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Agnieszka Jelewska and Michał Krawczak, **Exposing Violence: Media Practices and Aesthetics of Radical Truth,** Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2026, 262 pp., $55.00 (paperback).

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There is something extraordinarily compelling and engaging about ***Exposing Violence: Media Practices and Aesthetics of Radical Truth***, particularly reading it at the height of Habermas's recent passing and the escalation of (ongoing) conflicts in the Middle East—leaking into the everyday violent spectacle of the global north. The authors bring together a rich interdisciplinary conversation with remarkable authority and clarity, drawing on "Foucault, Latour, Cubitt, Weizman, Fuller, Nixon, Mbembe, Césaire, Dekker, Barad, Haraway, Schuppli, Derrida, Said, Rancière and many [many] others" (p. 213). The result is a work that reflects the intellectual depth and methodological sophistication that have come to characterize the two authors' scholarship over the past decade.

For readers at any level, and especially for those grappling with contemporary forms of violence, inequality, and mediated harm, this book arrives at a moment of particular urgency, offering not only a powerful diagnosis of the present but also a framework for understanding how such realities can be documented, exposed, and challenged—collectively and within a grassroots utopia defined by the authors as a (decolonial) aesthetics of radical truth (AeRT). In this sense, it resonates with the late bell hooks' (2003) call for scholarship and critique that move beyond despair and toward forms of engagement capable of revealing and confronting structural injustice. *Exposing Violence* explicitly seeks to do so, and succeeds with conviction, passion, and considerable intellectual generosity, fostering "processes of mediatization, remediatization, digitalization, and hybridization of reality [that] have led to the emergence of a need to stabilize the concept of truth, evidence, and testimony through socially accepted mechanisms for their production and authentication" (p. 27). The book is structured in five fundamentally coherent chapters (plus intro and epilogue) highlighting the aesthetics of truth within military violence, slow violence and its resistance to data, the means of borderization, migrations as a form of liquid violence, and the fundamental means of grassroots digital archives (which is a recurring theme). The central laudable element is the means for analysis of a central, slow-violence milieu of hyperexposure and yet an ownership of the very exposure, effectively returning to the Latourian notion of "how the practices of formation of evidence to truth can be politically and socially productive" (p. 58).

After a tour-de-force introduction, the book begins by outlining the fundamental aesthetics (and ethics) that underpin the volume, particularly by reclaiming the concept of truth—a notion that has become

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increasingly contested in the so-called "post-truth" era. This intervention feels especially timely given the contemporary culmination of decades of systematic geopolitical violence, consisting of "terrorism, intrastate wars and conflicts, and various forms of apartheid unleashed massive waves of refugees" (p. 22). This conceptual foundation connects seamlessly to chapter 2, which examines the structural dimensions of military violence and offers a detailed analysis of the media practices through which such violence is documented and exposed—though much of it is perhaps over focused on investigative initiatives such as Bellingcat, which undoubtedly represents one of the most significant grassroots systems for documenting and exposing military violence, though there is comparatively little sustained reflection on the tensions and risks associated with open-source intelligence and the online circulation of sensitive material, such as WikiLeaks (which is mentioned) and the controversies surrounding the publication and redistribution of leaked information, as with the Epstein files (which are not mentioned). Such cases illustrate how the democratization of access to evidence can simultaneously expose wrongdoing and create new challenges about interpretation, authority, and the amplification of conspiratorial forms of knowledge production. Chapter 3's discussions of violence, denial, and resistance are particularly powerful, demonstrating how specific forms of harm are enacted, concealed, and normalized across time and space, while acts of resistance are frequently marginalized or forgotten. Here, the influence of Rob Nixon's (2011) "Slow Violence" is especially evident. The authors extend insights from the book with considerable precision, producing an account that is both analytically rigorous and deeply unsettling in its depiction of how it operates through processes of visibility and invisibility via warzone eternal scars of minefields, phosphorus bombs, and depleted uranium and the means to report them.

