2. I prefer this term to *developing countries*. The latter implies they are developing towards developed countries. They are not. It also implies that developed countries have finished developing. They have not.
3. Chapters six through ten examine 'a particular movement in Islamic art in terms of the relevant Islamic theology, philosophy, and poetics of the period' (p. 33).
4. ' ... [B]ecause there is a certain difficulty in establishing the relationships in just that way, and in that difficulty there is an interest, and in that interest there's a certain tension and for me that tension is a lot more important than the stable equilibrium of harmony, which doesn't interest me at all. Reality must be torn apart in every sense of the word.' (Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake. *Life with Picasso* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964], p. 60)

About the author

Bavand Behpoor, *Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München*

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A multiplied medium

Reviewing recent publications on television's transitions

Markus Stauff

In recent research on academic knowledge production there are intimations that a certain fuzziness of the investigated object, even a somewhat vague set of questions, are not the worst starting points for scholarship. These points often lead to exciting insights. This might explain why, for some time now, various academic engagements with television have provoked discussions and created conceptual tools that are of interest to media studies in general. Media studies seems to be a field (fortunately, it still cannot be considered a proper discipline) that is more dependent on the on-going transformations of its main object than other academic areas of inquiry. What constitutes a medium and how different media relate to each other are discussed on a theoretical level, but they are usually defined in relation to the dominant media constellation at hand.

Television can be said to be the origin of the umbrella term 'media' in the 1950s and 1960s. It epitomised the concept of 'mass media', which was at the heart of media research for decades. In the 1980s, television was still the central reference point for discussions on representation, reception, and the 'active audience'. However, beginning in the 1990s, digital media (computers, cyberspace, networks)

dominated conceptual discussions on what media are and what their cultural impact is.

In the 2000s it became clear that television was more resilient than expected – but also, it becomes less and less clear just what television is. This vagueness and television's on-going transformation turned out to be a good point of departure for reflecting on the heterogeneity of digital culture in general – a culture that is no longer considered to be defined by several fundamental characteristics of the computer or networks, but much more by a constant re-arrangement of gadgets and industrial strategies, infrastructures, and practices. As television's 'old media' characteristics (broadcasting, serialised and scheduled programs) mingle with presumably 'new media' dynamics (narrowcasting, one-to-one or peer-to-peer communication, databases, interfaces, etc.), an engagement with the medium promises insights into the fuzziness of the current state of affairs. Throughout the history of television there was never a shortage of books dealing with the future of the medium (for example, Richard Hoggart's and Janet Morgan's (eds) *The Future of Broadcasting: Essays on Authority, Style and Choice* [London: Macmillan, 1982]). More recently, television's ongoing transitions are often seen through the development of other media, and it is less an indeterminate future that is to be guessed at than multiple developments of the present that need to be traced.

A groundbreaking book in this respect is the anthology *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2004), edited by Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson. While betraying a slightly defensive attitude ('television remains a central mode of information and entertainment in our present-day global culture' [p. 1]) and sometimes limiting a comparison of TV to the internet, most of the contributions in the book use categories that were established by academicians in relation to television to question dynamics across different media. No longer do we see questions such as 'what happens to programming, flow, and broadcasting in the context of digital media?' Rather, the authors show how these categories that were once the exclusive territory of television now allow us to describe the heterogeneous dynamics of a convergent/divergent media culture. This is partly because television strategies are translated to and applied by new media, and partly because these strategies were never 'specific' to television, but rather were always based on transmedial relationships. The apt title of the book – *Television after TV* – suggests that the dynamics of television will continue to be relevant, spreading to different media technologies even if 'TV' (the network or broadcast-based cultural form that is taken for granted) loses its dominant role.

A highly original and focused follow-up to this perspective can be found in the volume *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube* (Houndsmill-Basingstoke-Hampshire-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), edited by Paul Grainge. Pointing to the transformation that TV commercials undergo

as they are endangered by pay-TV and DVD, also as they gain power through going viral on online video platforms, the book analyses current media culture through the example of short-form texts. Ephemerality, as Grainge argues in the introduction, was always part of modern media (from the actualités of early cinema to Hollywood movie trailers and the liveness of television), but now short-forms have found themselves centre stage. A closer description of these marginal texts, along with their changing aesthetics and industrial function, allows us to gain insight into 'the durational and circulatory temporalities of media that shape, structure and express something of our mobile and increasingly fractionalised encounter with screen entertainment' (p. 11).

