Catherine Johnson,
Branding Television,
Routledge Chapman & Hall,
London 2011, pp. 224

In *Branding Television* Catherine Johnson studies the development of branding in US and UK television industries, exploring the reasons who these different industries address.

In the first part of the book, the author offers a critical analysis of the industrial and legislative changes in the US television market. From 1980s, the deregulation of the Republican government under Ronald Regan deteriorates the oligopoly of the three main broadcasters: NBC, CBS and ABC. Johnson focuses on the birth of new channels like MTV, FOX and HBO analyzing scheduling, advertising and promotion. Every network defines a specific identity, which communicates in terms of brand not only to previously identified niche targeting, but also to advertisers and employees. The presence of new competitors forces also the big three to embrace the brand strategies through innovative campaigns. This experience demonstrates that niche cable channels can easily built a differentiated brand identity, while national networks have to focus on the quality of the program mix. HBO is the only channel that develops both strategies, in order to obtain larger numbers of subscribers and income from syndication and merchandising. Over the 1990s, new technologies and the business of media conglomerates radically alter the US landscape, changing the viewing experience and turn the uses of television set itself, for instance it's possible to use television as a monitor for a computer or to access on line. In the digital era, content creators can distribute their products on web, evading networks[1]. The major conglomerates develop new services, which entails that organizing content is more similar to database philosophy than to traditional television flows. The author argues that in the digital era, brands do not function as form of recognition, but as form of loyal relationship. Networks embody ideas and values, which spread also through corporate social responsibility campaigns. In this landscape Hulu is an interesting reality, it is a joint venture platform between Fox, NBS and Disney, but it does not publicize the relationship between the networks. Johnson's analysis underlines that Hulu does not promote a particular product or a company but an experience, its brand focuses on selling a service.

The second part of the book centers on British television industry, which is marked by public service broadcasting policy. Compared to the European landscape, commercial channel was introduced early in the UK, but ITV and state BBC share the same public service broadcasting logic. Unlike the USA market, satellite offers such as Sky and BSB transformed the television industries in United Kingdom. The first alternative terrestrial mass channel is Channel 5, which is aimed at a younger audience. Channel 5 builds its brand identity on youth power and on an alternative programme, identifying a gap in the previous national television landscape. In the late 1990s, digital terrestrial television develops in Europe and every British broadcaster sets up new channels based on existing channel brands. The public BBC conquests new networks (joined under the umbrella brand identity of UKTV) and a different platform, like BBC Online, but it prefers to launch different brand identities, so the new channels are called UKTV People (then Blighty), UKTV History (then YeSTERDAY), UKTV Gardens, UKTV Food (then Good Food) and do not carry the

BBC initials in the name of the channel. Also Channel 4, which had a specific public service orientation, expands to innovative service like 4oD (on demand channel) or 4Mobile (mobile service), but in distinctly separate sites. In this way, Johnson argues that traditional boundaries between public and commercial service broadcasting are declined. In this perspective, brand and marketing are useful strategies to communicate also the value of public service to the national audience.

Finally, the author considers the different elements that build the brand identity – such as name, trademark, communication and visual appearance – and chooses to focus her attention on interstitials between the programmes. This aspect of brand communication received relatively poor attention from previous researches. A further area of analysis is connected to the ancillary texts around television – like trailers, posters, promotion on magazines. In fact, these paratexts contribute to assign a precise meaning to a program, a channel, a broadcaster. Johnson retrieves and studies the development of interstitials on main British channels: BBC One, ITV1 and Channel 4. These ancillary elements are first based on clearness, and are used to give coherence to an inhomogeneous scheduling of the public service. Instead in the US landscape, NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox initially utilize interstitials in a more commercial way, to retain the audience. In the digital era, both UK and US broadcasting use interstitials to steer the spectator toward a multiplatform offer of programmes and services. However, in this age, emerges the importance of brand for the high concept programs, which extends the text through the transmedia storytelling. Johnson argues that programme branding have specific properties: longevity, transferability, multiplicity. Moreover, it adapts well to types of programs like serialized drama and reality. Most of all, program branding shows the loss of centrality of television channels, as site to access for content; networks have become just one site for distribute programmes also available online .

