Revisiting Postwar Theater Television

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Abstract

This essay explores the largely unsuccessful attempts to exploit electronic moving images in public cinemas in the United States between 1946 and 1953 as a case study of failed technological innovation. Scrutinizing the contemporaneous trade and popular press, the essay untangles the complicated web of interests and tactics among firms across the industries of theatrical exhibition, electronic manufacturing, and commercial broadcasting involved in theater television. The author analyzes the historical roots of postwar theater TV in the era of mechanical television in the late 1920s and early 1930s and explores its implications for the precarious situation of theatrical exhibition in the contemporary era of streaming video and global pandemic. After delineating the economic, demographic, and institutional factors behind the failure of postwar theater TV, the essay suggests several historiographic lessons for scholars addressing privileged moments of technological change and industry uncertainty in moving image culture.

Keywords: Theater Television, Film Exhibition, 1950s Television

Introduction

Ralph B. Austrian, a show-business veteran and president of the recently formed RKO Television Company, confidently predicted at the Society of Motion Picture Engineers' (SMPE) 40th semiannual conference in October 1946 that industry engineers would soon succeed in delivering large-screen electronic moving images to movie-house audiences. The executive challenged his Hollywood audience: "The question is, what are we commercial men, the producers, the showmen, the merchandisers, the exhibitors, going to do with this technically perfect system?" Austrian offered the transition to the sound film two decades earlier as an historical analogy to the postwar situation of theater television, and after quoting more than a dozen hostile trade and critical responses to the introduction of sound (a transformation, he pointed out, spurred by a single box-office hit in *The Jazz Singer*), Austrian told his audience,

... the same thing is going to happen with theater television. It's only going to take one sellout to start the ball rolling. It's only going to take the vision and the courage of one man or one company to start theater television on its way precisely as one company started sound pictures on their way despite the practically unanimous opinion of the industry that it was a foolhardy, silly novelty.²

After conceding British leadership in theater television development and turning aside concerns over competing projector technologies, logistical challenges in retrofitting new equipment into existing cinema halls, integrating video programming into daily theater schedules, and navigating complex labor jurisdictional disputes, Austrian nevertheless promised that “theatre will make it possible for the theater owner to make *his* theater *the* amusement and cultural center of the neighborhood.”³ Austrian ended his rallying address with a personal pledge and a striking historiographic challenge:

I promise you that I will do all I can to keep the showman's mind focused on theater television with a positive attitude. I shall do everything I can to make it impossible for some future researcher to go to the files and dig out the funny articles and negative opinions about theatre television with which to address the 80th Semiannual Conference of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers.⁴

Although the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers' (SMPTE) 80th Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition anticipated by Austrian took place over twenty years ago, I would like to belatedly take up Austrian's invitation and dig out some of the articles and opinions, funny, negative, or otherwise, that swirled around the brief postwar period of intense studio interest in theater television. While the curious case of postwar theater television played a significant role in the revisionist television historiography of the 1980s—in 1985, Douglas Gomery described the postwar efforts of several major Hollywood studios to bring electronic moving images to public cinemas as the “missing link of technological change in the US motion picture industry”—it has received scant subsequent scholarly scrutiny.⁵ If Austrian's 1946 extravagant hopes for theater television seem misplaced or at best fifty years premature, there are valuable lessons in exploring this technological path not taken, at a moment, then and now, of crisis and change for both the motion picture and television industries. After explicating the historical roots of postwar theater television, this article investigates how a combination of scientific superenthusiasm, corporate mixed motives, and strategic bad faith complicates the investigation of postwar theater TV, concluding with reflections on the historiographic stakes of considering postwar theater television as a case study in failed media. My central argument analyzes the ways in which theater television's fitful history is replete with increasingly desperate efforts to make the economic case for box-office-funded theater television over advertising-supported domestic television by proposing uniquely compelling electronic programming to lure public audiences. Defenses of theater television against its ascendant domestic rival were often linked to wider assertions about the special psychic and social appeal of out-of-home entertainment, and I argue that such claims for the privileging of cinema-going have been reanimated in both the early 2000s transition to digital cinema and the current conflict between cinema exhibitors and home-centered streaming services in an era of global pandemic.

Defining Television

While speculative accounts and visualizations of the wireless delivery of moving images for both domestic and public consumption go back to the nineteenth-century origins of photography and telegraphy, two discrete historical episodes of theater television emerge, part of what one observer in 1937 called the “obligingly elastic corner” around which television seemed perpetually poised.⁶ Making sense of the curious episode of postwar theater television requires expanding the historical lens beyond the brief period between 1946 and 1953 to consider its earlier speculative and experimental iterations in the late 1920s and early 1930s. While the technological competencies, institutional actors, and social contexts of the two moments of electronic cinema are quite distinct, the two episodes nevertheless reveal a number of enduring themes and strategic disputes. Each iteration represented a moment of potentially disruptive technological innovation, a rehearsal of what the authors of the 1938 monograph *Television: A Struggle for Power* called “the problems of vested interests in times of technological change.”⁷ The two moments of theater television provide snapshots of the specific manner in which competing private interests made tactical use of wider assertions about moving image aesthetics and audience psychology and serve to remind us that the imaginative scenarios, technological capabilities, and economic applications of the television medium have always exceeded its dominant place in the nation’s late twentieth-century domestic living rooms.

While Hollywood studio interest in theater television began with the earliest experiments with mechanical television in the late 1920s, studio investments resumed and accelerated after World War II (WWII), peaking in early 1952 when 102 US theaters were equipped for electronic exhibition and plans for a number of studio-affiliated theater TV networks were announced. However, the refusal of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to allocate exclusive spectrum for program distribution, the constraints of limited and expensive programming, complications arising from the ongoing studio divestitures of theaters following the Paramount consent decrees, and the box-office success of Cinerama and Cinemascope after 1953, all contributed to the marginalization of theater television in America into a fitful litany of the occasional prize fight, political convention, rock concert, and business conference.⁸