This becomes very clear in Max Dawson's chapter on online video summaries of serialised TV drama programs. Dawson shows how video abridgements of complete seasons of television series become an essential part of the 'complex narrative' industry, as they secure online attention for TV broadcasters and, simultaneously, allow the audience to catch up with missed episodes (or overlooked/forgotten aspects of the story). These 'mnemonic devices' (p. 47) not only make the temporality of a TV series more flexible but they also re-interpret the story and cater to fan knowledge with hidden hints, and thus contribute to the distribution of cultural capital (Dawson relates this to *Reader's Digest* abridgements). This is a great example of how studying television can contribute to the analysis of the entanglement of different temporalities in contemporary culture. It also shows that the more general question of 'industrial aesthetics' gains a great deal from research on television's transitions, as this research scrutinises both the way the industry (unavoidably) experiments with aesthetic forms to cope with changing use patterns and technologies, and also the way emerging aesthetic forms (e.g. the demotic and vernacular grammar of amateur videos) are appropriated by commercial enterprises.

Two closely interrelated chapters by Jon Dovey and Elizabeth Jane Evans analyse the ways online drama taps into vernacular practices to counter the information overload resulting from the internet's 'always-on availability' with a 'promise of engagement' (p. 140). John Caldwell points out that inside production processes, ephemeral texts such as demo tapes or mentoring rituals already play fundamental roles in continuing, re-defining, and legitimising the difference (and the hierarchy) between various media, industries, and professions (production has always been a highly textual and mediated process, in which the difference between media is not a given but rather the result of a performative element). With its very specific focus, *Ephemeral Media* (which also includes insightful interviews with practitioners) clearly proves that the intersection between television and (other) digital media is a productive site for understanding current media culture.

Most anthologies dealing with the transformation of television over the past years are less coherent than this volume (if no less inspiring to media studies), as they often aim to describe the most variegated aspects of television. *Television Studies after TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era* (London: Routledge, 2009), edited by Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay, focuses on the somewhat more traditional question of what is happening to television's social function, its broadcasting mode, and its nationally-defined public sphere. The book offers solid comparative case studies that prove television to be so technologically and geographically diverse 'that we can no longer talk about "TV" as if it were a singular medium' (p. 3).

Television as Digital Media (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), edited by James Bennett and Niki Strange, suggests approaching television 'as a non-site-specific, hybrid cultural and technological form that spreads across multiple platforms' (p. 2). The book also includes a particularly strong section on 'aesthetics of convergence', which sees (amongst others) Karen Lury mourning 'the loss of contingency' (p. 201) in television's use of CGI, as well as Jason Jacobs focusing on the 'interruption' (so characteristic for commercial TV) to question aesthetic similarities and differences between TV and computer games. A careful mapping of specificities and innovations characterises all of this volume's contributions. One particular highlight is Roberta Pearson's historical analysis, which takes *Star Trek* as an early pre-digital example of the development of what are presumably digital production strategies, as it already then featured the introduction of the producer as a brand, the valuation of niche audiences, and marketing across multiple channels.

My last example is the volume *Flow TV: Television in the Age of Media Convergence* (Michael Kackman et al [eds]; New York: Routledge, 2011), which evolved out of FlowTV.org, an online journal that since 2004 has been an indispensable source for critical reflection on TV's latest developments. This is the most heterogeneous of the volumes reviewed here – which is not a deficit, considering the heterogeneity of television. The book's introduction already points out that television never was a well-defined or consistent medium (given the different national appropriations and the constant re-articulation through cable and satellite, or the remote control and VCR). Even TV's most central feature – the experience of programs as flow – was dependent on broader cultural contexts, acting more as a 'powerful heuristic device' (p. 2) to frame the constant transformations than as a clear-cut characteristic of the medium. The current developments in television incite even more intense and general reflection on the circumstances and the practices that give the medium its provisional form and define its cultural impact.

Jason Mittel contributes to this discussion with a casual and apposite reflection on how the possibilities of digital video recording define his own family's time

management and, as a consequence, what his kids understand television to be: less something to be switched on and submitted to than a collection of files that encourage choice. The transforming role of the interface is more systematically discussed in the chapter by Daniel Chamberlain, who (following Raymond Williams' take on flow) analyses how these 'configurable media experiences' are interrelated with broader transformations of temporal and spatial behaviour. The concept of interface-based customisation not only connects different mobile media, it also extends through these gadgets to the environment beyond: individuals 'customize their spatial environment along with their media experiences' (p. 26). In his contribution to the afore-mentioned *Television as Digital Media*, Chamberlain uses the architectural term 'scripted space' to outline how interface-based media use deviates from the time-dominated concept of program and flow.

In this instance, television is portrayed as a flexible, modifiable constellation of technologies, cultural forms, and industrial strategies that assumes its shape and achieves its cultural impact by its positioning in structured constellations, such as the family home and consumer culture at large. Further chapters show how this is also true for the whole infrastructure of national television systems, in which the medium helps to define and is in turn defined by governmental regimes. James Hay argues as much in his case study. The Unites States television network established in post-war Iraq that was meant to support the establishment of a new form of liberated and liberal government owes most of its characteristics to a carefully planned convergence of military and commercial rationalities, which were supposed to assist the Iraqi people in learning to govern themselves. From the start, this was a mix of technology and infrastructure (including radio) brought together by a rationality of governing.

