

production of a kind of cultural capital. In this regard, she does a good job in showing the effects of the collaboration's research on the cybernetics-systems approach, leading to a new language, practices, and institutions in the areas of control and governance in human affairs.

The book also provides an interesting view into late Soviet experiments with administration and policymaking. Soviet state managers were perpetually frustrated in their search for the perfect organizational scheme that would impel dynamism into the command economy. Rindzevičiūtė takes the reader through the Soviet state's much-touted Scientific-Technical Revolution (STR), which would lead to a more rational and efficient postindustrial future. The book joins in the old Soviet-studies debate over the post-Stalin trajectory between ideology-power and rationality-performance that Barrington Moore kicked off in *Terror and Progress USSR: Some Sources of Change and Stability in the Soviet Dictatorship* in the early 1950s. Rindzevičiūtė builds on the notion that state elites held an unquestioning faith in science and technology, and were optimistic about the applicability of scientific breakthroughs in cybernetics-systems theory. She makes the case that the scientific results of IIASA research and a political environment accommodating to technocratic solutions had a long-term liberalizing effect on the Soviet communist regime. The author, however, tempers this assertion by noting how political power seized on advances in the systems approach through, for example, the KGB's surveillance system in society. The author finally engages the larger theoretical debate on whether cybernetic-systems science represents the culmination of "high modern" control, arguing instead that the systems approach ushered in a new "nonmodern" epistemology of governmentality.

The book is constructed from a solid base of primary evidence, which includes archival research at the Russian Academy of Sciences, the State Archive on the Economy, and IIASA. The research is further enhanced by three dozen interviews of participants in the project. Despite the technical subject matter, the author does a very good job of explaining and illustrating abstract scientific conceptualizations to guide the reader smoothly along. Still, this work is not meant for a general audience. *The Power of Systems* is a first-rate monograph, best suited for graduate students, scholars of Soviet Russia and the Cold War, and scholars of the history and sociology of science.

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RUTH A. MILLER. *Flourishing Thought: Democracy in an Age of Data Hoards*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016. Pp. viii, 230. Cloth \$60.00, e-book \$50.00.

This engaging monograph asks us to think more carefully about embryos, clones, and data hoards as *productive* constituents of democratic theory. Ruth A. Miller's *Flourishing Thought: Democracy in an Age of Data Hoards* opens with an unusual juxtaposition: amoeba-like slime and data surveillance, the book suggests, should be understood not as uncontrollable threats to liberal democracy, but as non-

human entities that promote a different kind of politics, one that forces us to broaden our conception of democratic participation. Things that reproduce unboundedly can be said to think, and things that think are inherently political. Ultimately Miller argues that slime and data are "infinitely more beneficial" than detrimental to democracy (3). Put differently, she promotes a theory of "mass democracy as nonhuman thought," which might be better able to respond to the apparent threat of data surveillance than is "classic, human-centered liberal democratic theory" (139).

The center of the book is the examination of three case studies—embryos, clones, and reproductive trash—which provide the grounding for Miller's claim that "it may be possible to reconfigure data mining as, itself, a democratic actor rather than a threat to political engagement" (170). Clones, for example, pose a threat to liberal democracy, but not primarily in the mundane sense that a person could clone herself, and then (after eighteen years or so) have essentially doubled "her" vote. Rather, the ability to clone oneself poses an "insidious threat" to democracy because it "mocks individualization" by revealing how "human dignity exists as a political artifact specifically to police the boundary between reproduction, on the one hand, and growth and thought on the other" (101–105). Miller draws on posthuman feminist theory to assert that cloning should instead be seen as "a radically democratic act" (134) precisely because it enables a democratic politics that downplays liberal human-centered ideals and identities in favor of a more vital version of democracy.

Such examples suggest that Miller is less concerned in this book with historical questions of democratic engagement than with showing posthumanist, antihumanist, and nonhumanist scholars and feminist theorists how their arguments might point the way to a new conception of mass democracy. The book hardly engages with democracy as a lived experience of interest to many historians (no doubt because doing so would privilege the human over the nonhuman). Likewise, though Miller draws on biologists for her understanding of reproduction, historians of science may lament that she relies on explicitly misreading a handful of historical and contemporary sources to build her case. Though her analyses of Georges-Louis Leclerc Buffon, William Preyer, and Bahaeddin Şakir are fascinating, they are fundamentally decontextualized, and seemingly cherry-picked (her focus is arbitrarily on France, the U.S., and Turkey). Even if Miller aggressively misreads her sources, she is still quite careful in doing so; her prose is admirably clear for a theory-laden book. Scholars unfamiliar with posthumanism will still be able to engage with its central claims.

At times, the analysis goes well beyond what might be expected in a book concerned with "democracy in an age of data hoards." When discussing "reproductive trash," for example, the author argues that a newspaper article about scrap dealers finding a fetus in a dumpster reinforces a "gendered framing" of "the garbage heap [as] a place where an alternative mode of political and biological life becomes possible" (160). However provocative, even outlandish, such assertions might initially seem to readers,

they ultimately support a far more plausible claim: that supposed threats to democracy are really threats to the notion of rational (male) individuals asserting their autonomous rights, rather than threats to democracy as such.