Notwithstanding theater television’s descent into commercial marginality and historical obscurity in the face of the dominant economic and cultural status that living-room TV had achieved by the mid-1950s, the hegemony of commercial TV is best understood as the product of specific commercial and regulatory battles over the contested venues, program forms, and economic models appropriate for electronic moving images. Contesting the definition of television as a domestic, advertiser-supported medium was central to Hollywood’s ambitions for postwar theater TV; a 1939 report prepared for the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) argued that “we should never let the idea become generally accepted that television means pictures in the home *instead* of pictures in the theater.”⁹ RKO Television’s Ralph Austrian offered a striking analogy in his attempt to redefine television as a theatrical medium at an SMPE Technical Conference in 1944:

Television must not be thought of as the exclusive instrument of the broadcasting industry or, as a matter of record, of any other industry. Television is too big, too all-encompassing, too international

in scope to be controlled by group interests. Airplanes were invented primarily for transportation purposes. Today they are winning the war by destroying and killing. Certainly the Wright Brothers never thought of that. The original concept of television was that it would enable millions to see from their homes events taking place at far distant points. I am inclined to believe, however, that many have forgotten this so-called “closed circuit” use of television I have been delineating.¹⁰

Austrian’s self-interest should not obscure the fact that television’s largely forgotten alternative technological applications, economic models, and psychic valences have haunted the history of the broadcast medium, repeatedly conjured up and relitigated in moments of technological change and market uncertainty. In particular, the intimation of television’s latent capacity for interactivity recurs in some of the formative scenes in the history of the medium, including the case of postwar theater television. Television’s earliest public appearances highlighted its interactive capabilities along with its flexibility for display; the 1927 New York City demonstration of Bell Telephone’s video telephone featuring Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover involved simultaneous display on both a 2 × 3-inch neon tube and a 2 × 3-foot square folded neon screen, simultaneously initiating two of the longest running technologically unrealized and obsessively reimagined inventions of the mid-twentieth century: the video telephone and the flat panel wall display, each evoking psychic scenarios quite distinct from those associated with the quotidian living-room TV set.¹¹ Indeed, the *New York Times* account of the Bell Telephone demonstration noted the coincidental screening of Fritz Lang’s dystopian *Metropolis* on New York City movie screens, “a case of a prophecy being fulfilled about as soon as it started,” the newspaper observed.¹² Similarly, the countless widely reported 1920s demonstrations of mechanical television in the United Kingdom staged by John Logie Baird for British journalists, politicians, and celebrities typically featured simultaneous telephone links between the remote studio and the invited television viewer, allowing individual TV spectators to speak to and direct the actions of the televised performer. Even as television assumed its secure place in America’s living rooms, the popular and technical presses cataloged the medium’s alternative applications in military weaponry, public surveillance, industrial logistics, and business affairs.¹³ Part of the persistent rhetoric of both wonder and unease associated with early television was bound up in the medium’s promise of interactivity across these alternative contexts.

Scientific Superenthusiasm and Corporate Bad Faith

Despite the efforts of some in Hollywood and elsewhere, the decisive economic success of domestic television by the mid-1950s confounded attempts to diversify the venues and economic models appropriate to the medium, naturalizing its place in the home in traditional accounts of the medium. Theater television was merely one area of intensive interest and investment by the studios in the early TV industry, efforts slighted in many traditional histories of the medium. However, as historian Timothy White argued in 1988, although the early television activities by the major studios “were ignored for years by film historians, they were well reported in not only the trade press, but also in mass market publications.”¹⁴ For revisionist historians of the 1980s, refuting the prevailing myth of myopic studio moguls ignoring the prospect of television until it was too late was as simple as scanning the voluminous

trade press accounts of TV-related efforts by the Hollywood studios going back to the late 1920s. At the same time, some features of the contemporaneous trade and popular press inflect the writing of theater television history in significant ways, including the legacies of technological utopianism and appeal to popular spectacle that marked electronics hobbyist culture. The popular literature on television in the eras of late 1920s mechanical TV and late 1940s theater television is marked by what the *New York Times* in 1928 was already characterizing as the “superenthusiasm of scientists” (which, it warned, threatened to dampen sales of conventional radio sets), accompanied by breathless and often unreliable announcements of ambitious technological breakthroughs and commercial alliances. Public demonstrations of theater television often echoed the trappings and spectacle of the scientific lecture and fairground attraction, and despite the medium’s seemingly thorough domestication, the technology of television, like that of radio before it, never completely escaped its associations with technological spectacle, public surveillance, male hobbyist culture, and the rhetoric of popular magic.¹⁵

If the popular and trade press coverage of television during historical moments of technological disruption is often marked by scientific superenthusiasm and a fascination with technological spectacle, contemporaneous press accounts also offer abundant evidence of corporate boosterism and bad faith. The reports of postwar theater television developments are replete with thinly rewritten press releases promoting what in a media later era would be called vaporware. In the midst of a three-part article for the *Saturday Evening Post*, “The Big Brawl: Hollywood vs. TV,” journalist Milton MacKaye noted a *Hollywood Reporter* report in 1951 of US\$61 million worth of filmed television programs “finished or in work”:

but upon further investigation I discovered that the word “finished” needed re-examination, and that the word “in work” meant nothing at all. People in promotion-minded Hollywood tend to talk in positive terms. Hastily organized companies announce productions “in work” when they have paid a month’s rent and bought a waste-basket.¹⁶

The coverage of postwar theater TV in the contemporaneous trade press presents a striking asymmetry between breathless accounts of dazzling public demonstrations and ambitious plans for theater installations and networks contrasted with the little-noted demise of many of the same schemes. The journalistic imbalance invites overestimations of the actual status and accomplishments of postwar theater television by credulous readers then and now.

Beyond the unsurprising self-aggrandizing proclivities of promotion-minded Hollywood startups, readers of trade and popular press accounts of theater TV face the challenge of untangling the distinct interests within a single firm, the tensions between stated corporate policy and actual behavior, and the often-submerged conflicts among ostensible business partners. Milton MacKaye argued in his 1952 “Big Brawl” article,

Fortunes will be made and lost, and reputations too. It will be not only a war of showmen and technicians but a war of financiers. There will be, whether aboveboard or in secret, great mergers and amalgamations, alliances between very strange bedfellows.¹⁷

The competing interests of the distinct sectors of the would-be theater television industry can be broadly defined among four groups: enthusiastic theater TV equipment manufacturers looking at a potential market of eighteen thousand US movie houses in 1945; strategically

supportive, if fiscally constrained, exhibitors seeking to create an alternative to advertiser-supported domestic television; equivocal Hollywood studios eager to exploit theater TV but also ready to supply programming to the growing domestic TV platform; and hostile broadcasters and advertising agencies committed to the model of commercial broadcasting to the private home.¹⁸ Moreover, it is clear that many of the individual corporate actors in postwar theater television had interests blurring the lines between competing markets, including a number of major studios who by 1950 created telefilm production subsidiaries to test the domestic TV program market while also investing in theater TV.

