

The problem is that it can't work. Readers will ask, if the determinist description of our technological condition is correct, what good can any philosophy possibly be? And if adopting a new attitude and acting accordingly can really change things, then the philosophical description of our condition underlying the philosophy of technology must be wrong. So who is going to adopt it?

One might add that no one is going to adopt the academic philosophizing found in these essays,

many of which are quite good, but nevertheless concerned mostly with the presentation and fine-tuning of various analytical concepts. There is, however, a more fundamental question, raised by this book, which needs to be addressed by philosophers. Is it the very concept of technology as a mighty, determining force in society that renders philosophy of technology impotent? The very concept that is used to justify the existence of philosophy of technology in the first place?

Joan Skogan, *Mary of Canada: The Virgin Mary in Canadian Culture, Spirituality, History and Geography*

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Skogan, Joan. *Mary of Canada: The Virgin Mary in Canadian Culture, Spirituality, History and Geography*. Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003. 328 pp., 70 duotone illus., paper \$29.95, ISBN 1-894773-03-9.

Mary of Canada is a very personal book written by Joan Skogan, for Joan Skogan. Promoted by the publisher as cultural anthropology, religion and history, the book belongs to none of these categories. Rather, it is a deeply private memoir of the author's quest to find Mary. Skogan first encountered Virgin Mary at sea, on fishing vessels while working as a fisheries observer for the Canadian government. Polish, Russian, and Mexican seamen often brought with them pictures of Byzantine Madonnas, the Mary of Czestochowa or the Virgin of Guadalupe, which they displayed in lockers, in captain's cabins, kitchens or crews' messes. Fishermen shared these images with Skogan, hanging Mary over her bunk, to protect their guest during a long voyage. As she became familiar with the sailors' various forms of Mary, Skogan adopted her as her own guardian and consolation. Among foreign, male crews on the ships, Mary became her female companion, the only other woman on board.

Although, she loved her offshore work, Skogan was forced to abandon the sea. She does not elaborate in the book on the reasons for leaving her job, yet she makes it clear that the transition to life on land was difficult and painful. While she had to give up the sea, Skogan did not want to leave Mary behind. Thus, she set on a personal voyage to find, what she rather feebly describes as, "a possibility of Mary." *Mary of Canada: The Virgin Mary in Canadian Culture, Spirituality, History and Geography* is an unfortunate result of this quest.

In all fairness, Skogan's knowledge of the subject is extensive. She has obviously studied in-depth Marian history, art, literature, imagery, and symbolics. Yet, she devotes little effort to conveying this erudition to her audience. Skogan seems to assume that her reader is already familiar with Marian sources. In fact, anyone with only a minor interest in religion or raised in a non-Christian environment will find it difficult to follow the author's train of thought as she alludes to various dogma, myths, and apocrypha in Turkey, Georgia, Poland, Egypt and Syria in as little as three paragraphs.

Moreover, Skogan chooses a lyrical style, full of literary tropes to talk about Mary. Her syntax is complex and her sentences several lines long. The narrative is built around a metaphor of a sea voyage and is closed with a literary ellipse, beginning and ending with an image of an ocean. This imagery reinforces the idea of a quest, and also renders a fluid meaning that Mary carries throughout the time and space. Skogan, who is also an accomplished journalist, a fiction writer and a poet, proves in some instances that she can well imitate language used by Polish fishermen at sea, and the style of Canadian playwrights. Yet generally, the tone of the book is ceremonial and repetitive with a long litany of epithets. A typical paragraph from the book reads as follows:

Mary the Mother of God knows Canada by heart. She has the recipe for a certain life-giving tea made from the bark of Thuya occidentalis, the eastern white cedar. Atop the pillar supporting Our Lady of the World in Marystown, Newfoundland, the Burin Peninsula's unemployment rate is on her mind, and in St. Norbert, Manitoba,

she is Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours, Our Lady of Good Help, keeping an eye on the Red River levels near the Metis wayside shrine. She works cross-country days, and night shift. She is Mother of Consolation in Winnipeg's north end and other Canadian cities' though downtown neighbourhoods, while she steadies the wheel for tired drivers at Our Lady of the Highway on the road east of Vegreville, Alberta. [58-59]

This style is almost liturgical, and although it expresses ritualistic rhythm well suited to the topic, it becomes dull at times.

In her 305-page-long quest to find Mary in Canada, Skogan looks beyond devotional places to find Madonnas in art, literature, history and nature. Her Mary is as multicultural as Canadian society. She is a Viking woman, the Norse dying of smallpox, a native musician, a traveller and explorer, a religious symbol, a nation builder, a political supporter, a patient observer of, and an active participant in, Canadian life. Skogan's Madonna is omnipresent in Canadian history, geography, literature and art. She is found in movies, songs, novels, poetry, plays, and political memoirs; in paintings and sculptures; in gardens, rivers, cities, ship names, credit unions, lawn ornaments, and editorial cartoons. Mary lives in Canada: Skogan has proven that beyond any doubt in her exhaustive list.

Unfortunately, Skogan notices and marks a Marian presence in Canadian culture, but rarely comments on the found imagery. Her book reads

like a catalogue rather than a thoughtful study or analysis of the topic. She only rarely draws any analogy between the images of Mary and Canadian women. She does not explain how unique or typical the Canadian Mary is in the worldwide context, and does not discuss social, cultural, economic or political implications of such an extensive presence of the Madonna in this country.

The editorial organization of the book also poses a problem. There is no index. Duotone illustrations, although they depict a variety of images such as tapestry, sculptures, paintings, maps, and even pillows, hide the richness of Marian imagery in their lack of colour. Moreover, not only are captions for illustrations placed at the end of the book, but any image or part of an image that is repeated throughout the book is described under its first appearance. Therefore, the reader looking for a caption to an image placed on page 53 in Chapter II, will only find it listed in *Image Notes* under Chapter I, page xiv.

Even though there are numerous studies of the religious or social meanings of Mary published in Canada in both English and French, Canadian Marian images and material culture are rarely if ever included in international literature on the subject. Comprehensive books on Mary tend to focus on European and South American shrines, and on imagery found in European art. Skogan's book may have been an excellent and much needed addition to the subject literature, yet without a deep and clear analysis of Marian images as representations of Canadian social beliefs and values, this opportunity was lost.

Jon Agar, *Constant Touch: A Global History of the Mobile Phone*

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Agar, Jon. *Constant Touch: A Global History of the Mobile Phone*. Cambridge: Icon Books, 2003. 172 pp., 20 illus., cloth \$20, ISBN 1-84046-419-4.

If we could name just one, defining addition to the material culture of personal communications in the last decade, it would have to be the cellular, or mobile, phone. Introduced in the 1980s to share out scarce radio frequency in chronically overtaxed mobile radio networks, cellular technology allowed users with relatively small and low-powered transceivers to connect to the public telephone network via nearby radio base stations. Large cities would be broken into small cells, each with its own base station that in an urban core might serve just a few square blocks. Cellular radio depended on technical

advances in integrated circuits, microprocessors, software, antennas and batteries. Over time, manufacturers made transceivers smaller, lighter and with a wider array of functions. But as Jon Agar argues in *Constant Touch*, the commercial explosion in mobile telephony also was driven by social and cultural factors.

It might be an exaggeration to call this a central thesis of *Constant Touch*, for this book is not a probing work of research and analysis. It is one of a series of slim volumes published by the British firm Icon Books. The "Revolutions in Science" series is aimed at a general audience and presents scientific and technical history in a lively narrative style. *Constant Touch* has no footnotes, a meagre bibliography of secondary sources and a text that runs