Deus In Machina: Religion, Technology, and the Things in Between. Edited by Jeremy Stolow. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013. 354 pp. ISBN 9780823249817.

Derived from a colloquium held in Hamilton in 2007, this impressive anthology calls into question why religion and technology have existed as two distinct areas of understanding. The result is what the editor, Concordia University Communication scholar Jeremy Stolow, calls "a conversation" with communication scholars, religious studies specialists, and anthropologists aimed at generating new ways of thinking about how to understand the hybrid technical and mystical aspects of social experience. Although a few chapters are partially adapted from previously published work, the majority is comprised of new material.

Broadly speaking, a collection like this has two main objectives. It wants to create space for a field of study within a discipline by pointing to the limitations of previous ways of knowing some of its key objects and then drawing attention to the benefits to knowledge that accrue from bringing the new approach to bear. It also wants to encourage engagement by showing scholars new pathways into an exciting area of study. With its diverse case studies across a number of religious traditions, its variety of theoretical frameworks, and its rich historical detail, *Deus in Machina* is an unqualified success on both accounts.

In his informative introduction, Stolow notes that one of the collection's main objectives is to replace what he calls the "instrumentalist conceptions of technology" (p. 7), which have kept religion and technology in two different ontological spheres, with culturalist and phenomenological approaches that bring them together. The book also represents a challenge to mechanistic conceptions of technology in favour of a view that emphasizes practices, experiences, and that reveals hidden notions of magic. These arguments are illustrated across eleven chapters organized into three main sections.

The first section, "Equipment," explores how different instruments and devices mediate the spiritual and material worlds. I will go out on a limb and predict that John Durham Peters' chapter, "Calendar, Clock, Tower," will do for these three forms what James Carey did for the telegraph as far as teachable texts are concerned. Peters illustrates how this triumvirate demonstrates the impact of old media on new media and calls attention to the "logistical or organizational role of religious technologies" that "define our basic orientation to time and space" (p. 25). Wolfgang Ernst follows Peters with a media archaeological account of the history of the oscillating clock and its detachment from religion. This is part of his broader critique of the ways in which religious metaphors have created and obscured media practices, which in turned have obscured the ways in which media and religion express different notions of time. The anthropologist Marleen de Witte provides a fascinating account of what she calls "the magic of technology" and of the "technicity of experiences glossed as supernatural or religious" (p. 63) through her account of the ways in which Ghanaian preachers per-

suade parishioners of their proximity to the divine through the fraudulent use of a device called "The Electric Touch Machine." Stolow closes this section with a study of the use of spiritualist technologies during the nineteenth century, examining the instructions of one of the movement's leaders, Andrew Jackson Davis, to carry out séances with the use of a "magnetic cord."

The second section, "Bio-Power," explores how questions about health, fertility, and suffering reflect broader issues about subjectivity and body politics. Here Jason Ananda Josephson details how Buddhist ritual healing practices engage with contemporary Japanese law. Sherine Hamdy provides an impressive account of the politics of organ transplantation in Egypt. With her clever title, "The Canary in the Gemeinschaft," Faye Ginsburg examines the ways in which documentary films can be used to challenge how disabled bodies are traditionally viewed within the Jewish community.

The third section, "(Re-)Locating Religion in a Technological Age," asks how technologies figure into the imagination of religious ideas around belonging and identity. John Lardas Modern considers how the writings of Herman Melville, especially *Moby Dick*, were read within American Protestantism. Peter Pels discusses the interest of the science fiction genre in religious ideas through a number of case studies. Alexandra Boutros offers one of the collection's stronger chapters with an exploration of the on- and offline culture of the voodoo religion in Haiti and in cyberspace. The final contribution, by Maria Jose de Abreu, explores the production and dissemination of a Eucharistic ritual by a charismatic Catholic organization in Brazil as a way of meditating on the concept of "contemplation."

The absence of a concluding chapter invites the reader to continue the conversation started by this collection. How might communication scholars go about rectifying the problems that inspired this volume to better shed light on the religiosity of technology or the technicity of religious experience? Should we be offering courses on religion as part of our communication programs? Should we be reading more theology? Perhaps a thornier issue is how—or to what extent—religious influences shape the work of communication theorists. Can we say that Adorno's thinking is Jewish any more than we can call out the Catholic ideas in McLuhan's writings, or the Jesuit thinking of Walter Ong, to use some obvious examples? If so, how would we do it? Many aspects of communication assume notions such as transcendence, spirit, and ritual that have obvious links to religious practices or traditions. Recent books by John Durham Peters (1999) and Peter Simonson (2010) have called attention to the religiosity of communication theory. Such questions resonate for those who teach and study communication in the Canadian context. May I remind you that Concordia University is the first communication program in Canada, and one started by Father John O'Brien, S.J.

The contributors of *Deus in Machina* have pushed these issues to the forefront by drawing our attention to what we have been missing by treating religion and technology as two ontologically distinct ways of thinking. For all of the reasons I have indicated here, this book should be essential reading for students and scholars interested in communication theory, media history, and cultural studies, with an eye towards thinking more closely about the relationship between religion and technology in everyday life.

References

Peters, John Durham. (1999). *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Simonson, Peter. (2010). *Refiguring Mass Communication: A History*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Ira Wagman, Carleton University

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