Similarly, RCA operated simultaneously as manufacturer of 90 percent of the theater TV projectors installed by 1953, major supplier of projectors and sound equipment for drive-in theaters, operator of the broadcast network NBC and owner of a number of increasingly profitable local TV stations, and leading TV set manufacturer and collector of patent royalties on every competing television receiver sold in the nation. Furthermore, as the dominant force in radio manufacturing and networking, RCA faced the special challenge of reassuring its radio customers that the development of the new visual medium would not threaten the established business of sound broadcasting. During the first flurry of popular interest in mechanical television, RCA Chairman David Sarnoff confidently predicted in the *New York Times* in 1928 that “within the next few years such [television] equipment and service will be developed and made available to the home.”¹⁹ However, after popular interest in television languished, only to revive after 1935, Sarnoff was publicly more cautious, telling RCA stockholders in 1935 that “television is not here, nor around the corner,” and he was at pains to

emphasize that television bears no relation to the present system of sound broadcasting . . . While television promises to supplement the present system of broadcasting by adding sight to sound, it will not supplant nor diminish the importance or usefulness of broadcasting by sound.²⁰

Similarly, Sarnoff was exceedingly modest in describing the visual quality of television’s prevailing 343-line standards:

From the practical standpoint, the character of service possible in the present status of the art is somewhat comparable in its limitations to what one sees of a parade from the window of an office building, or of a world series baseball game from a nearby roof, or of a championship prize fight from the outermost seats of a great arena.²¹

Sarnoff remained guarded about television’s prospects in his address to RCA stockholders in 1936: after noting progress in RCA’s recent laboratory developments, he warned that

this is a far cry from the expectations of such a service aroused by pure speculation on the subject. There is a long and difficult road ahead for those who pioneer in the development and establishment of a public television service.²²

However, in a speech to a different industry constituency at the time, Sarnoff expressed emphatic confidence in television’s unique power as an advertising medium; only two weeks after his cautious stockholders speech, he promised an audience at an Advertising Federation of America meeting that when television comes, “advertising will have a new medium,

perhaps the most effective ever put at its command” and boasted that “television will bring into the home much visual material—news events, drama, paintings, personalities—which sound can only bring partially or not at all.”²³ Critic Gilbert Seldes described the dilemma of the radio interests like RCA pursuing television in a 1937 *Atlantic* article:

the promoters of television dare not withhold it and at the same time they hardly dare promote it. All the leaders in the field are involved in the business of radio broadcasting or in the manufacture of radio sets, or both. . . . That is why almost every official statement about television is sure to contain the word “supplementary.” . . . But the promoters are obviously uneasy. They know that the time will come when they will be trying to sell electric light bulbs and kerosene lamps over the same counter.²⁴

In addition to the challenge of untangling the conflicting strategies across competing technological platforms within a single corporate entity, historians also face the task of penetrating the record of corporate bad faith among McKaye’s “very strange bedfellows” involved in early television. Emblematic here is the case of Paramount Pictures, operator of the largest chain of movie theaters in the country before court-ordered divestiture and the studio with the longest running and most diverse range of activities in early television, including a short-lived stock swap with the young CBS radio network in 1929 and its 1938 investment in TV set manufacturer, early TV station owner, and fledgling TV network operator DuMont Laboratories. In addition, Paramount owned outright early TV stations in Los Angeles and Chicago, was a joint-owner, along with 20th Century Fox, of theater TV equipment manufacturer American Scophony, and operated a theater television network of Balaban and Katz Chicago-area movie houses in the early 1950s.²⁵

However, Paramount’s disparate early TV activities were marked by persistent accusations of corporate bad faith from its ostensible partners. A 1945 Justice Department antitrust suit against American Scophony, for example, was in fact supported by American Scophony’s president, who accused the Paramount and Fox representatives on its board of conspiring to frustrate the Scophony’s plans to license its theater TV patents to other studios. Similarly, Paramount’s investment in DuMont undoubtedly hindered the fortunes of that company as station owner and network operator; neither of Paramount’s TV stations in Los Angeles and Chicago chose to affiliate with the DuMont network, the studio never produced any programming for the network, Paramount members of the DuMont board sabotaged the company’s fundraising efforts, and Paramount’s antitrust record was repeatedly invoked by the FCC to the detriment of DuMont’s interests in broadcasting.²⁶ Veteran DuMont executive Ted Bergmann described Paul Raibourn, Paramount’s representative on the DuMont board, as “perhaps the most negative man I had ever dealt with” and concluded that Paramount was “basically dedicated to the destruction of television—including DuMont. It seemed they took every opportunity to thwart its progress.”²⁷ Such accounts of corporate misdirection and infighting, sometimes emerging decades after the fact, complicate a naïve reading of the contemporaneous business press as historical record during a period of unusual industry instability. Paramount’s behavior with its erstwhile partners is emblematic of the tangled network of interests and unusual level of uncertainty that characterized the complicated history of postwar theater TV.