Branding Television analyzes different strategies from channel branding to quality schedule branding, from relationship branding to service branding and to programme branding in the UK and the US landscape. While other recent researches like Temporal[2] and Banet-Weier[3] more thoroughly analyze a single brand identity, a value of this present book is the plenitude of case studies: from different broadcasts of two different nations and addressing both commercial and public services. Instead traditional marketing theory distinguishes product brand form service brand associated to corporation, Johnson analysis shows a more complex situation. Moreover, to compare corporate, channel/service and a program's brand as interrelated elements allows to consider television as a cultural form and to understand its evolution from a different perspective.

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1 T.M. Todreas, *Value Creation and Branding in Television's Digital Age*, Greenwood Pub Group In 1999.

2 P. Temporal, *The Branding of MTV. Will Internet Kill the Video Star?*, John Wiley & Son, 2008

3 S. Banet-Weiser, *Kids Rule! Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizienship,* Duke University Press Book 2007.

Anikó Imre, Timothy Havens,
Katalin Lustyik (eds.),
Popular Television in Eastern Europe During and Since Socialism,
Routledge, New York/London 2013, pp. 285

For a long time, the reflection devoted to cultural formations in Central and Eastern Europe excluded television from academic discourse. A number of reasons explains such a blind spot: the privilege accorded to traditional arts when considering cultural production in the area; the reduction of mass media to their political function; scholars' limited access to national productions, due to linguistic barriers that prevented the developing of a truly transnational approach to the area; the dominance of a Western paradigm in media studies. The project underneath the volume fills in many gaps, by acknowledging TV's multifaceted nature and role in the former Socialist block, from its early development to the present date. As the editors state in their introduction: "such a volume might spotlight, nurture and reclaim Eastern European television studies from the margins of both television studies and Eastern European media studies. As an intellectual endeavor, Eastern European television studies suffer from the Western nature of most television scholarship and theory, while the field of Eastern European media studies almost exclusively addresses questions of journalism, democracy and civic life." (p. 1).

The volume is organized in three main sections. The first two examine "Popular Television in Socialist Time" and "Commercial Globalization and Eastern European TV;" the third one discusses "Television and National Identity on Europe's Edge," thus centering on a crucial question for the region, at least from 19th century onward. Compared to previous contributions, the three sections displace the discussion, not confining the reflection on TV to the narrow borders of media and political power relationships. This approach does not dismiss political agency in popular TV during Socialism (Katja Kochanowski, Sascha Trültzsch, Reinhold Viehoff, *An Evening with Friends and Enemies: Political Indoctrination in Popular East Germany Family Series*). However, the chosen pathway enables single contributions not to look at medial transformations through the sole sociopolitical lens. Such a standpoint leads to a more thorough account for the development of television in the former Soviet bloc, its different policies in terms of imports and broadcasting, its placement within a broader continental TV history. As Sabina Mihelj puts it, "an adequate understanding of these developments cannot rely on the perception of the Cold War as a black and white confrontation between capitalism and communism, nor can it proceed solely from the established interpretive frameworks of post-socialist democratization and economic liberalization. Instead, we should acknowledge that many of the promises and challenges posed by television everywhere were similar, and that both popular and elite reactions to them often defied the logic of the East-West divide." (*Television Entertainment in Socialist Eastern Europe*, p. 25; see also Dana Mustata, *Television in the Age of (Post-)Communism: The Case of Romania*). Equally, post-Socialist reality appears far more complex than its widespread representation as the uncontrolled realm of US production. US dominance cannot be underestimated, and certainly affected regional production, as children's edutainment (Katalin Lustyik, *From a Socialist Endeavor to a Commercial Enterprise: Children's Television in East-Central* Europe), but persisting policies are to be discovered, as for instance broadcasting (Sylwia Szoztak, *Post-Transitional Continuity and Change: Polish Broadcasting Flow and American TV Series*). At the same time, European strategies to contrast US hegemony

and foster continental cultural diversity seem to follow rather a commercial, Western-based logic (Timothy Havens, Evelyn Bottando, Matthew S. Thatcher, *Intra-European Media Imperialism: Hungarian Program Imports and the Television Without Frontiers Directive*).

