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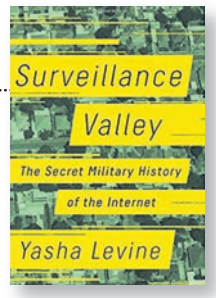




EDITED BY JESS CLARK @JCLARKJOURNO

The internet, data and military surveillance

TECH
SURVEILLANCE VALLEY
BY YASHA LEVINE



IN 2019, we know that the internet giants know almost everything there is to know about us. Google knows our age, gender, location, health concerns. Facebook targets advertising at us it knows we'll like. The technology powers our social lives, workplaces and transportation.

Which is why Surveillance Valley by Russian-American investigative journalist Yasha Levine, a detailed yet digestible delve into the internet's roots in US military surveillance, is particularly shocking.

Most people are aware of Edward Snowden, Wikileaks and Cambridge Analytica, but the World Wide Web's beginnings as a counterinsurgency project funded by the US military to aid intelligence gathering in foreign nations which developed into a method of surveillance of citizens on American soil is perhaps less known.

Levine points out that although many people think the "weaponisation" of the internet is a new phenomenon unique to the age of Brexit and President Donald Trump, that the truth is far murkier. The internet was never a force for democracy and egalitarianism, he argues, but the public were duped by a "marketing pitch" pushed on us by Silicon Valley.

"The idea was to understand the enemy, to know their hopes, their fears, their dreams, their social networks and their relationships to power," Levine writes of the US Army's pursuit of counterinsurgency tactics in the early 1960s, prompting the reader to consider how much of their personal data has been freely given away and gathered by today's tech giants.

When Levine writes "the more a person typed into Google's search box, the more refined the picture that emerged. Multiply this by hundreds of millions of people around the world, each using the site all day, and you start to get a sense of the unfathomable stores of data at Google's disposal", it is almost impossible for the reader not to imagine the depths of personal data the company could compile about them as an individual.

Work, relationships, hobbies, secrets, idiosyncrasies, sexual preferences, medical ailments and political and religious views of each individual user can be determined by mining the search engine's vast stores of data.

Surveillance Valley follows the slow growth of the internet through the major events of the past 60 years.

From the Vietnam War to the dotcom boom, the Cold War to the heart of Silicon Valley, Levine's investigation into the internet forces the reader to confront how the technology has permeated almost every aspect of modern life,

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Levine presents no immediate remedy to the situation we now find ourselves in. However, he does offer some long-term hope at the end of the book, admitting that "not all control is equal, not all surveillance is bad".

Without a degree of control and surveillance, he says, "there can be no democratic oversight of society", although the way the internet is used to carry out both is dependent on the political and social environment of our times.

"The more we understand and democratise the internet, the more we can deploy its power in the service of democratic and humanistic values, making it work for the many, not the few."

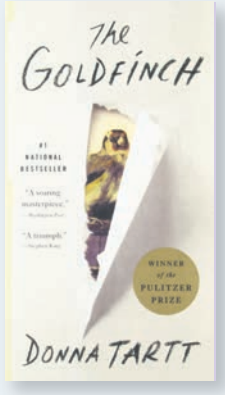
Surveillance Valley: The Secret Military History of the Internet, by Yasha Levine. Published by Icon Books £14.99

WHAT I'M READING



PAUL LEE
GLOBAL HEAD OF RESEARCH, TECH, MEDIA AND TELECOMS, DELOITTE

THE GOLDFINCH BY DONNA TARTT



I relished this book so much that I now envy anyone who is yet to read it. The Goldfinch is a painting that the story's protagonist, 13-year-old Theo, mistakenly steals from a New York art museum after a bomb explodes, killing his mother.

The story continues in this vein: it is an exhilarating series of plausible and incredible twists over the course of Theo's life. The book approaches 1,000 pages; I still crave a further 1,000 pages.

EVERYBODY LIES BY SETH STEPHENS-DAVIDOWITZ

This is a book about technology and how humans react to it for better and for worse. The search engine is one of the most powerful digital innovations and it has revolutionised my job.

However, it can be used to self-inform, as well as to self-misinform. This book offers a factual fable, based on aggregated search data, of how technology may be used to confirm prejudices, rather than to confound them.

THERE'S A HOUSE INSIDE MY MUMMY BY GILES ANDREAE

This is a children's book, and a masterful one. It tells the story of a little boy contemplating the arrival of a new baby into the family, an event that must be utterly bewildering to a small child. It accomplishes this within a few hundred words of rhyming couplets, accompanied by charming illustrations. It's over a dozen years since we told this story to our then little boy to prepare him for the arrival of his sister, yet I can still remember the opening verse, and it still makes me well up:

"There's a house inside my Mummy
Where my little brother grows
Or maybe it's my little sister:
No one really knows."

A HEARTBREAKING WORK OF STAGGERING GENIUS BY DAVE EGGERS

An eclectic autobiography that is a story of triumph amidst tragedy. Dave's parents succumb to cancer within a few months of each other, leaving Dave, a 20-something aspiring writer, orphaned and responsible for a much younger brother, Toph.

This is the story of Dave and Toph's relationship, which is a testament to the power of family and to resilience. It is searingly frank and honest.

The narrative structure is deconstructed and unconventional and that for me is largely what makes this book so compelling.

THE ART OF TRAVEL BY ALAIN DE BOTTON

This book questions the rationale of long distance leisure travel. Or, put more bluntly, exposes its futility.

