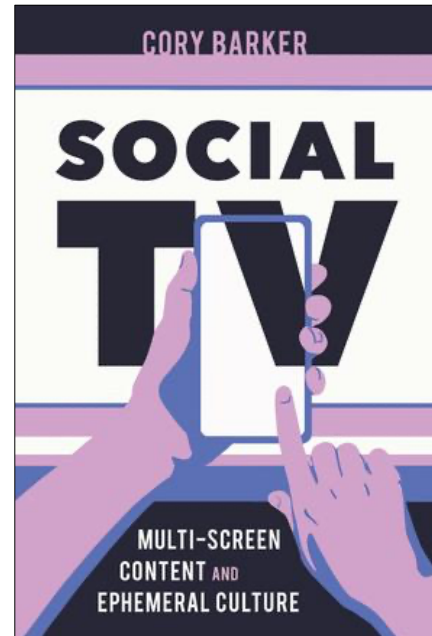Cory Barker, **Social TV: Multi-Screen Content and Ephemeral Culture**, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2022, 272 pp., $30.00 (paperback).

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As demonstrated through recent media coverage, television content continues to reach viewers through new flows of circulation, increasingly on video-based social platforms like TikTok (Jones, 2023). In *Social TV: Multi-Screen Content and Ephemeral Culture*, Cory Barker examines what he coins as "Social TV" during the 2010s. An assistant professor at Bradley University in the Department of Communication, Barker positions Social TV as a framework for understanding the burgeoning collaborative relationship between the American television industry and Silicon Valley, having implemented various tactics to increase ratings between 2010 and 2018. Through case studies ranging from ABC's partnership with Twitter prioritizing live tweeting and hashtags as part of a network-wide multiplatform campaign to Amazon Studio's Pilot Season initiative that bestowed viewers with a false sense of democratic participation in content development, Barker highlights how Social TV functioned as a brief industry phenomenon remediating the flows and boundaries between older, legacy media and newer social media platforms.

Social TV emerged at a particular fleeting moment when the television industry was experiencing an identity crisis due to emerging technological advancements like streaming that altered how viewers accessed content. For Barker, "Social TV" constitutes an industry practice to merge television networks with social media platforms designed to encourage viewers to interact with programming through interactive platforms and mobile applications on other devices (such as laptops, mobile phones, and tablets). He approaches his analysis of Social TV by incorporating a wide variety of academic material from media studies, including scholarship by Raymond Williams (1990), Jonathon Gray (2010), and Paul Grainge (2011). Through initiatives like mobile "check-in" applications like Miso and Viggle that incited viewers to share what content they were watching in exchange for small rewards and benefits, Barker argues that Social TV developed *interactive* digital spaces for users, extending the commercial reach for corporate brands and the media industry. Barker underscores the powerful role of cultural intermediaries (including journalists, marketers, industry professionals, and corporate executives) in creating and circulating narratives framing the Social TV experience, which attempted to normalize certain practices like live tweeting. New media technologies are often integrated to revive legacy media like television based on contemporary notions of interactivity, democracy, and empowerment—empty, corporate rhetoric that the industry and supplement promotional coverage used to market Social TV. Building on Richard Grusin and Jay Bolter's (1999) work, this process Barker refers to as the remediation-legitimation cycle is not new to the industry landscape that underlies Social TV but has existed at every technological juncture within the television industry.

While Social TV was an industry experiment that ultimately failed, Barker contends that this phenomenon is worthy of further study, particularly since many of the framework's initiatives continue to impact the current media environment. Drawing on Rick Altman's (2005) notion of "crisis historiography" (how new media enter social habits without an anchored meaning or protocol), Barker employs a methodological approach of "ephemeral historiography" (p. 15). For Barker, ephemeral historiography as a methodology emphasizes instances of failure to demonstrate how these unsuccessful experiments function to generate future opportunities for the television industry. Situating his analysis within the archival restraints of other ephemeral media, Barker highlights the difficulties in formulating the historical development of Social TV. Despite the relative recentness of the industry framework and the abundance of material produced by Social TV initiatives ranging from promoted tweets to Reddit forums, other content was quickly discarded after cancelation by the television industry and Silicon Valley. To overcome this challenge, Barker combines his personal Social TV initiatives experience with a discursive analysis of journalistic coverage, social media posts and profiles, and other relevant promotional material.

The case studies comprising Barker's overarching historical examination of Social TV feature analyses that provide insight into the roles played by numerous intermediaries ranging from corporate executives to trade journalists in the development and circulation of these initiatives. Although a secondary argument that emerges from his analyses, the strength of *Social TV* is in how Barker positions the industry framework within the theoretical context of Sarah Banet-Weiser's (2012) notion of brand culture (p. 4), referring to the affective space created through the symbiotic relationship between companies, products, marketing, and consumers. In Barker's analysis, television channels like HBO leverage social media to develop a networked personality enabling them to connect with users through circulatory content like memes, which he argues exemplifies a type of platform authenticity legitimized by a "corporate brand voice" (pp. 145–146). HBO's social media profiles motivate users to develop a continuous relationship with the network, which, Barker argues, depends on the temporal logics of Ethan Tussey's (2018) notion of the "procrastination economy," referring to the "in-between moments" that demand our attention when using mobile devices (pp. 13–14). This aspect of Barker's argument highlights how networks employ the content produced by the television industry to construct branded relationships. Such tactics transform the benign, everyday moments when users browse their social media platforms into identity-building events shaped by the omnipresence of the "corporate brand voice."

The Social TV era is marked by legacy channels like ABC, AMC, and HBO trying to embrace the characteristics and affordances of social networks like Twitter. While these networks and Silicon Valley eventually abandoned many Social TV initiatives, Barker concludes that the model helped normalize the industry's current focus on prioritizing content through social platforms. Networks are increasingly becoming more ubiquitous through branding that inserts the logos, imagery, and story narratives into the most banal moments of everyday life, demonstrated through Barker's strong analysis of HBO's ability to transform prestige content into easily circulated memes and gifs. Through the politics of remediation, social media transforms television into a platform supported by an endless stream of content dependent on the circulatory labor of users.

Social TV was a collaborative partnership intended to help sustain the television industry during the changing 2010s media landscape. The strength of Barker's argument is in how he demonstrates the way such practices transformed television into a platform subtly integrated into the flows of daily life influenced

by the growing use of social media. While the text functions as a historical analysis wof a specific moment in the American television industry, Barker's *Social TV* is a timely addition that provides a historical framework to current debates within media studies on the remediation of television through platforms like TikTok (Faltesek et al., 2023). As Barker illuminates in his analysis, Social TV contributed to the continuously evolving shift toward networks prioritizing video content through platforms to create new circulatory flows shaped by the discursive logics of brand culture.

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