Making the Case for Theater Television

If the record of postwar theater television is complicated by the ghosts of interactivity and scientific overenthusiasm and the legacies of corporate boosterism, internal cross-purposes, and bad faith, such issues were subsumed by the overriding question of the period, namely, the contested economic viability of the new theatrical TV service against its advertising-supported domestic rival. On the one hand, many industry leaders expressed confidence in the logic of the theatrical box office for the new medium; as early as 1929, CBS President William Paley argued that “someone will have to foot the bill for home television, and it is hard to conceive of an advertising sponsorship of the filmed efforts of Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks.”²⁸ When the prospect of theater television reemerged near the end of WWII, many commentators echoed Paley’s skepticism about the ability of broadcast advertising to supply the production budgets sufficient to create appealing television programming, putting exhibitors in a strong position to compete for screen talent and special events. In a presentation entitled “Some Economic Aspects of Theater Television,” at an SMPE Technical Conference in 1944, RKO Television’s Ralph B. Austrian put the financial potential of theater television in stark numbers: there were 18,000 movie houses in 10,015 cities across the nation, with a total capacity of 11,700,000 seats. The monthly domestic movie box office amounted to US\$150,000,000, six times the revenues of the entire broadcasting industry, and Austrian argued that the wide national appeal of sporting events like racing’s Kentucky Derby, baseball’s World Series, and major boxing matches would allow exhibitors selling seats for US\$1–2 each to easily outbid TV broadcasters for the telecast rights. Theater television would have special appeal, Austrian argued, in the case of prize fights currently staged in large indoor venues like Madison Square Garden and Yankee Stadium, where many of the sixty-eight thousand live spectators were seated “so far from the ring, in spite of the high prices paid, that the fighters look like a pair of dancing mice—when they can be seen through the smoke.”²⁹ Austrian estimated that the theater TV audience for the World Series could amount to between 44 and 77 million people; “You can reduce this figure by any factor you desire, and multiply it by any admission price you wish, and your answer is still an astronomical figure,” he argued. And savvy exhibitors could sell peanuts and hot dogs during the telecast, he pointed out.³⁰ Beyond sporting events, Austrian quoted John Kirkpatrick, president of Madison Square Garden, suggesting that his venue alone hosted sixty-five events annually of definite theater television box appeal (“boxing, basketball, the horse show, the dog show, the circus, and other events”), boosting the facility’s potential audience from twenty-five thousand to a million or more; “and I think that theater owners can count on events that will fill every seat,” Kirkpatrick told Austrian.³¹

Beyond the closed-circuit telecast of such traditional sports and entertainment attractions, postwar theater TV proponents predicted new forms of compelling video material for public cinemas. Anticipating the end of wartime shift workers who currently filled movie houses at all hours, in 1944 Austrian warned that “the theaters of America may once again experience some slim matinee days” and suggested that “theaters could . . . be used in the so-called ‘off’ hours, such as mornings, for lecture halls for the educational networking of television programs.” In the evening hours, Austrian argued, “theaters could be used as overflow houses for symphony orchestra, concerts, opera, etc.” Cinemas could also offer Broadway shows like

the current hit *Oklahoma* which “cannot possibly play in all of the cities in this country where there are people who want to see it,” and a network of TV-equipped theaters could support the formation of “a stock company composed of the leading legitimate stage stars who could not or would not undertake the rigors of road shows. The possibilities of this phase of theater television alone are limitless and breathtaking!,” he enthused.³² Indeed, Austrian predicted that advertising-supported domestic television might eventually be relegated to a talent development service for the dominant theater television sector; “television will bring hundreds of new personalities to the public eye, the same as radio did,” and he predicted a nationwide network of TV-equipped theaters “seeking home television personalities as fast as they are developed, and paying them enough to make it worth their while to perform for theater audiences rather than for the home audience.”³³

Austrian’s optimism about the economic prospects for theater television was echoed by others at the time, including *Newsweek* radio editor Robert Conly, who wrote in the *American Mercury* in 1944 that broadcast television faced chicken-and-egg challenges of small initial audiences supporting meager program budgets dampening further set sales and noted the skepticism of some within the broadcast industry, including Zenith president E F MacDonald, about the viability of the radio advertising model for TV, given the new medium’s production costs and demand for viewer attention. Like other observers at the time, Conly noted the disparity between Hollywood feature film per-minute expenditures and what could reasonably be expected to be generated by advertising revenues in the young television medium. Considering the weak wartime television programs currently broadcast, Conly argued that

when the war is over, they will improve, but it will be a long time before they come near Hollywood’s grade B movie, made at a cost from \$100,000 to \$400,000. Few advertisers can afford half that much for a weekly program—even to reach an audience of millions.

Given the constraints under which he believed early commercially supported television would operate, Conly saw great potential for the Hollywood studios in the alternative markets of theater TV and pay-television. He concluded reassuringly, “Most movie men have pretty well gotten over the fear that television may squeeze them out of business. Instead, they see that it may provide them an additional and very lucrative source of revenue.”³⁴

Similar expressions of optimism about the prospects for theater TV persisted for a number of years after WWII. George Menton told readers of the *Magazine of Wall Street and Business Analyst* in May 1951,

Looking ahead, there is a good chance that theater television shows will gain in popularity as time passes. In this event, the development of TV may lose a good deal of its threat. The large screen presentations of national and sporting events are already swelling box office receipts, with every prospect of providing added attraction.³⁵

As late as July 1953, *Business Week* argued that recent multiyear theater television contracts by Box Office Television Inc. for the Harlem Globetrotters and Notre Dame football and basketball teams suggested that “public theater television is about to get the needle it’s been waiting for.”³⁶

However, other observers had long been skeptical of claims for the economic domination of theatrical TV exhibition over advertising-supported domestic TV, including as early as 1929, when playwright Robert Sherwood rebutted Paley's prediction that broadcast television could never compete for top Hollywood talent.³⁷ Skeptics of postwar theater TV abounded, pointing to the rapid growth of the domestic TV audience and the steady decline in the postwar box office; *Business Week* wondered in 1951, "Will people pay to see football games when they can see others free over their own TV sets? Why should movie houses pipe in expensive live shows when they can show better ones on film?" Arguing that "movies and movie cathedrals have lost their novelty appeal," the magazine noted that postwar demographic trends highlighting family formation were unfavorable to movie attendance; "the current younger generation is busy at home raising families. It hasn't enough time, money, or baby sitters to afford movies." The magazine concluded by reporting that industry "critics look on theater TV as a stopgap. It will go over, they think, as long as some areas don't have TV or until more people have sets. But after that? They wonder."³⁸

Exploring *Business Week's* demographic speculation about the postwar box office, broadcast historian Douglas Gomery in 1985 analyzed the decisive role of suburbanization and family formation in Hollywood's declining audience immediately after the war, noting that the steepest declines in movie theater attendance occurred between 1946 and 1950, while television sets were still installed in less than one-third of American households. However, by the time theater television activity crested in 1952, broadcast TV audience numbers, advertising revenues, and program budgets were all booming.³⁹ Indeed, commercial television revenues grew much faster than many industry observers had predicted just a few years earlier, despite the FCC freeze on TV station construction permits between 1948 and 1952. Writing in the *Hollywood Quarterly* in 1950, economist Rodney Luther warned that broadcast television was likely to become an increasingly powerful rival to exhibitors, noting that sponsor Gillette recently paid US\$800,000 for the 1950 World Series, four times what it paid the previous year, and "that television stations are paying more for first showings of Gene Autry TV westerns than do theaters for similar first runs."⁴⁰ In sum, RKO Television's Ralph B. Austrian's 1944 optimistic economic balance sheet favoring potential theater TV revenues over those of broadcast television was subject to drastic revision after 1950.

