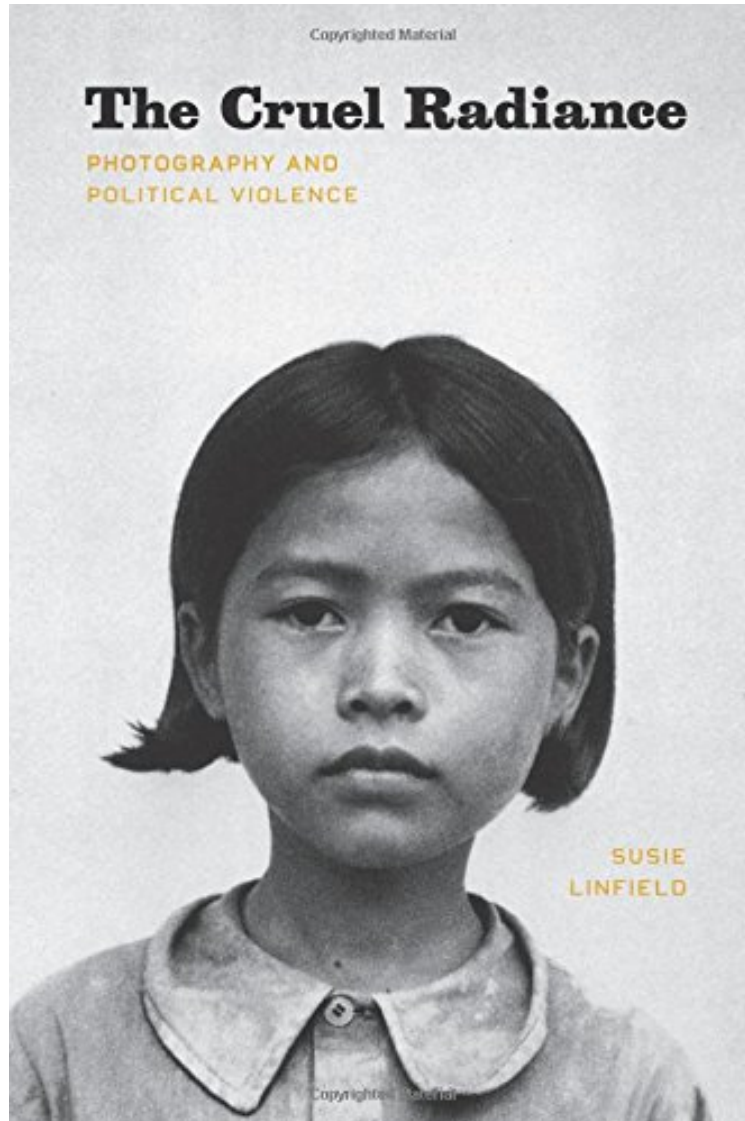


[Download] The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence

The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence

Susie Linfield

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Susie Linfield : The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An interesting take on photography criticism and "photography-criticism criticism"By TheRightReviewThis is one of the must-reads for anyone that deals with photography, whether you are creating images behind the camera, analyze them for a critique perspective or use and distribute them for publications. I personally fall within one of these categories and, while the first part of the book is a bit of a slower historical retrospective on photography criticism and why critics hate photography, it gets very interesting the more

you read on. The main concept around which Susie Linfield writes in *The Cruel Radiance* is that photographs of political violence don't necessarily exploit their subjects and fulfill some voyeuristic tendencies of the ones who look at those images. The author goes on arguing that it is a necessary ethical and political act to look at those images and learn about the people in them, in order to connect the viewer with the history of violence, which could make us realize the wrongfulness of the human capacity for cruelty. Linfield takes from scholars and critics such as Susan Sontag and Walter Benjamin and looks at major historical events such as China's cultural Revolution, terrorism and the Holocaust while looking at the connection between photojournalism and the beginning of the concept of human rights. The author moves on to analyze the work on some of the major photographers in contemporary history such as Robert Capa and James Nachtwey and thinks on how photographs should adapt to today's way of making war. A really interesting take on the book comes from *The Guardian's* Sean O'Hagan, who writes the following: "Contemporary photojournalism is problematic, both in the increasingly explicit nature of its images of suffering and degradation and its uncertain role in a world where, as Linfield puts it, "we no longer have the same kind of moral and political framework" that governed our responses to the war photography of the past. For these reasons, her book only really comes alive when she moves beyond the narrow world of theoretical criticism and tackles the photography itself specifically, the role of photojournalism in a world where the old certainties no longer apply and the violence of faraway wars often seems nihilistic." 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Daring to look

By Marcos Lopes
Linfield's book is well done account of photographs which represent things that, usually, we don't want to look at. The author brings into discussion the very ethics of looking, gazing and staring, criticizing opinions that affirm that to look at the pain of others is participate in the intentions of perpetrators of politic crimes, specially against human rights. The principal targets of her critics are Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, Alan Sekula and John Berger, as well as Benjamin and Krakauer. For Linfield, this authors are not essentially wrong, but we should place their writings in perspective and not make gospels of them. In reading this interesting book, we come to know that "to look or not to look" is not merely a question of transcendental ethics, but a political act regarding the suffering of human people. Linfield not only invites us to be daring to look at the pain of others, but also to look into it, its testimonies, its visual existence, and try to make of the gaze a means of amelioration of our chaotic world.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. AMAZING
By elin o'Hara slavick
Amazing! While arguing against my cultural heroes - John Berger, Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag - Linfield manages to respect their genius while reinstilling belief and hope into the photographic practice of documenting this world - in all its beauty and horror. A great and painful read, post-Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*. I plan to use this book in my Conceptual Photography Seminar at UNC, Chapel Hill.

In *The Cruel Radiance*, Susie Linfield challenges the idea that photographs of political violence exploit their subjects and pander to the voyeuristic tendencies of their viewers. Instead she argues passionately that looking at such images and learning to see the people in them is an ethically and politically necessary act that connects us to our modern history of violence and probes the human capacity for cruelty. Grappling with critics from Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht to Susan Sontag and the postmoderns and analyzing photographs from such events as the Holocaust, China's Cultural Revolution, and recent terrorist acts Linfield explores the complex connection between photojournalism and the rise of human rights ideals. In the book's concluding section, she examines the indispensable work of Robert Capa, James Nachtwey, and Gilles Peress and asks how photography should respond to the increasingly nihilistic trajectory of modern warfare.