The fourth chapter (un)covers the contradictions embedded within contemporary border security and migration governance, revealing the tensions that lie, among others, at the heart of contemporary European engagements. The authors demonstrate how the European Union's commitment to humanitarian ideals often coexists with practices and policies that perpetuate systemic exclusion and injustice. In doing so, they offer a compelling account of how violence is often displaced beyond visible frontiers while remaining deeply entangled with European political responsibility.

Central to this discussion is the role of personal technologies, particularly smartphones, that migrants carry throughout their journeys: The authors convincingly illustrate how these devices function as tools of exposure, documentation, navigation, and survival. Precisely because of their capacity to record evidence, facilitate communication, and support mobility, smartphones themselves become targets of intervention and destruction by border authorities seeking to limit migrants' ability to travel, communicate, and document their experiences and abuses: exposure and defiance again interconnect.

Indeed, the smartphone emerges as one of the most significant technological artifacts examined throughout the book. In contrast to accounts that primarily frame digital technologies as instruments of surveillance and extraction—as famously articulated by Shoshana Zuboff (2019)—the authors emphasize their emancipatory and evidentiary potential. Hyperconnectivity is thus presented not solely as a mechanism of control but also as a means through which visibility, accountability, and resistance can be enacted in an "unfinishable" chapter that is instead concluded echoing a masterfully chilling passage from Achille Mbembe.

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This argument proves even more pronounced in the final chapter, where the authors explore forms of grassroots surveillance and citizen witnessing. Through the lens of the *world is watching* paradigm, they examine how mobile recordings, distributed footage, and networked forms of documentation have become central to exposing racialized violence and police brutality. Drawing on examples associated with Black Lives Matter and related movements, the chapter demonstrates how visual evidence can challenge official narratives, support collective mobilization, and generate new forms of public accountability. In doing so, it reinforces one of the book's central claims: that contemporary struggles over violence are increasingly struggles over visibility, evidence, and the power to document.

Overall, this is a powerful, intellectually ambitious, and even shocking book. Yet, despite the strength of its individual chapters, the volume does not always cohere into a fully integrated whole. This is because many elements are only mentioned in passing, yet they raise important questions for the framework of the AeRT: though the book extensively highlights grassroots surveillance that challenges hidden military-industrial networks, the authors leave several important geopolitical complexities relatively unexplored. For instance, the Arab Spring was lauded as a social media-driven uprising, yet its overthrow also showcased the darker side, as seen in Myanmar's genocide, which was significantly aided by the very same tools. Similarly, revolutionary peak moments like the Tiananmen Square tank affair, despite extensive media coverage that apparently paralleled the shocking footage of Rodney King's beating, were and are heavily censored by the People's Republic.

These examples suggest some of the limits of a framework centered primarily on radical truth and visibility, confirming the trope "the revolution will not be televised." Indeed, the two authors engage only briefly with how "mirror world" realities (Klein, 2023) also permeate the "post-truth" diversions, permanently fueling alt-right and "Proud Boys" narratives and conspiracy theories, which the two authors briefly acknowledge as "dark epistemologies." Grassroots web-induced conspiracies expose the collective harm of radicalized "truth" when amplified, collated, and permeating online spaces. Moreover, the most destructive, unregulated forces via DIY surveillance, digital vigilantism, and online sleuthing (Trottier et al., 2024) are rarely addressed in such light, despite their profound impact on both the surface and so-called deep (or dark) web in discriminating, targeting, doxxing, and harassing users worldwide, highlighting in itself how exposure, citizen investigation, and participatory evidence become mechanisms of domination, conspiracy, and harassment.

A final point may be raised in line with the strong intellectual decolonial-hereditary argumentation that the two authors put together: the need to complement practices of exposure with a politics of opacity.

This is Édouard Glissant's (1990/1997) central argument of effective "resistance" practice as a "poetics of relations" as a form of self-defense against both "the standardization of globalization and the transparency-seeking epistemologies of the West" (Davis, 2019, p. 65), which may add another layer that the two authors may investigate in their future work—which I very much look forward to reading.

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