Cybercultures: Mediations of Community, Culture, Politics. Eds. Harris Reslow and Aris Mousoutzanis. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2012. p/bk 188 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-3578-2. Price £38.00.

Tweets and the Street: Social Media and Contemporary Activism. Paulo Gerbaudo. London: Pluto Press, 2012. p/bk 194 pp. ISBN 798-0-7453-3248-2. Price £16.99.

The prefix cyber- for all sorts of words seems that have become less fashionable then it was in the 1990s, when cyberspace was a relatively new term used to refer to the Internet, the newly established World Wide Web, and other new media technologies, such as virtual reality. It is therefore both slightly surprising and also very timely to see a new publication entitled *Cybercultures* issued now. It's as if the rise of the new media technologies that have made conceptual cyberspace an everyday experience are now being recontextualized in the language, if not the rhetoric, that was prevalent two decades ago. This updating must also, of course, take into consideration new realities.

The collection of essays brings a new, more contemporary perspective on the subject. The rise of cyberculture studies in the 1990s was crystallized in works that are now considered classic texts on the subject: Howard Rheingold's *The Virtual Community* (1993), Douglas Rushkoffs *Cyberia* (1994), Mark Dery's *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century* (1996), and Pierre Levý's *Cyberculture* (1997), to name but four.

Breslow and Mousoutzanis have presented the essays they selected for this new anthology of writings about cyberculture into four parts: (1) The Nature of Cyberculture, (2) Prosthethic Subjectivity, (3) Cybercultures and the Public Sphere, and (4) Mediatisation of Memor. These are arguably four all-encompassing headings for the current state of cyberculture. However, the fact that there are only two or at most three essays in each section makes for a relatively narrow engagement with each of these overarching themes at the heart of cyberculture studies.

In his essay 'Electronic Kairo'," Gary Thomson contests the nature and significance of cyberspace. His writing is reminiscent of pieces that were very popular in the first wave of cyberculture studies, directly evoking

Walter Benjamin's notion of "aura." Skipping ahead to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's schizoanalysis and their concept of the rhizome as a means to examine relations in cyberspace, Scott Sundvall's 'Post-Human, All too Non-Human: Implication of the Cyber-Rhizome' serves as a pointer to the advances made in the discussion of cyberculture since the early 1990s, when the posthuman was still described almost exclusively in terms of the cyborg.

Daniel Riha's 'Machinima, Creative Software and Education for Creativity' moves the tone from one favored by a critical theorist to a realm that occupies the forefront of practical engagements with new media technologies. Since the term cyberculture entered the academy two decades ago, machinima is one of the new forms of creativity that stands for whatever is really new in new media technologies. It is the spread of creativity beyond the elite producers that is also captured in 'Future Media Platforms for Convergence Journalism' by Frederick Gundelsweiler and Christian Fil. While media convergence was constructed as the next big thing a decade ago, it 's now an everyday reality in a small device carried by most people. Judith Guevarra Enriquez takes this development further by discussing the nature of human experience in 'Bodily Aware in Cyber-Research.'

The essays in part three of the collection utilize the politics of community formation and identity io discussions that update key ideas proposed by Jurgen Habermas, Benedict Anderson and other theorists of collective culture. Fidele Vlavo's '"Click Here to Protest": Electronic Civil Disobedience and the Imaginaire of Virtual Activism' stands out as a purely historical discussion of early hacktivism, with little contemporary updating of the issues discusse. Unlike Gerbaudo's *Tweets and the Streets* — of which more later in this review — Vlavo's work adds little knowledge to the field.

The final two essays in *Cybercultures* deal with memory studies, an emerging area of study that is rapidly gaining ground. Heiko Zimmerman's 'Diverging Strategies of Rememerance in Traditional and Web-2.0 On-Line Project' summarizes the great strides that have been made in online collective collaboration in terms of things like remembrance, memory and archiving. Picking a very specific example of this sort of activity, Martin Pogočar's contribution 'Music Blogging: Saving Yugoslav Popular Music' gives an excellent example of finding meaning through recovering endangered cultural activities in the mediation of memories.

This collection of new essays on cyberculture is of great interest to anyone seeking updated scholarly work on Internet studies, based on historically significant approaches in the area. Read cover to cover it seems little more than a special issue of a journal dealing with the subject; however it serves as a good addition to the many other publications that first appeared in the 1990s, serving as a historical backdrop to the more recent developments with the culture of new media technologies.

By contrast Gerbaudo's *Tweets and the Street* comes across as a very up-to-date in-depth study of the impact of social media (more specifically Twitter and Facebook) in terms of contemporary popular activism. Recognizing the need to understand the social significance of media practices, contrasting contemporary forms of communication with the past, the author of this book ensures that he does that before embarking on a detailed discussion of recent political protest movements. He also presents a firm theoretical framework on which he builds his arguments on what he calls the "choreography of assembly" driven by "choreographic leadership."

Three of the five chapters in Gerbaudo's book deal with the social media practices of three contemporary popular movements. Chapter 2 discusses the role of social media in the 2011 revolution against Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. Chapter 3 focuses on the *indignados* protest in Spain during the same year, while Chapter 4 analyzes the use of social media to mobilize participants in the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US. Gerbaudo argues very convincingly that the loose formation of contemporary popular protest movements does not mean they are leaderless, as journalists and media pundits often claim they are. He calls the style of leadership 'choreographic,' explaining that social media is used by the instigators of such movements to assemble those who seek change around them. This is based on the nature of social media networking websites like Facebook and Twitter, which enable "diffuse spheres of friendship and intimacy characterised by a vibrant emotionality" (14).

Insisting that the social impact of social media has been very important, but in different ways, Gerbaudo presents a more complex and ambiguous interpretation based on the choreography of assembly. This metaphorical approach is quite effective because in dance, the choreographer is responsible for many of what an audience sees dancers

perform but is rarely seen on stage with them. From specific Facebook group administrators to prominent Twitter users with thousands of followers, the author makes the point that these people provided a soft or liquid leadership for those who assembled on the streets, regardless of whether they were actually there to rally their call in person or not. This is not to say that these are armchair activists. Following Evgeni Morozov, author of 2011's *Net Delusion*, without fully embracing his pessimism, Gerbaudo points out that "social media can create serious risks for activists, given the increased possibilities of monitoring by state security apparatus" (8).

Read together, these two books offer a good overview of some of the more contemporary issues raised by Internet culture or cyberculture. They provide readers with scholarly viewpoints on concerns presented in the popular media with little or no critical engagement from either a historical or contextual perspective.

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