their careers. Franks thinks that the metaphor of a glass ceiling ceased to be adequate because in the diverse and digital environment of contemporary journalism it becomes more difficult to recognize as it can take on the appearance of other phenomena such as glass menagerie, sliding glass door or bamboo ceiling. Franks considers motherhood a decisive dividing line when it comes to women's careers in the media – unless women have an unconventional family background, they can find it difficult to combine the demanding journalistic work with a family life. Franks views freelancing in the digital media age as a chance for journalists-mothers to keep working in journalism. She deals with blogging and websites that bring together mothers-journalists examples of a newly emerging journalistic genre. This new world of freelancers working for social networking sites is described as a positive development, however, she does not leave out its negative aspects.

The fourth chapter discusses changes in journalism since the 1980s when more women began entering the profession, new trends such as confessional columns or girl writing and the spread of infotainment which has previously been associated with growing numbers of women in media are explored. The author also explores shifts in the news agenda, news values and changes in media contents that are linked to increased numbers of female experts and other female sources. Although Franks stresses that the impact of gender differences on journalism continues to be researched, she identifies ways of challenging stereotypes in the above mentioned new journalistic genre. The concluding part of the chapter considers possible future trends, such as feminization of media due to decreasing pay and the increasingly unstable work conditions in journalism. On the contrary, Franks thinks that a positive trend may emerge if female entrepreneurs manage to utilize the opportunities provided by the digital revolution without getting discouraged by their experiences from traditional media.

In the final, fifth chapter, Franks reminds her readers of the arguments outlined before and she also proposes recommendations that could help tackle inequalities that women face in journalism. She discusses audits that would ensure fair pay, recruitment quotas, transparent employment procedures and other policies that should be implemented also in other countries than Scandinavia. She also refers to anti-ageist campaigns that could lead to the representation of diverse age groups. She also suggests means (technological, legal) that would prevent anonymous online abuse which tends to target female journalists.

In short, *Women and Journalism* represents an accomplished overview that deals with topical gender issues that women face in the world of journalism – from unequal pay through ageism and glass obstacles that prevent their career development all the way to women-freelancers facing abuse in the anonymous online environment. Franks thus alerts to the fact that much effort is needed to ensure gender equality and balance in the media which would enable women to fully utilize their journalistic potential. The author, however, does not merely describe the current situation, on the contrary, she also introduces recommendations that would lead to improvements.