The concern with the role of TV in national and regional culture enlightens the dialogue between multiple cultural expressions at the core of popular production, as Dorota Ostrowska explains through the cultural analysis of a 1980s Polish TV series (*The Carnival of the Absurd: Stanislaw Bareja's* Alternatywy 4 *and Polish Television in the 1980s*). By connecting historical loose descriptions with high and folk culture, "edutainment series […] were instrumental in fostering national unity through television entertainment not despite but because of the fact that they were mostly made up. In other words, their affective power and longevity within national memory derives precisely from folk culture's and high literature's mutual validation of nationalism's loose treatment of historical fact." (Anikó Imre, *Adventures in Early Socialist Edutainment*, p. 37).

A will to grasp cultural dynamics in popular TV brings to close examination its role in defining identities. These may be declined as national ones (Adina Schneeweis, *To Be Romanian in Post-Communist Romania: Entertainment Television and Patriotism in Popular Discourse*; Alice Bardan, *Big Brothers and Little Brothers: National Identity in Recent Romanian Adaptations of Global Television Formats*). Otherwise, identities can be considered collectively, shaped by a memory of totalitarian past and traumatic shift triggered through popular TV (Irena Carpentier Reifová, Kateřina Gillárová, Radim Hladík, *The Way We Applauded: How Popular Culture Stimulates Collective Memory of the Socialist Past in Czechoslovakia*); or political (Ferenc Hammer, *Coy Utopia: Politics in the First Hungarian Soap*). Finally, the term concerns also minorities and popular TV, especially telling within a region where the strive for national identities marked discursive and political practices (Annabel Tramblett, *Why Must Roma Minorities Be Always Seen on the Stage and Never in the Audience? Children's Opinions of Reality Roma TV*; Ksenija Vidmar-Horvat, *Racing for the Audience: National Identity, Public Tv and the Roma in Post-socialist Slovenia*).

Popular Television in Eastern Europe During and Since Socialism greatly contributes to a better understanding of cultural Eastern European specificity. To achieve this goal, the volume does not keep its reflection to established geopolitical boundaries, instead, it proves how productive a more problematic approach can be. It questions assumed historical paradigms, includes Eastern European popular TV in the broader international history of the medium, promotes further reflection on national, regional and transnational medial identities, and includes gender and ethnic varieties into a broader scope. A more defined approach to popular culture could clarify the methods, and the issues at stake. At the present stage, the contributions maintain the contradiction at the core of the notion of popular: "On the one hand an emphasis on something produced for the ordinary people, on the other, something approved by the people. It is in the switch between the two emphases that we can locate the problematic of popular culture."[1] Therefore, different approaches are juxtaposed, coupling broadcasting and TV flows analysis with research focused on social discourses on or through media, on ways of building identities, overcoming cultural, social and political traumas by appropriating popular TV. Besides, the same notion of popular has been forged within and applied mostly to Anglo-Saxon cultural production, but does not necessarily fit into different cultural typologies. Eventually, an approach based on a symbolic

economy might provide this vivid discussion with the missing link between modes of production and broadcasting and cultural processes. Though, thanks to this unprecedented and welcomed effort, the reader can take such a step, and further carry on the research.

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Miriam Bratu Hansen,
Cinema and Experience. Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno,
University of California Press,
Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2012, pp. 378

A genuine testament of Hansen, who died prematurely after the publication of the book, *Cinema and Experience* appears as the summation of her long research work. It is also, at the same time, a masterly confrontation with that longstanding theoretical tradition (born in the twenties in Germany mostly around the Institut für Sozialforschung in Frankfurt), which was the first to reflect, in an often contradictory and antinomic way, upon modernity and the transformations it had brought about, and upon the crisis for a way of knowing based on memory and tradition. Technological modernity is defined above all by a crisis of experience, a fragmentation of sensory life, which is disintegrated into its different parts in a sort of "apocalypse of the sensible."