As nearly all contemporaneous commentators noted, the economic viability of postwar theater television depended on discovering and deploying uniquely compelling video programming for public cinema audiences. Alongside the three alternative technologies of postwar theater television (RCA's projecting cathode ray tubes, Paramount's intermediate film process, and Eidophor's still experimental color projector), there emerged two distinct programming philosophies for movie-house TV after WWII.⁴¹ Paramount's newly spun-off exhibition arm, United Paramount Theaters (UPT) led by future ABC network head Leonard Goldenson, enlisted Chicago's Balaban and Katz theater chain for a theater television circuit built around college football and other sporting events; "We don't want to make a TV set out of the motion picture screen," Goldenson told *Business Week* in 1951. The magazine contrasted UPT's strategy of special-event simulcasts to the more expansive vision of Spyros Skouras, head of 20th Century Fox, who, the magazine reported, foresaw "huge variety shows, shown simultaneously at special performances at hundreds of theaters. These programs would be so expensive, so big, that no broadcast television sponsor could begin to complete with them."⁴²

Indeed, the search for uniquely compelling exclusive content for theater television has dominated trade debates since mechanical television's debut in the 1920s; the *New York Times* wrote in 1927,

the commercial future of television, if it has one, is thought to be largely in public entertainment—super-news reels flashed before audiences at the moment of occurrence, together with dramatic and musical acts shot on the ether waves in sound and picture at the instant they are taking place at the studio.⁴³

RKO Television's Ralph B Austrian's 1946 SMPE speech offered an expansive list of possible theater TV attractions, including "movies, music, current happenings, radio, sporting events, plays, personal appearances, and other interesting programs."⁴⁴ Along the lines of Austrian's 1944 exhortation for exhibitors to deploy theater television in the movie house's "off hours," there were scattered postwar attempts to use daytime periods for the cablecast of corporate events, including the 1952 17-city closed-circuit sales convention for a Brooklyn clothing store and a 51-city cablecast for nineteen thousand people celebrating the production of General Motor's 50-millionth car in 1955.⁴⁵ However, the FCC's unwillingness to license exclusive broadcast spectrum for theater TV distribution forced exhibitors to resort to expensive ad hoc AT&T landline networks, making it difficult to spread program costs across additional venues, and theater-owner efforts to exploit non-entertainment programming in off-hours were largely unsuccessful.

One of the few technological and corporate survivors of theater TV's precipitous decline in the mid-1950s was the Swiss firm Eidophor, which developed a proprietary monochrome projector before WWII, demonstrated a color projector in 1952, and continued manufacturing increasingly sophisticated high-definition projectors into the 1990s. 20th Century Fox announced a US\$400,000 investment in the company in early 1951, including the installation of five hundred Eidophor projectors in movie theaters across the country. While the agreements granted Fox exclusive US rights to the Eidophor device, by the time color projectors were available, the studio was consumed with the successful 1953 introduction of CinemaScope's anamorphic lenses and magnetic multichannel sound.⁴⁶ Although the Eidophor apparatus uniquely delivered the luminance required for widescreen color projection, by 1958, Fox formally canceled its option for thousand projectors after purchasing only three units, and Eidophor retreated into the low-profile applications of large-screen television for prize fights and other sporting events, rock concerts, corporate trade shows and teleconferences, military and aeronautics command and control systems, medical demonstrations, off-track betting halls, Miss America pageants, and evangelical crusades (one high point was Billy Graham's 1970 religious campaign that involved the simultaneous deployment of thirty-nine Eidophor projectors across ten European countries).⁴⁷ One of Eidophor's last prominent installations was at the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas, and in the 1990s Eidophor's projection technology was supplanted by Digital Light Processing (DLP)-based displays. The extensive history of Eidophor's diverse applications invites media scholars to reconsider traditional boundaries of relevant screen practices; far beyond the movie theater, the technological and economic legacies of Hollywood's brief flirtation with postwar theater television continue to be felt in the diverse contemporary contexts of point-of-sale advertising, large-scale architectural signage, and sporting and entertainment venue displays, all practices nearly invisible to traditional media scholars.⁴⁸

While applications of electronic projection systems like Eidophor's migrated into nontheatrical venues after the mid-1950s, the search for compelling alternative electronic material for local cinemas was revived in the transition to digital exhibition in the early 2000s as producers and exhibitors confronted a post-celluloid future in the new millennium.⁴⁹ The conversion to digital exhibition filled the trade press with optimistic reports of various successful novel simulcast programs, from Metropolitan Opera performances and World Cup matches to video gaming competitions, including ten thousand fans assembled in South Korean cinemas in 2006 to watch contests between young videogame champions.⁵⁰ However, despite nearly a century of speculation and promise, it remains unclear whether exhibitors will succeed in devising compelling alternative video content of interest to public audiences. As Martin Barker argued in 2012, the industry's nomenclature of "alternative content" for contemporary live theatrical simulcasts itself suggests a persistent failure to specify the nature and appeal of unique program material for electronic exhibition in public cinemas. Barker noted that the 2012 London meeting of executives from six nations in the "alternative content" trade association resulted in the organization's selection of the more confident but still imprecise new self-designation as the "Event Cinema Association."⁵¹ It is clear that the transition from celluloid to electronic distribution and display of moving images in public cinemas in the early 2000s did little to resolve theater television's nearly century-long quest for unique and remunerative programming.

