Chief Editor
Tirtha Prasad mukhopadhyay

Editor
Tarun Tapas Mukherjee

Indexing and abstracting

Rupkatha Journal is an international journal recognized by a number of organizations and institutions. It is archived permanently by **www.archive-it.org** and indexed by **EBSCO**, **Elsevier**, **MLA International Directory**, **Ulrichs Web**, **DOAJ**, **Google Scholar**, **J-Gate**, **JournalSeek**, **ResearchGate** and other organisations and included in many university libraries

Additional services and information for *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* can be found at:
About Us: www.rupkatha.com/about.php
Editorial Board: www.rupkatha.com/editorialboard.php
Archive: www.rupkatha.com/archive.php
Submission Guidelines: www.rupkatha.com/submissionguidelines.php
Call for Papers: www.rupkatha.com/callforpapers.php
Email Alerts: www.rupkatha.com/freesubscription.php
Contact Us: www.rupkatha.com/contactus.php

Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion

Edited by Athina Karatzogianni and Adi Kuntsman
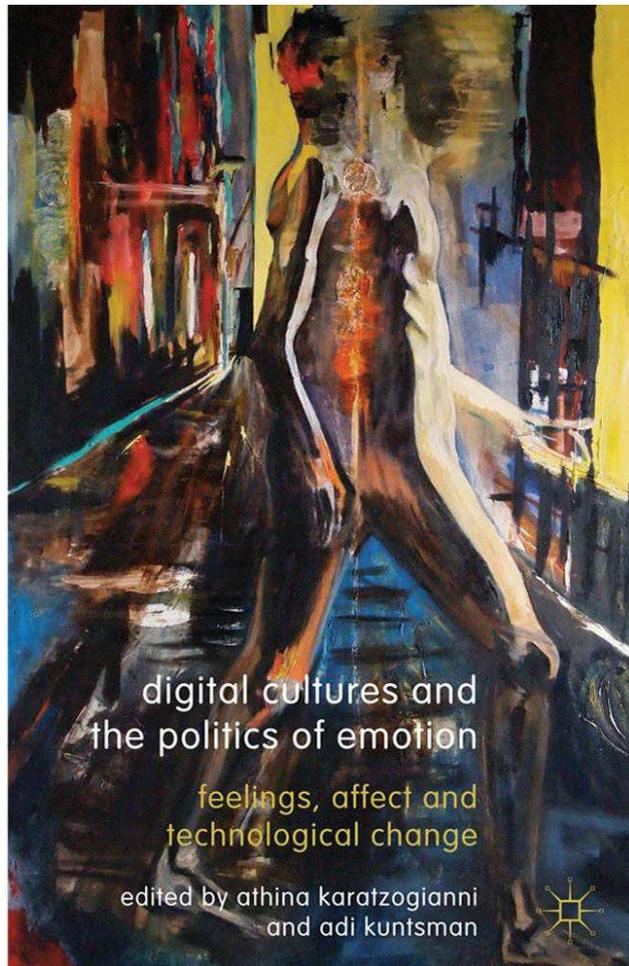
Review by
Rohit K Dasgupta
University of the Arts London, UK

Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion is an important intervention in the field of digital media studies, an area that has expanded considerably in the last decade. Digital Culture spans several disciplines and can take several forms. They have opened up new ways and approaches communication. Swiss and Hermann who examined the internet as a unique cultural technology where several complex processes come together, remarks:

> The technology of the World Wide Web, perhaps *the* cultural technology of our time, is invested with plenty of utopian and dystopian mythic narratives, from those that project a future of a revitalised, Web based public sphere and civil society to those that imagine the catastrophic implosion of the social into the simulated virtuality of the Web (Swiss and Herman, 2000:2)

> This volume edited by Athina Karatzogianni and Adi Kuntsman is a significant contribution to this field of digital media studies. The cultural aspect of digital media can itself be

traced back to Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies where media studies was brought into the cultural studies sphere. In this volume, the editors explore 'the affective fabrics of digital cultures' (1). The aim of this volume is to look at the political and psychological effects of communication on the digital sphere. Adi Kuntsman begins the volume by talking about the widespread circulation of online nationalism, racism and militarism and the construction of emotions that these communications bring forth.