It is "that great overhaul of the perceptual inventory that will modify again and in an unpredictable way our image of the world," as Benjamin wrote in 1928 trying to define the contours of a new scopic regime and its huge epistemological and social impact. As the subtitle of her book points out, Kracauer, Benjamin and Adorno are Hansen's direct interlocutors, but Habermas, Negt and Kluge – the last exponents of Critical Theory – are fundamental in her analysis of the developments of technological modernity, and of the new forms of experience, sharing and spreading knowledge. When she thinks of cinema as the new public sphere of modernity, the scholar refers to the well-known notion, elaborated by Negt and Kluge[1], of the 'public sphere' "as a 'social horizon of experience' grounded in the subjects' 'context of living', that is, the lived relationality of social and material, affective and imaginative re/production." The social and political role of cinema is defined precisely by this ability to create a collective horizon of experience, in which an ever more fragmented and alienated existence can be recomposed. Hansen finds this emancipatory power above all in the work of Kluge, which has been for many years a recurring point of reference for her own research.

In the preface, among various other autobiographical remarks, Hansen admits that the direction of her research has overlapped with that of Film Theory: her studies at Frankfurt University, from 1967 to 1976, are contemporary with the rise of the debate on cinema and media in Germany, a debate which started much later than in France or the United States, but which has been fundamental in identifying the categories and the thinkers that would dominate the theoretical scene in the following decades. As a student of Theodor W. Adorno and Karsten Witte, who edited the writings of Benjamin and Kracauer respectively, Hansen began in those years that careful reading of these au-

1 Colin MacCabe, *Defining Popular Culture*, in *High Theory/Low Culture*, edited by Colin MacCabe, St. Martin's Press, New York 1986; now in Id., *The Eloquence of the Vulgar. Language, Cinema and the Politics of Culture*, British Film Institute, London 1999, p. 76.

thors that would enable her – at various times and with admirable accuracy and meticulousness – to understand their postulates avoiding those oversimplifications, keywords and slogans, through which these scholars (Benjamin in particular) have very often been read. The essays Hansen published over nearly twenty years in «Critical Inquiry», «New German Critique» and «October», have been fundamental not only in introducing in the United States a 'philological interpretation' of the thought of Benjamin and of other German theorists of the twenties and the thirties, but also in defining a new model of interpretation inspired by those thinkers. Also in *Cinema and Experience* Hansen defines a method of re-reading that can be considered a theoretical model: theory itself allows a continuous revision of its own premises, a correction and a reformulation of its own hypothesis, which are adjusted and adapted to an everchanging context or situation. In the same way, Benjamin's re-writings – the different drafts of his essays, the continuous reversal of his decisions, which has often been read as the antinomic character of Benjamin's philosophy – are forms of thinking that take account of ongoing transformations: revision is 'memory directed at the future,' an ability to measure up to his times. It's the same effort to be contemporary that can be found in the work of Hansen, who was never satisfied by the "simple" philological reconstruction, but is able to see the anticipatory qualities of those theories and the resurgence of old issues in new forms.

The book is divided into four parts, each dedicated to a single author and a particular phase of his production, which also corresponds to the progressive definition of problems, categories and models of interpretation. Not only for chronological reasons, Kracauer opens and closes this trajectory. The first part is dedicated to his writings in the twenties, whereas the last is about *Theory of Film*, which was written 'in exile' in 1960 and ignored at the time of its publication in Germany in 1964, to then become a point of reference for the Munich movement of 'Sensibilismus' ten years later. From the phenomenology of the unapparent – the study of the 'surface manifestations' in which one can see the fragmentation and the serialization of sensory life in modern industrial societies – to the theory of the redemption of Physical Reality, Hansen delineates a story of loss and reconstruction in which cinema plays an essential role, not only as part and symptom of the crisis, but also as a powerful matrix for modernity's liberatory impulses. Kracauer considers cinema, literally, as "a self-representation of the masses subject to the process of mechanization," and consequently as a form of education to the new regimes of experience and models of identity.