Conclusion: Postwar Theater Television as Failed Media

The excavation of the unsuccessful and largely forgotten postwar efforts to bring electronic moving images to public audiences joins a wider scholarly effort described by film historian John Belton "to situate historical events within a phenomenal field that now includes absences as well as presences—within a history that did not happen as well as that which did."⁵² Thomas Elsaesser argued in 2016 that the "reasons why certain events did not occur are telling us something important about what *did* happen, and what may have been forgotten or seemed to have failed also belongs to history."⁵³ Elsaesser credits his own interest in the emerging project of media archeology to Noel Burch's 1978 invitation for scholars to investigate, in Elsaesser's words, the "gaps, false starts, and dead ends, isolated experiments and contradictory conjunctures" within received film history.⁵⁴ Media historian Susan Murray argued in 2018 that the proliferation of media archeology studies served to focus new attention on the contingent, the marginal, and the failed media artifact, quoting Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka's 2011 call for "alternate histories of suppressed, neglected, and forgotten media that do not point to the present media-cultural condition as their 'perfection'."⁵⁵

Considering postwar theater television as failed media illustrates the ways in which even innovations decisively repudiated in the marketplace can have lasting resonance. Historian Kenneth Lipartito, challenging the traditional portrait of AT&T's ill-fated Picturephone of the 1960s, argued that "failed technologies, far from being dead ends or even mere cautionary tales, may persist well beyond their material life [and] echo like footfalls down corridors not taken, leading us to the present."⁵⁶ In this light, the reexamination of unrealized ambitions for theater television challenges traditional historical evaluations of technological failure,

since unsuccessful technologies are inevitably implicated in complex and enduring cultural narratives that help shape real-world outcomes. As Lipartito explains,

Socially constructed failures are also socially resonant, and they shape our options for the future. Indeed, because failures are in fact the more common technological experience, they may be more important in this regard than those artifacts we treat as successes. Through a form of technological ideology, failures are able to exert a mystifying influence on the present.⁵⁷

One of the striking features across the century-long attempts to deliver electronic moving images to public audiences is an enduring core of still-disputed foundational assertions about the nature of visual spectacle, audience sociality, and the nature of public and private space. Failed media technologies like theater television, despite their historical obscurity, can play important roles in framing these continuing disputes and in shaping real-world outcomes.

If this article's belated response to RKO Television's Ralph Austrian's 1946 SMPE invitation to re-excavate the historical record of postwar theater television does not necessarily prove the adage that history is written by the victors, it certainly suggests that history is largely written *about* the victors. Although the unsuccessful postwar theater television efforts by studios and exhibitors had little lasting impact on the dominant practices of either the film or TV industries, they provided a productive site for subsequent historical revisionism and theoretical reflection about how to make sense of historical moments of technological change and explore the cultural legacies of failed innovation.⁵⁸ Reexamining the curious episode of theater television also suggests that the imaginative scenarios and practical applications of the television medium have always exceeded its culturally naturalized place in the domestic living room. Television studies scholar Amanda D Lotz argued in 2020 that

if we are speaking of the future of television, it is clear it is a future of televisions. And with dutiful genuflection to the historians, yes, it has always been televisions. . . . There are many televisions available to study and there is no need to create hierarchies among them. They bring with them a variety of uses and cultural purposes and play varying roles in enacting and disseminating structures of power.⁵⁹

Echoing the recent excursions of cinema scholars into the underexplored histories of the nontheatrical film and the multiple sites of "useful cinema," historians of television might likewise usefully explore the ways in which the technological dead ends and failed commercial schemes littering the margins of television history can provide insights into the medium's complicated and unstable place in contemporary culture.⁶⁰

Reprising many issues and assumptions that characterized the debates over postwar theater television, our own era has brought renewed fears for the survival of theatrical exhibition as new streaming services disrupt traditional structures of film finance and exhibition. Just as the new online platforms have challenged the traditional business models and practices of the television industry, their aggressive moves into feature film production and distribution promise to disrupt the business of motion picture exhibition as well.⁶¹ Eschewing the conventional economic measuring sticks for program-makers of box-office revenues or broadcast ratings, emerging streaming services like Netflix, Amazon, and Apple have invested mightily in building their brands by courting A-list directors, lobbying for film festival

exposure, and mounting expensive campaigns for Academy Award nominations. The resulting anxiety among exhibitors has only become more urgent as the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered public cinemas across the globe. With film festivals retreating online, studios moving scheduled theatrical releases to streaming platforms, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences suspending the qualifying theatrical window for Oscar nominations, nervous exhibitors worry that major parts of their audience will be lost forever.⁶² As David Sterritt recently argued, the rise of so-called “virtual theater” schemes wherein independent exhibitors share revenues from on-line distribution of would-be theatrical films are unlikely to reverse what he saw as the “lengthy erosion of movie-theater hegemony” going back to the 1950s.⁶³ The perennially contested status and viability of theatrical exhibition, fiercely debated in the short-lived postwar episode of theater television, might soon be facing their most radical and consequential challenges.

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² Ralph B. Austrian, “The Showmanship Side of Television,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 49 (5, 1947): 395; emphasis in original.

³ *Ibid.*, 401.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Douglas Gomery, “Theatre Television: The Missing Link of Technological Change in the US Motion Picture Industry,” *The Velvet Light Trap* no. 21 (1985): 54–61; Douglas Gomery, “Failed Opportunities: The Integration of the Motion Picture and Television Industry,” *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9 (1984): 219–28, and Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 231–34.

⁶ The elastic phrase comes from Frank Daugherty, “The Movies Woo Television,” *Christian Science Monitor Magazine*, December 22, 1937, p. 3; on mechanical television, see Philip W. Sewell, *Television in the Age of Radio: Modernity, Imagination, and the Making of a Medium* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014); William Boddy, “‘Spread Like a Monster Blanket all Over the Country’: CBS and Television, 1929–33,” *Screen* 32 (2, 1991): 173–83; Robert H. Stern, “Regulatory Influences upon Television’s Development: Early Years Under the Federal Radio Commission,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 22 (3, July 1963): 347–62; on the transition to digital cinema, see William Boddy, “A Century of Electronic Cinema,” *Screen* 49 (2, 2008): 142–56.

⁷ Frank Waldrop and Joseph Borkin, *Television: A Struggle for Power* (NY: William Morrow, 1938), 130.

⁸ The classic work on widescreen cinema is John Belton, *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); on the marketing of widescreen and 3D cinema in the 1950s, see Ariel Rogers, *Cinematic Appeals: The Experience of New Movie Technologies* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2013).