The idea is that if Miller can show how embryos, trash, and clones are productive to democratic theory, then surely data surveillance can also be understood as a normal and healthy expression of democracy. One might think she would use (or at least gesture at) the extensive history of data collection and state surveillance (Social Security, Census Bureau, etc.) or the growing literature on the materiality of data, but instead the book is configured solely as a work of nonhumanist political philosophy.

Unfortunately, we gain little sense of the payoff or ultimate stakes in critically “misreading” the historical evidence in this way. Despite the repeated claim that non-human entities threaten democracy, the historical (as opposed to philosophical) implications of that threat are entirely absent. If there are “various, seemingly daily, crises of democracy” (11), some readers might want a more specific sense of how, precisely, these crises are experienced. Even if readers grant that liberal democracy is threatened by the proliferation of nonhuman entities, and that a non-humanist theory of democratic engagement resolves this apparent tension, what are we to make of that? Historians of the recent past have identified many different “threats” to democracy (social media manipulation, centralization of power, political polarization, globalization, etc.) in Turkey, France, and the U.S., but embryos, clones, and trash rarely make the top-ten list of concerns. The practice of bulk collection of metadata may have indeed contributed to a sense of democracy being under threat. But it isn’t clear, to this reader at least, that discovering that a state’s surveillance and data-mining apparatus shows “the triviality of human political engagement and, simultaneously, the vitality of a centuries-old nonhuman politics” (192) will provide any comfort to voters worried about democracy in Donald Trump’s America or Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Turkey.

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CATHAL J. NOLAN. *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. viii, 709. \$34.95.

This bold book by Cathal J. Nolan reinterprets the history and nature of warfare from the Middle Ages through the Second World War. It is aptly titled *The Allure of Battle*, because Nolan argues that the seductive siren call of battle-as-the-key-to-victory has distracted rulers, statesmen, and commanders from the true determinants of success or failure in armed conflict.

Nolan identifies three dangerous misconceptions that have distorted the practice of warfare: belief in decisive battle; confidence in the “short-war illusion”; and trust that military genius can overcome otherwise marked disadvantages. These dangerous fallacies are distinct, but

they feed into one another. Nolan’s criticism of the idea of decisive battle follows two paths. First, the author denies that battles were the primary determinants of victories in past wars, as in medieval and early modern conflicts. This is a matter of history. Second, he stresses that when war planners gambled on precipitating decisive battles of annihilation, as did the Germans in 1914 and 1941, failure produced precisely the wars of attrition they had counted on avoiding. This is a matter of operational and strategic thinking.

Faith in decisive battle encouraged expectations of short wars: compel the opponents into battle on your terms and they can be driven to their knees quickly. The troops can be home by Christmas. The short-war illusion misled rulers and commanders before the late eighteenth century; however, that unlikely prospect became ever more dangerous as wars of monarchs gave way to wars of peoples, conflicts that exploited technology, production, and demography as never before. Nolan points out that the short-war illusion has been particularly tempting to those who realize that they are not well suited to a long struggle.

Underwriting the prospects of victory by decisive battle in a short war is confidence in the genius of one’s military leaders. Superior intelligence, character, and resolve promise to overcome other shortfalls and achieve victory. But Nolan insists that short wars won by decisive battles fought by commanders of genius have hardly been the rule in military history, which has, in fact, been dominated by wars of attrition. He writes, “The major power wars of the past several centuries were in the end decided by grinding exhaustion more than by the operational art of even the greatest of the modern great captains” (9–10).

Nolan says most about four “great captains” with reputations as battle winners: the Duke of Marlborough, Frederick II, Napoleon, and Helmuth von Moltke the elder. But he points out that Marlborough fought only four great battles, and by Nolan’s reckoning, he lost the last, Malplacet, because his army suffered excessive and unsustainable casualties. For all his greatness, Frederick the Great came close to losing the Seven Years’ War, and was only saved by Fortuna, when Empress Elizabeth of Russia died and was succeeded by her pro-Prussian son. Napoleon seemed the very god of war, but he was the victim of his own hubris (Nolan’s most damning condemnation) when he invaded Russia, and he was ultimately trampled by a European coalition that overmatched him in every category. Nolan reads Baron de Jomini and Carl von Clausewitz as apostles of battle and genius, and thus wrong-footed. Along with Napoleon, it was Helmuth von Moltke who represented decisive battle and the short-war illusion, by his victories against the Austrians and the French, 1866–1871. His forces humiliated Austria in six weeks and destroyed the main French armies arrayed against him in a mere three months, although the war itself dragged on for another three.

The German military mindset, harking back to Frederick the Great, Clausewitzian interpretations of Napoleon’s victories, and von Moltke’s mid-century triumphs, was locked into the vision of warfare as decided by battles of annihilation. The kaiser’s Reich and the Nazi regime