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Book review : Contemporary Culture and Media in Asia by Daniel Black, Olivia Khoo, and Koichi Iwabuchi and Telemodernities: Television and Transforming Lives in Asia by Tania Lewis, Fran Martin, and Wanning Sun

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077699019856868>

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<b>Type</b>	Article
<b>URL</b>	This version is available at: <a href="http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/60724/">http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/60724/</a>
<b>Published Date</b>	2019

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***Contemporary Culture and Media in Asia.*** Daniel Black, Olivia Khoo, and Koichi Iwabuchi. London, England: Rowan & Littlefield, 2016. 274 pp. £85 hbk. \$27.95 pbk. £24.95 ebk.

***Telemodernities: Television and Transforming Lives in Asia.*** Tania Lewis, Fran Martin, and Wanning Sun. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. 324 pp. \$104.95 hbk. \$27.95 pbk.

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DOI: 10.1177/1077699019856868

In the last sixty years, cultural studies has been built through debate around just a handful of semantic differentials. These spaces of opposition include dyads such as the local versus the global, the urban versus the rural, or consumption versus production. Another debate has been established around the space in which these discussions take place, moving the focus from the European and North American centers to Asia. In this sense, both texts reviewed adopt complementary perspectives in the attempt to relocate media globalization while combining critical and noncritical approaches to Cultural Studies.

Among these two works, *Contemporary Culture and Media in Asia* (2016) is, perhaps, the most ambitious, embedded in a more complex structure that aims to give answers to different problems around the Media, Culture, and Society triad within the Asian context—the authors (Daniel Black, Olivia Khoo and Koichi Iwabuchi) are precisely experts in Media Studies affiliated to Monash University who have conducted extensive research on this topic. The text belongs to the series Asian Cultural Studies: Transnational and Dialogic Approaches. This is a collection supervised by relevant figures within Asian Media Studies—including Koichi Iwabuchi himself—with the aim of identifying and describing common aspects of the dialogues around culture. In this series, Asia is presented as an epicenter although not necessarily as the only place of interaction. More than just being another volume, the text seems to be an introduction to the series because it describes some of the main lines discussed through the series, as reflected in its table of contents.

In the first part, the authors introduce the main concept of the book, that is, the discussion of spatiotemporal nature of the “Trans-Asia” concept, consisting of three different aspects. The first one elaborates a historicization of the trans-Asian through different periods (premodern, early modern, colonial, etc.). Consequently, the book defines the concept in spatial terms, circumscribing it to East Asia. The

third aspect expands this geographical area of influence (China, Japan, Korean and Taiwan) through their diasporic populations.

The second part of the book moves away from the geographical axis of the Pacific to bring attention to a less well-known dialogue between media and Asian Muslim audiences. Religion and Islamic culture are one of the most important identities of global Asia. The research focuses almost exclusively on the ways the representation of these international Islamic audiences is constructed within different media products. Therefore, most active dimensions of this audience's behavior, such as fan-consumer production, are less explored than in other sections. This approach changes in the third section, by name, "Cultural Politics Across Borders: Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality" in which the authors examine in depth these identity constructions through media consumption. The last of the sections, "Digital Media and Social Action," moves to the interaction between audiences and political power, in relation to the use of the Internet. Here, the geographical axis of the analysis is again restricted to East Asia (China and Korea). The volume closes with an afterward, signed by John Nguyet Erni (Hong Kong Baptist University) who invites, through the introduction of the concept "meta-media" to seek other applications of this "trans-Asian" construction in relation to the interactions between individuals, a different but complementary scale of analysis which can be an alternative to the global and transnational flows of popular culture.

The book justifies, through the diversity and relevance of the selected case studies, the debate surrounding the so-called "trans-Asian" approach. However, it does not seem to give a satisfactory and ultimate definition of the Asia object. But it may be questioned—if this perspective goes beyond the national limits and diasporic populations—how can we define the Asian?

On the contrary, Tania Lewis, Fran Martin, and Wanning Sun delve through *Telemodernities. Television and Transforming Lives in Asia* (2016) into this question of the inter-Asian, taking as a starting point the television medium, in relation to the multiple identities or "modernities" of Asian audiences. The choice of television as the center of this exploration is not accidental. The volume is part of the series inspired by the annual conferences with the name "Console-ing Passions: Television and Cultural Power" that examines the multiple political readings of television, as well as the identities (geographical, ethnic, gender, etc.) and experiences elicited by television consumption among these audiences.

The book is structured in different chapters that examine, in a parallel or sequential way, several contents of Asian television in a simple but still significant group of examples formed by East Asia (Taiwan and China) and South Asia (India). The introduction explains the purpose of the book, which connects directly with the television medium and the way it inspires and reflects the lifestyle of different Asian audiences. The

rest of the book is structured implicitly around two main ideas

The first part (Chapters 1-4) aims to characterize Asian television in relation to consumption, production, and main television genres. Thus, in the first chapter, the necessary context is provided to describe this macro system through a brief description of Asian Media Industries' political economy. Then, in the second chapter, the responses of rural and urban China audiences are contrasted. In the third chapter, the authors shift the focus to the representation of the geographical imaginaries through Indian television. In contrast, the fourth chapter explores the transnational character of these narratives and their role in shaping imagined geographical spaces, in this case using television travel shows as the main example.

The second idea of the book, which occupies the rest of the volume (Chapters 5-8), discusses both Lifestyle programs (cooking, domestic life) and so-called "Advice TV" (of greater scope) through the combination of political economy, textual analysis, and qualitative audiences studies. These television genres, broadcasted to audiences as different as India and Chinese-Taiwanese, allow the exploration of several aspects of modernity, including spirituality (Chapter 6) or romantic relationships and gender roles (Chapters 7 and 8). Finally, the authors highlight in the conclusions the differences between these prototypical Asian markets in terms of content and, as a consequence, also in the role of these narratives in modeling "ethical choices" to different national audiences.

Reading these two volumes raises interesting questions about the ways in which Asia is conceptualized through Media Studies. As pointed out by the editorial of Clark et al., the boundaries between nations and states have been blurred as a result of the uncontrollable flow of transnational popular cultures. Thus, we may consider the Asian as nothing but another manifestation of the local, global, or transnational interactions between media and audiences. Asia, as space of interaction, may be less explored than other global media centers, but still replicates the same processes. In this sense, these books contribute substantially to the development of Asian Media Studies, combining Structural and Holistic-Cultural approaches, but above all, to the concept of transnational flows itself.

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