- ⁹ Christopher Anderson, "Television and Hollywood in the 1940s," *Hollywood: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1999), 227–54.
- ¹⁰ Ralph B. Austrian, "Some Economic Aspects of Theater Television," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 44 (5, May 1945): 385.
- ¹¹ For a report of the Bell Labs demonstration, see "Far Off Speakers Seen as Well as Heard Here in a Test of Television," *New York Times*, April 8, 1927, pp. 1, 20; for a history of Picturephone's historical failure, see Kenneth Lipartito, "Picturephone and the Information Age: The Social Meaning of Failure," *Technology and Culture* 44 (1, 2003): 50–81.
- ¹² "Far Off Speakers," 20; Hoover's appearance via cable from Washington DC was followed by a vaudeville act brought by radio link from a Bell Labs facility in Whippany NJ; the *New York Times* noted that "it was the first vaudeville act that ever went on the air as a talking picture, and in its possibilities, it may be compared to Fred Ott's sneeze of more than thirty years ago."
- ¹³ On the military, industrial, and surveillance applications of television at the time, see Al Bernsohn, "Television Goes to Work," *Mechanix Illustrated*, 1947, <http://blog.modernmechanix.com/television-goes-to-work/>.
- ¹⁴ Timothy White, "Hollywood's Attempt to Appropriate Television: The Case of Paramount Pictures," in *Hollywood in the Age of Television*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1990), 149.
- ¹⁵ On the role of the hobbyist press on the popular image of television, see Keith Massie and Stephen D. Perry, "Hugo Gernsback and Radio Magazines: An Influential Intersection in Broadcast History," *Journal of Radio Studies* 9 (2002): 264–82; an example from an early Hugo Gernsback journal is H. Winfield Secor, "Television in the Theatre at Last!," *Everyday Science and Mechanics*, January 1932.
- ¹⁶ Milton MacKaye, "The Big Brawl: Hollywood vs. Television, Part 2," *Saturday Evening Post*, 224, no. 30, January 26, 1952, 119.
- ¹⁷ Milton MacKaye, "The Big Brawl: Hollywood vs. Television, Part 1," *Saturday Evening Post*, 224, no. 29, January 19, 1952, 18.
- ¹⁸ Austrian, "Some Economic Aspects of Theater Television," 378.
- ¹⁹ "Television Is Evolving at Slow but Sure Pace," *New York Times*, April 22, 1928.
- ²⁰ David Sarnoff, "Television," address to RCA stockholders' annual meeting, May 7, 1935, in RCA Institutes, *Television: Collected Addresses and Papers in the Future of the New Art and Its Recent Technical Developments*, Vol. 1 (NY: RCA Institutes Technical Press, June 1936), 1.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.
- ²² David Sarnoff, "RCA's Development of Television," statement delivered at annual stockholders meeting, April 7, 1936, in RCA Institutes, *Television: Collected Addresses and Papers in the Future of the New Art and Its Recent Technical Developments*, Vol. 1 (NY: RCA Institutes Technical Press, June 1936), 6.
- ²³ David Sarnoff, "Television in Advertising," address to Advertising Federation of America, Boston, June 29, 1936, in RCA Institutes, *Television: Collected Addresses and Papers in the Future of the New Art and Its Recent Technical Developments*, Vol. 1 (NY: RCA Institutes Technical Press, June 1936), 18.
- ²⁴ Gilbert Seldes, "The Errors of Television," *Atlantic*, May 1937.

- ²⁵ On the Paramount-CBS deal, see Jonathan Buchsbaum, "Zukor Buys Protection: The Paramount Stock Purchase of 1929," *Cinettracts* 2 (3-4, 1979): 49-62; Michele Hilmes, *Hollywood and Broadcasting: From Radio to Cable* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 41; Scophony in the United Kingdom and its US offshoot American Scophony were engaged in the manufacture of both theater TV equipment and receivers for domestic use; see statement by Arthur Levey, President, American Scophony in "The Nature of Television Programs," Radio Executives Club of New York, Television Seminar at NBC Studio 6B Radio City July 6, 1944, Mary Pickford Papers, file 1587, Special Collections, Herrick Library, Los Angeles.
- ²⁶ Paramount's Paul Raibourn and Fox's Earle Hines left the board of directors of American Scophony, preventing the company from undertaking any action; see "Scophony Suit," *Business Week*, December 22, 1945, pp. 90-91; on Arthur Levey's optimistic plans for theater television in alliance with Paramount and Fox, see Arthur Levey, "The Nature of Television Programs," on Paramount's relationship with DuMont, see Hilmes, *Hollywood and Broadcasting*, 118-20; Gary Newton Hess, *An Historical Study of the Du Mont Television Network* (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1960); David Weinstein, *The Forgotten Network: Dumont and the Birth of American Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).
- ²⁷ Ted Bergmann and Ira Skutch, *The DuMont Television Network: What Happened? A Significant Episode in the History of Broadcasting* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 81, 86.
- ²⁸ William S. Paley, "Radio and Entertainment," in *Radio and Its Future*, ed. Martin Codel (NY: Harpers, 1930), 65, 67.
- ²⁹ Austrian, "Some Economic Aspects of Theater Television," 378-80.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 381-82.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 380-81.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 383.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 384-85.
- ³⁴ Robert Conly, "The Promise of Television," *American Mercury*, July 1944, pp. 61-63.
- ³⁵ George Menton, "What's Ahead for the Motion Picture Industry?," *Magazine of Wall Street and Business Analyst*, May 19, 1951, p. 200.
- ³⁶ "Sports for Theater TV," *Business Week*, July 18, 1953, p. 76.
- ³⁷ Robert E. Sherwood, "Beyond the Talkies—Television," *Scribners* 86 (1, July 1929): 7.
- ³⁸ "Movie Theatres Grasp at TV," *Business Week*, May 21, 1951, p. 44.
- ³⁹ Douglas Gomery, "The Coming of Television and the 'Lost' Motion Picture Audience," *Journal of Film and Video* 37 (1985): 5-11.
- ⁴⁰ Rodney Luther, "Television and the Future of Motion Picture Exhibition," *Hollywood Quarterly*, 5 (2, winter 1950): 171-72; on the rapidly rising broadcast fees for major sporting events by 1950, see Gilbert Seldes, *The Great Audience* (NY: Viking, 1950), 163.
- ⁴¹ For contemporaneous descriptions of the three respective systems, see Ralph V. Little, "Developments in Large-Screen Television," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 51 (1, July 1948): 37-46; Richard Hodgson, "Theater Television