The chapters in this volume reflect both the ambiguity and reach of these structures of feeling that operate within our everyday digital life. There are a variety of topics and approaches that the authors of this volume make. One of the striking features of this volume is the diversity of theories and methodologies that populate the various chapters. All the chapters engage critically with the intersections between affect, emotions and digital culture. The studies make it clear that the authors come from a variety of academic backgrounds other than just media studies (In fact they range from sociology, anthropology, history to multimedia). The book is divided around four main themes- 'Affect in the Age of the Digital', 'Subjects and Objects of Digital Culture', 'Virtual Intimacies' and 'Feelings, Technologies and Politics'.

Patricia Ticineto Clough's opening chapter, 'War By Other Means: What Difference does the graphics make?' begins with a description of the website *I Live here* which contain an collection of stories and images about war and death in different parts of the world. Clough begins by questioning the reader, what is the role of the graphics. The description runs from evoking emotional responses of sympathy, compassion to horror and disgust. What emerges is that Clough's call for shifting the attention from the 'subject, body or language... to body parts and affective intensities' (10). Karatzogianni in her chapter, 'Wiki leaks Affects: Ideology, Conflict and the Revolutionary Virtual' addresses the potentiality of the virtual in addressing political and social situations by focusing on the recent Wikileaks controversy. The Wikileaks affect has for the first time shaken the invincibility of government institutions and media politics by harnessing the power of new media through digital activism. Karatzogianni says:

> Wikileaks is a part of a tradition of an overall information age ideology adhering to information wants to be free, wanting to change the world through making government open and accountable... through peer production and collaborative networks. (64)

The links between emotional interactions and digital media are further explored in the second section of the volume. Karenza Moore in 'Digital Affect, Clubbing and Club Drug Cultures: Reflection, Anticipation, Counter-Reaction' analyses the role played by digital media in UK's clubbing culture. She specifically looks at Facebook groups (memorial sites) dedicated to clubs which are not in existence anymore. Through a process of mourning and nostalgia she reads the variety of emotional responses to clubbing and drug use within the embodiment of digital spaces. By raising the question how digital affect emerges in the process of remembering, the author proposes that 'memorial sites actively reconstruct a historically and culturally significant moment which produces personal and collective (club crowd) memories' (113).

The topic of emotional responses that occur within digital spaces is investigated further by Melissa Gregg in 'White Collar Intimacy' where she studies work based online cultures. Sifting through a variety of digital spaces, from advertisements, emailing and facebook groups, the author offers a view of working culture and online technologies. Two of her case studies show that many employees checked their work email even outside their work which they were not being paid for. Whilst some of this can be traced back to performance anxiety, what this proffers is how intimate digital culture and working lives are. In fact one of the employees even says how mobile technologies improved her relationship at home 'because she spent more time with her partner' (154). This blurred relationship between virtual and actual presence represent the intimate relationship that digital technologies and office workers share- one that is both

productive (in terms of remote access, working from home, etc) and at the same time intrusive on the worker's own space.

Mihirini Sirisena's chapter, 'Virtually Your's: Reflecting on the Place of Mobile Phones in Romantic relationships' is the perfect ending for this section. By studying the role of mobile phones in the love lives of young people in Sri Lanka (mostly university students, on whom this study is based), Sirisena traces how new intimate spaces are opened up through mobile phones. Interestingly Sirisena does not look exclusively at the textual content generated by the phone through voice calls or texting, rather affective practices such as 'blank calls' to remind the love of the other's presence, subscribing to 'couple's packages' signal how technologies themselves act as mediators and objects of feeling.

The fourth and final section of the volume engages critically with the political potential of digital technologies. Michaela Quadraro's 'Digital Aesthetics and Affective Politics', which is the final chapter of the volume, brings together 'postcolonial theory and digital art in order to address the potentials that digital technologies offer to postcolonial politics' (15). By studying Isaac Julien's work, the author shows how such art practices can challenge existing notions about race and identity and move to a more revolutionary way of reading such content.

In conclusion, in this volume Karatzogianni and Kuntsman offer a mix of theoretical reflections and empirical case studies that will help readers understand how digital culture and new media create affective regimes and how they shape the experiences of everyday emotion. The book makes a timely and important intervention within the field of not just digital media but within the wider disciplines of anthropology, cultural studies and sociology. The book not only makes a significant addition to the field's ongoing scholarship but challenge the readers to find new ways of studying them. The book will be useful to not just senior scholars and academics but undergraduates and those with an interest in media practices.

Bibliography

Swiss, T and Hermann, A (2000), 'The World Wide Web as Magic, Metaphor and Power,' In T Swiss and A Hermann (ed) *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory*, London: Routledge, pp. 1-4

Rohit K Dasgupta is Associate Lecturer and Doctoral Student at University of the Arts London.