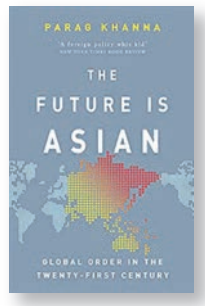
I read this book on a 15-hour flight to Buenos Aires for a holiday and I resented the truths it pointed out.

I re-read it on the way back and I agreed with almost every word. That was some 15 years ago.

Since then I've done a lot less long distance flights for holidays, initially because a young family made this harder and latterly because half term pricing made it searingly expensively, but deep down this book has placed a subconscious shackle on far-flung travel.

REVIEWS: WHAT TO READ THIS MONTH

GEOPOLITICS
THE FUTURE IS ASIAN
BY PARAG KHANNA



AS THE West grapples with the rise of populism, Brexit and President Donald Trump in the White House, Parag Khanna paints a picture of Asia as an optimistic and opportunity-laden region shaking up geopolitics.

The Future is Asian challenges the way westerners view the continent through the lens of 19th century European dominance and 20th century Americanisation.

Beginning with a detailed overview of Asia to fill in the assumed gaps in the readers' historical knowledge and charting the rise of the region – from Australia to Afghanistan – as a bloc more than capable of competing with the European Union and North America.

As Khanna lays out his argument and vision for the Asia's future role in global geopolitics, it is almost impossible not to be persuaded by his school of thought.

Khanna, a managing partner at Singapore-based strategic consultancy Futuremap, also challenges the tendency to view the area as "China plus". The full picture is this, he writes – "China has only one-third of Asia's population, less than half of Asia's GDP, about half of its outward investment and less than half of its inbound investment... Asia's future is thus much more than whatever China wants".

The continent is home to 5bn people, two-thirds of the world's mega-cities, one third of the global economy, two-thirds of global economic growth, 30 of the Fortune 100, six of the 10 largest banks, eight of the 10 largest armies, five nuclear powers, technological innovation and the newest crop of top-ranked universities.

As Britain's political system seems to be sinking further into chaos and uncertainty every day, from botched no-deal Brexit ferry contracts to infighting over the terms of the UK's withdrawal agreement with the European Union, Khanna's argument in favour of Singapore-style technocratic and democratic government structures certainly seems appealing. In a technocracy, political figures are elected on the basis of their expertise in a specific area.

"Here, then, is a key reason to pay attention to technocracy," Khanna writes, "because it is Asia's future. Technocracy becomes a form of salvation after societies realise that democracy doesn't guarantee national success. Democracy eventually gets sick of itself and votes for technocracy." However, Khanna notes the "unhealthy cultural illiberalism and dangerously populist political partners" that such leaders might have, but brushes those concerns aside fairly rapidly.

"Westerners must be placed, even briefly, in the uncomfortable position of imagining what it is like when about 5bn Asians don't care what they think and they have to prove their relevance to Asians rather than the reverse," Khanna writes, in a book that goes some way to achieving exactly that.

The Future is Asian by Parag Khanna Published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson £20.00

PHOTOGRAPHY
LONDON'S SQUARE MILE
BY POLLY BRADEN AND DAVID KYNASTON



LONDON'S Square Mile, a photography book accompanied by a short history of the City by historian David Kynaston, spans 12 years starting in 2007 on the cusp of the financial crisis. Perhaps that is why Kynaston takes a critical tone when examining the Square Mile's role as a global financial centre, branding the area as "cut off" from the rest of the country.

However, he is also complimentary about the unique atmosphere in the area.

Kynaston opens by quoting Charlotte Bronte's Villette, in which she writes, "The City is getting its living – the West End but enjoying its pleasure. At the West End you may be amused, but in the City you are deeply excited." The quote largely rings true, if you discount queuing for a coffee in Pret or attempting to board a 5pm Central line train from Bank station, and is reflected in the images by photographer Polly Braden.

The mini-essays that sit alongside the photographs are short and concise. This book is not for a reader hoping for an in-depth delve into the history of the City of London, as Kynaston reels through subjects from the importance of London's location on the River Thames, to the financial crash and Margaret Thatcher's influence.

However, the lack of quantity does not equate to a lack of quality, as Kynaston, an English historian and author of an acclaimed four volume history of the Square Mile, adds interesting context to explain the photos – which are, after all, the main event. "Ranging from poorly paid cleaners to achingly wealthy investment bankers, from zero-contract motorbike couriers to the governor of the Bank of England, well over 300,000 workers arrive each weekday in the City," Kynaston writes.

It is the images of those workers that make the photography book absorbing.

Braden's photos take a look at the landmarks dotted around the Square Mile; the Bank of England, Monument and the Walkie Talkie. But the most interesting images are when she captures people going about their daily lives; a businesswoman staring out of a window, Lord Mayor's Show attendees and construction workers taking a break.

"Any critique – any attempt to reform the City – has to end as well as begin with the human dimension and an understanding of the environment in which those humans operate," Kynaston writes.

The content does not shy away from controversial topics that surround the City, and covers the causes of the financial crisis, the continuing gender imbalance in the financial world, and money laundering, but whether you believe the Square Mile is in need of reform or not, the photographs capture a sense of the unique and historical City within a city, and the Londoners who work within its boundaries. "It would be a shame, even a tragedy, if it were ever to lose completely its own very particular specialness," he concludes.

London's Square Mile: A Secret City by Polly Braden and David Kynaston Published by Hoxton Mini Press £17.95