Hector Amaya, on the other hand, shows how the role of the U.S. Spanish-language network Univision is very much marginalised by the fact that Spanish-language media are not considered as vital contributions to their audience's citizenship. Additionally, Amaya criticises the way television studies itself takes a share in homogenising television. Univision is rarely mentioned in research dealing with U.S. TV networks, thereby endorsing the dominant concept of U.S. national television as being exclusively composed of English-language programming.

It is not only television-related concepts that are at stake in order to get a grip on the transforming medium. Broader categories of media and cultural studies (like authorship, text, or paratext) can and should be re-thought with respect to television's transitions. Derek Kompare suggests focusing on podcasts attached to television series in order to develop an updated notion of authorship. The multiplication of 'moments of television' in an online culture revaluates the concept of authorship, as it structures the connection of users to discursive textual elements and upholds a claim of consistency and quality. It is characteristic for

the strategic flexibility of the authorship category that, in recent television, it is the 'showrunner' and not a writer or director who occupies the position of the author. In the chapter's analysed paratexts (*Lost* and *Battlestar Galactica*), the showrunners are represented as authentic voices that connect authoritative knowledge with a fan's attitude.

In a related case, Jonathan Gray argues that in the context of the multiplication of TV outlets, TV reviews become increasingly important paratexts for television, as they not only frame the process of making meaning but also create 'interpretive communities' (in Stanley Fish's sense). Gray's analysis shows how newspaper reviews of *Studio 60*, *Heroes*, and *Friday Night Lights* address a 'quality audience' by referencing prior works, thus limiting the shows' generic identity range. While Gray somehow falls short on positioning these reviews amid broader transmedia dynamics, sticking to a more or less conventional notion of the paratext, Louisa Ellen Stein questions the dichotomy of text vs. paratext altogether. Even more, her analysis of ABC Family strategies to create (but also tame) a media-savvy audience for the show *Kyle XY* suggests we should consider transmedia connections in spatial rather than in textual terms. Taking up the narratological concept of diegesis, she shows how a story world easily spans across different media, making use of media specificity in a questioning manner. Programs are increasingly transforming into 'a conceptual, spatial story world with expansive and emotive characters who are waiting to enact narratives and find fulfilment in romantic, platonic, and familial relationships often beyond those overtly imagined by the text itself' (p. 131). A program's fanbase as well as its producers can quite easily switch between the role of a character inside this diegesis and that of an author contributing to the diegesis.

Stein's essay is an example of how a reflection on current television necessarily includes a reflection on the dynamics that structure the interrelation between multiple media technologies and industries. 'Convergence' still figures as the most comprehensive term of this debate. However, in their introduction to the anthology, the editors make it clear that just like 'flow', convergence also figures as a 'heuristic tool' rather than as a well-defined quality of media culture. Convergence does not have 'uniform, or uniformly positive, cultural and political effects' (p. 3).[1]

The most direct analysis of the term is offered in the chapter by Jack Bratich. Starting from the oft-discussed example of reality television, he shows how convergence (or the convergence of people as a convergence of different media technologies) is more often than not based on practices and technologies of divergence. The audience may be actively involved in a show by judging and voting for candidates, yet the shows themselves base the possibility of social relationships on prior competition, classification, and the fabrication of behaviour. That convergence always necessarily involves frictions is also shown in the chapter by Misha Kavka, who argues that the industrial convergence between TV and food,

fashion, or music enterprises is far from 'seamless'. What television offers the 'divergent convergence culture' (p. 90) of heterogeneous media and industries is a possible, though never fully controlled, 'overflow' of intimacy. Bratich and Kavka both claim that the connection between different media is based on affective procedures that harness divergence as well as convergence.

Not all of the contributions to the anthologies reviewed here are as clear and convincing in their analysis as the ones by Bratich and Kavka. Throughout the different chapters, the questioning of established categories seems to be easier than the development of new categories (which should not come as a surprise). This is particularly true of methodologies which convincingly show how cross-media dynamics develop, how some are established, and how others are rejected. Overall, these volumes prove that the potential to re-think established categories lies in the transitional nature of television, also allowing one to re-think what a medium might be in a cross-media context. Television research in the form represented in these volumes has a vital role to play in on-going discussions about how to theorise and analyse the cross-media dynamics which characterise the current conjuncture.

Note

1. An in-depth reflection on the term 'convergence' and its relevance for the discipline of cultural studies can be found in the special issue of the journal *Cultural Studies* (Vol 25, 2011) under the title 'Rethinking Convergence/Culture'.

About the author

Markus Stauff, *University of Amsterdam*

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European nightmares

Horror cinema in Europe since 1945

Francesco Di Chiara

Patricia Allmer, Emily Brick, and David Huxley's edited collection *European Nightmares: Horror Cinema in Europe Since 1945* (New York-Chichester: Columbia University Press/Wallflower Press, 2012) is a book with roots that go back to a con-