Review: Nicoletta Leonardi and Simone Natale (eds), *Photography and Other Media in the Nineteenth Century* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018) 239pp. ISBN 978-0-271-07915-5, £27.95.

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THIS AMBITIOUS COLLECTION of essays joins a growing body of literature examining nineteenth-century photography through the lens of intermediality, specifically aiming to situate the study of photographs within the disciplinary framework of media history. It follows efforts such as *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Image, Sounds, Touch* (2011), Stephen Bann's *Distinguished Images: Prints in the Visual Economy of Nineteenth-Century France* (2013), and Geoffrey Belknap's *From a Photograph: Authenticity, Science and the Periodical Press, 1870-1890* (2016) in exploring photography's material and cultural relationship to the broader media landscape.[1] The essays examine nineteenth-century photography in the context of railways, the postal service, telegraphy, photographic animation, and phonography, while also revisiting its more frequently explored intersections with literature, the graphic arts, and painting.

The premise put forward by editors Nicoletta Leonardi and Simone Natale is that media historians have ignored photography for too long, while historians of photography have been guilty of media-specific tunnel-vision, and the time has come for both photo-art historians and media historians to awaken to each other's work. Leading with the assertion that the history of photography needs to 'overcome artificial distinctions among "individual" media in favor of an integrated approach' is admittedly somewhat perplexing given that this field of scholarship has evolved in recent decades to become widely engaged with the cultural, social, technological, and representational contexts for photographs.[2] From the recent material turn led by scholars such as Elizabeth Edwards, a visual anthropologist, to the inheritance of the essentially literary

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[1] Collette Colligan and Margaret Linley (eds), *Media, Technology and Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Image, Sound, Touch* (Aldershot, Hants; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011); Stephen Bann, *Distinguished Images: Prints in the Visual Economy of 19th Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Geoffrey Belknap, *From a Photograph: Authenticity, Science and the Periodical Press, 1870-1890* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

[2] Leonardi and Natale, 'Introduction,' p. 1.

attitudes shaping the works of Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes, photography is a discipline that has historically benefitted from cross-disciplinary perspectives. In the concluding chapter, presented as a dialogue between photograph historian Geoffrey Batchen and media historian Lisa Gitelman, Batchen acknowledges that the current scholarship has moved away from media specificity, from 'an almost exclusively art historical discourse to one scattered across many disciplines, including history, American studies, women's studies, race studies, anthropology, and so on'.[3] How exactly, then, does this collection challenge 'the established boundaries within which the history of photography is usually approached'?[4]

The editors admit that the framing discourse is intentionally provocative, posing a challenge not just to media essentialism and an autonomous history of photography, but calculated to uproot our understanding of photography as a fundamentally visual phenomenon.[5] For instance, a theme running through the book as a whole is the idea that movement – or the circulation of images across distances and across media, and not only in a representational capacity – presages understanding. In considering photography in relation to a wide range of expressive forms, this collection aims at removing what Leonardi and Natale view as 'the otherwise limiting boundaries of historical narratives based on the idea of technological revolutions', revealing that the boundaries which remain are not so much disciplinary as conceptual.[6] For many years now, photographic historians have played with the idea of multiple histories of photography and this would seem to be the natural extension of that fracturing narrative: to acknowledge both the material and immaterial aspects of photography demanded by a media history framework, the photographic image must be divorced from the photographic object so that each aspect can be weighed and understood.[7]

The essays are arranged in three parts: "The Emergence of Modern Communications," "Technologies of Reproduction," and "Popular Cultures." In the first section, Erkki Huhtamo undertakes a brief literature review of the history of photography to prove its readiness for integration into the theoretical framework of

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[3] Batchen and Gitelman, 'Afterword', p. 206.

[4] Batchen and Gitelman, p. 205.

[5] Leonardi and Natale, 'Introduction,' p.3.

[6] Leonardi and Natale, 'Introduction,' p.3.

[7] Batchen and Gitelman, p. 212.

media archaeology, while in chapter 2, 'A Mirror with Wings: Photography and the New Era of Communications', Natale submits a re-thinking of his important article for the *History of Photography*, which situated photography within nineteenth-century communication technologies.[8] Leonardi contributes a discussion of 'the visual economy of railroad landscape representation and reception in the United States' as a means of exploring the burgeoning cultural practice of looking at the world through machines.[9] Interestingly, all three of these authors utilize examples of human-machine hybrids ('proto-cyborgs') in nineteenth-century visual culture as evidence of the ways in which photography participated in the attitudes towards media generally; making it clear that expressions of anxiety and wonder around mechanization were both drawn from photography and imposed on it from other areas. David M. Henkin's chapter represents a focused inquiry balancing the daguerreotype's specific materiality against its place in a larger culture of media exchange. He looks at how radical reductions in U.S. Post Office rates contributed to the craze for daguerreotype portraiture by facilitating the movement and reach of these unique, non-reproducible objects, revealing how daguerreotypes became inextricably linked with letter writing as a means of maintaining relationships and personal contact, sometimes across great distances.