In the middle of this trajectory, in which cinema defines the aesthetic-cognitive horizon of modernity, we find Walter Benjamin, to whom the most substantial part of the book is dedicated. Hansen considers his analysis of the new forms of perception – in which contemplation is replaced by a more general and complete sensorial stimulation – a fundamental and also prophetic response to the increase of nervous stimulation in modern technological societies, since it identifies a sort of physiological, and anthropologically fixed features of them. This idea is still valid and useful to understand the way in which new media are assimilated today. Crucial in this reflection is the idea of *innervation* as a way to adapt to technology and to incorporate it, a sort of imitative faculty which allows a new perceptual experience that does not oppose human and machine, subject and technique. "In Benjamin's dictionary, innervation broadly refers to a neurophysiological process that mediates between internal and external, psychic and motoric, human and machinic registers." Also the 'optical unconscious' – a

key concept in Benjamin's thinking – is read by Hansen "as a form of mimetic innervation specifically available to photography and film."

If *Cinema and Experience*'s interpretation of Benjamin and Kracauer is not altogether a novelty in Hansen's *oeuvre*, the interpretation of Adorno is undoubtedly new and surprising if compared with his stereotypical image as a firm opponent of mass culture. Hansen's book is almost a counter-interpretation of Adorno, depending less on classic references to his *Culture Industry* in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, and more on his essays on theory of music. In Adorno's analysis of the changes brought about in musical listening by the new technologies of sound reproduction and diffusion, Hansen looks for an interpretation of the changes and the opportunities imposed by all technological media. The author challenges Adorno with the same weapons and uses his categories to interpret in an emancipatory way the new sensory culture created by technological modernity.

By combining the speculative accuracy of the German tradition with the freedom and interpretive hazard of the American school, Hansen leaves us illuminating philological interpretations and unexpected questions. Not only does she confront Adorno's writings on musical aesthetics and propose a sort of 'implicit theory of cinema' attributable to the Frankfurt philosopher, but she also builds an unexpected and fruitful bridge between past and present: she never reduces history to a relic but releases the new and the unexpressed that the past brings to us and that still belongs to us. It is 'the heritage of our times,' as another Jewish-German thinker, exiled in America, had understood.[1]

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1 Negt and Kluge's *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (1972) is the continuation of (and the answer to) Jürgen Habermas's likewise famous book on public opinion: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, 1962 (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*). Miriam Hansen wrote the foreword to the American edition: *Public Sphere and Experience,* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993.

Jacques Aumont,
Que reste-t-il du cinéma?*,*
Vrin, Paris 2012, pp. 120

The digitalization of the media had the effect, among others, of having renewed an ontological speculation. Or, at least, that was the case of cinema, an 'old' medium apparently overwhelmed by the new ones, significantly transformed by the emergence – in the name of plurality and impurity – of a new phenomenology of 'making a movie' and 'going to the movies,' and crossed by unusual phenomena, in nature and intensity, of displacement and evasion from itself. Thus, think about the forms of survival of cinema in contemporary society and, at the same time, about the constant elements of its technological, experiential and cultural identity, elements that have proved to be necessary and urgent in some ways. And France has undoubtedly been the center of this renewed speculation, as evidenced by, among others, *Horizon cinéma* by Jean-Michel Frodon (2006), *Virtuel?* by Angel Quintana (2008), *Cinémas contemporaines* by Luc Vancheri (2009) and *La querelle des dispositifs* by Raymond Bellour (2012). The publication of *Que reste-t-il du cinéma?* by Jacques Aumont dates back to January of this year, and it does not only fit perfectly this scenario, but it is also an attempt to provide a definitive answer to the doubt that the book presents in the title, where it claims in