- System,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 52 (5, 1949): 540–48; E. Labin, “The Eidophor Method for Theater Television,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers* 54 (4, 1950): 393–406.
- ⁴² “Movie Theatres Grasp at TV,” 44.
- ⁴³ “Far Off Speakers,” 1.
- ⁴⁴ Austrian, “The Showmanship Side of Television,” 401.
- ⁴⁵ Hilmes, *Hollywood and Broadcasting*, 122; a promotional film for the 1955 GE event can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07FqZF_ecsg.
- ⁴⁶ The amount was reported by *Variety*, December 26, 1951, 7, cited in Kira Kitsopaniidou, “The Widescreen Revolution and 20th Century-Fox’s Eidophor in the 1950s,” *Film History* 15 (1, 2003): 32–56; on Eidophor, see Kira Kitsopaniidou, “Electronic Delivery of Alternative Contents in Cinemas Before the Digital Era: The Case of Theater Television in the US Exhibition Market in the 1940s and 1950s,” *Mise au Point* 4 (2012), <https://journals.openedition.org/map/775>; Johannes Heinrich, *The History of the Eidophor Large Screen Television Projector* (Regensburg: Gretag, 1989); Albert Abramson, *The History of Television, 1942–2000* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2003), 56, 85, 142, 184, 229; see also Labin, “The Eidophor Method for Theater Television,” 393–406; and Mike Harrison’s lecture on the history of Eidophor at <https://hackerworld.co/mike-harrison-exposes-hot-oil-and-high-voltage-of-ancient-live-projector>.
- ⁴⁷ On the public telecasting of professional boxing, see Anna McCarthy, “‘Like an Earthquake!’ Theater Television, Boxing, and the Black Public Sphere,” *Quarterly Review of Film & Video* 16 (3–4, 1997): 307–23.
- ⁴⁸ Eidophor’s successors include the 11,520-square foot AT&T Stadium Mitsubishi screen constructed in 2009, then the world’s largest screen, now ranked merely number twenty-nine in size globally. The current largest display in Suzhou China encompasses 172,220 square feet, although the definition of such mammoth contemporary screens blurs into other forms of architectural illumination and display.
- ⁴⁹ John Belton, “Digital Cinema: A False Revolution,” *October* 100 (2002): 113; Martin Barker places the start of the digital revival of theater television with the December 2006 livecast of New York’s Metropolitan Opera’s production of *The Magic Flute*; by 2009, *Screen Digest* predicted that revenues from such alternative content on twelve thousand global screens would top US\$500 million; see Martin Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema: The Remarkable Rise of Livecasting* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); John Wyver, *Screening the Royal Shakespeare Company: A Critical History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019); Bernadette Cochrane and Frances Bonner, “Screening from the Met, the NT, or the House: What Changes with the Live Relay,” *Adaptation* 7 (2, August 2014): 121–33, <https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/apu015>.
- ⁵⁰ Matthew Goodman, “Digital Era Ushers in Epic Cinema Changes,” *Sunday Times*, June 30, 2006, 11.
- ⁵¹ Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema*, 92–93.
- ⁵² John Belton, “Fox and 50 mm Film,” in *Widescreen Worldwide*, ed. John Belton, Sheldon Hall, and Steve Neale (Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2010), 12.

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- ⁵³ Thomas Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology: Tracking Digital Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 54.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30. The productive literature analyzing the often torturous paths of new media technologies includes Belton's 2002 "Digital Cinema: A False Revolution," where he warns that "we cannot look to the path taken by one technology to explain or understand that of another," rejecting the then-ubiquitous analogies between the launch of digital cinema and the earlier transition to the sound film; see Belton, "Digital Cinema," 98–114.
- ⁵⁵ Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 3; quoted in Susan Murray, "Reviving the Technical in Television History," in *Companion to the History of American Broadcasting*, ed. Aniko Bodroghkozy (NY: Blackwell, 2018), 204.
- ⁵⁶ Kenneth Lipartito, "Picturephone and the Information Age: The Social Meaning of Failure," *Technology and Culture* 44 (1, 2003): 78.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 57–58.
- ⁵⁸ This historiographic reflection includes Douglas Gomery, "Media Economics: Terms of Analysis," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 6 (1, 1989): 43–60; Douglas Gomery, "Rethinking Television Historiography," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 30 (2, 2000): 17–28; Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology*; Janet Wasko and Eileen R. Meehan. "Critical Crossroads or Parallel Routes? Political Economy and New Approaches to Studying Media Industries and Cultural Products," *Cinema Journal* 52 (3, 2013): 150–57; William Uricchio, "Film, Cinema, Television . . . Media?" *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 12 (3, 2014): 266–79.
- ⁵⁹ Amanda D. Lotz, "The Future of Televisions: A Response," *Media, Culture & Society* 42 (2020): 800–02.
- ⁶⁰ Some of this expanded field is explored in Ariel Rogers, *On the Screen: Displaying the Moving Image, 1926–42* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2019); Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson, eds., *Useful Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Patrick Vonderau, Bo Florin, and Nico De Klerk, eds., *Films that Sell: Moving Pictures and Advertising* (London: BFI/Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), and Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible, eds., *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ⁶¹ On the place of television in a multiplatform environment, see Amanda D. Lotz, "Teasing Apart Television Industry Disruption: Consequences of Meso-level Financing Practices before and after the US Multiplatform Era," *Media, Culture & Society* 41 (7, 2019): 923–38, and Amanda D. Lotz, *We Now Disrupt this Broadcast: How Cable Transformed Television and the Internet Revolutionized it All* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018).
- ⁶² On the response of film festival organizers to the pandemic, see Thom Powers, "Film Festivals Aren't Just Surviving Online, They're Creating a Better Future," *IndieWire*, May 16, 2020, <https://www.indiewire.com/2020/05/film-festivals-online-future-1202231417/>.
- ⁶³ David Sterritt, "Virtual Cinema," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 37 (2020): 505–507, doi:10.1080/10509208.2020.1772655.

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