An exciting new direction promised by this book is a closer engagement with the seedier and more menacing side of photography, signaling an end to what both Natale and Huhtamo point to in their respective chapters as the canonical, laudatory history. Richard Taws reveals the negative perceptions of power and control that were associated with Claude Chappé's pre-electronic telegraph in post-Revolutionary France, which continued to influence the popular perception of telegraphy long after its decline. Looking specifically at Nadar's writings on electric telegraphy and photography in *Quand j'étais Photographe* (1900), Taws points to an ongoing, 'significant metaphorical currency' that engendered mistrust and left both technologies walking 'a fine line between truth and falsehood, fraud and sincerity'.[10] Jumping ahead to the section on popular cultures, Peppino Ortoleva's chapter on Honoré de Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* (1844) similarly launches from a re-thinking of photography's

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[8] Simone Natale, 'Photography and Communication in the Nineteenth Century', *History of Photography* Vol. 24, No. 4 (2012) pp. 451–56.

[9] Leonardi, 'With Eyes of Flesh and Glass Eyes,' p. 72.

[10] Taws, 'The Telegraph of the Past,' p. 68

development alongside another communication media, the birth of serialized fiction. Balzac famously referred to the work as an exercise in "daguerreotyping a society," which is often understood to mean that he imagined his writing to be a truthful and accurate representation of the world.[11] Ortoleva looks at other implications, such as the daguerreotype's potential to deceive and distort, which enabled authors of fiction to conjure not a picture of reality but 'a machine-made ghost world'.[12] He concludes that the daguerreotype's appeal to literary figures at the time may have come from the possibilities it opened up for experimenting with society rather than reflecting it.

Since William Ivins' assertion that half-tone prints have 'no syntax' (suggesting that we look *through* them rather than *at* them), and Estelle Jussim's emphatic counter that they absolutely do communicate through their materials, there has been no shortage of scholars who have looked at photographic reproductions.[13] Here, however, the studies look far beyond pictorial influence and visual culture. Lynn Berger examines the role of the photographic press in cultivating a peer-based community of open exchange, while Jan von Brevern proposes that photography as a reproductive medium changed the arts more dramatically than photography as an art, by redefining *what painting was.* Steffan Siegel's exploration of the use of aquatints to reproduce daguerreotypes in Noël Lerebours' *Excursions Daguerriennes* (1841-43) grapples with the question of whether a photograph is reducible to the message that it communicates. Siegel asserts that aquatint engravings of photographs communicated an understanding of photographic verisimilitude and precision that endowed them with photographic authenticity. Geoffrey Belknap pursues a similar line of reasoning in his look at the reproduction of eclipse photographs in the scientific periodical *Nature* (a re-working of a chapter in his book, *From a Photograph*), deftly demonstrating that hand-made reproductions could be understood as photographs provided that an unbroken chain of authenticity affirmed that the source was an original photograph.

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[11] Honoré de Balzac, 'Preface', *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans* (1844), qtd. in Peppino Ortoleva, 'In the Time of Balzac', p. 149.

[12] Ortoleva, p. 152.

[13] William Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge, Mass: The M.I.T. Press, 1953); Estelle Jussim, *Visual Communication in the Graphic Arts: Photographic Technologies in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: W. W. Boker, 1983).

The final section of the book includes Ortoleva's look at the daguerreotype and serialized fiction, as well as Anthony Enns' study of 'sound photography' and Kim Timby's chapter on 'perceptual realism' in animated photography. Each contrasts photography with the kinds of sociocultural institutions that André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion consider important to their widely accepted 'double-birth model' developed for cinema studies. Gaudreault and Marion conclude this section by considering how their model, which aims at separating invention from institutional legitimacy, might be applied to photography fairly. Acknowledging that photography had many births and developments, they explore a three-pronged approach that looks at the appearance, emergence, and advent of the daguerreotype as separate moments, positing that Niépce's idea of heliography and Daguerre's announcement of the daguerreotype represent the invention and institutionalization, while Nadar's photographic practice might indicate the real moment of rupture. It is a chapter that ironically looks very closely at media exclusivity in order to demonstrate that media participate in, and derive meaning from, contact with various 'cultural series' (a concept proposed by Gaudreault and Marion that is seen to be less media specific than 'cultural practice').[14]

The approaches to intermediality explored in this volume resonate well beyond the history of photography, and beyond media history too. Positioned as a starting point with a call for further enquiries, this collection taps into the spirit of materials-focused, context-aware analysis in current scholarship and embraces a shift away from an emphasis on production contexts towards dissemination and reception. The potentially wide-ranging applications of this inclusive approach should have the desired impact of encouraging scholars in far-reaching disciplines to also engage with photography outside of art history in non-Western, non-visual, or contemporary digital contexts.

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[14] Gaudreault and Marion, 'The Double-Birth Model Tested Against Photography,' pp. 200-201.

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