the first place the recovery of a 'singular look.' "Le cinéma, seul," to quote Daney: it carries not only the meaning of a lonely cinema, perhaps put aside as something outdated, but it rather conveys the idea of "just the cinema." Aumont's book reacts explicitly against the media model – very popular today – of convergences, changes of medium and short circuits. This model seems to annihilate a sectorial look, since it is interested in understanding the differences and not - for the umpteenth time - in the superimposition of practices and languages. On the contrary, it shows a peculiarity of contemporary communication strategies: "redouble their media and remove all traces of mediation: ideally, it would like to erase their own media at the same time which multiplies them" (Bolter-Grusin, 2002). A model that, among other things, feeds a dangerous tendency: that of "plaquer le même nom de 'cinéma' sur ce magma," the magma of contemporary vision; that of exchanging the dissemination of cinematographic models or elements with the dissolution or the uncontrolled expansion of cinema (Youngblood and the *Vulgata* of expanded cinema are liquidated maybe a little too radically), and hastily assimilating the fate of cinema to the fate of moving images.

Aumont's discussion then proceeds, in the four chapters of the book, to mark the differences or, better, to remember that there are, even today, *differences*; that cinema is neither dead nor gone, nor digitally disfigured to the point of being unrecognizable. And the progress of the argumentation is both historical and ontological: on the one hand, in fact, Aumont focuses on the 'historicity' of cinema in the present, he establishes a comparative path with art, and he concludes that if it is true that cinema has lost the monopoly of the moving image – more radically, "il n'a plus tout à fait le prestige d'être le seul art d'image mouvante" – it continues nevertheless to appear, for ethical and aesthetic reasons, "la référence positive et dernière." On the other hand, the last part of the book, aptly titled 'Permanences,' is properly of ontological order: the author proceeds to analyze the reasons for this centrality, of what cinema is – and continues to be – on the basis of what it does and of what it still manages to do. Briefly: it creates "un'alliance originale d'une fiction et de conditions de réception propices à la captation psychique sur un mode à la fois individuel et collectif," which, in fact, continues to "distinguer le cinéma de toutes autres sortes d'images en mouvement et de pas mal d'autres pratiques culturelles et artistiques."

A triple singularity, that of cinema: the structure of the device, the linguistic operations, the values offered to the experience of the viewer. And as to the first point, Aumont does not fall into the common error of interpreting the current proliferation of visual platforms as an index of the dissolution of cinema identity; the architecture of the cinematic apparatus, historically settled, should be rather understood as a mental model, formed by the junction of some elements (in particular, the dynamics of the projection and the experience of a "matière visuelle" that is released in front of the viewer) and liable to happen even outside the context of a seemingly 'canonical' model such as that of movie theater. In short, the cinematographic device can be defined as the meeting between a specific and original way to experience the moving image and an intention, that of a spectator who chooses to "voir (et entendre) un film," in respect of the temporal integrity of the projection. This last comment introduces the second value that Aumont recognizes as specific of cinema: the production and the complex management of time, which leads to a 'three-dimensional' experience of temporality: the time of the vision, the time represented by the diegesis (through which the film captures one of the world *tout court*), and the time "sculpté, modelé, mis en forme, celui du film, qui nous apparaît avec son

rythme c'est-à-dire son écoulement, fluide ou heurté." It is from here, from this work of narrative and articulation, that cinema can achieve a 'realist' equivalence between the world of film and life, where it gives rise to a unique and original 'meeting,' to the "expérience d'un monde que nous ne connaissons pas, mais qui s'accorde à notre vie." A relation through which the film celebrates and realizes a dramatic and aesthetic confrontation between the human being – whose "corps tout entier" is brought into play – and the reality that surrounds him. Including, of course, that of contemporary society, in which cinema participates without sacrificing its own identity, but continuing to exercise its faculties. Those that belong to cinema, and to cinema only.

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