Brunsdon, Charlotte, *Television Cities: Paris, London, Baltimore.* Duke University Press, 2018, 232 pp., 74 illustrations, $94.95 U.S., (hb), ISBN 978-0-8223-6894-6.

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In *Television Cities,* Charlotte Brunsdon analyzes the representation of Paris, London and Baltimore on television fiction from the early 1960s to this day. According to Brunsdon, in contrast to wide scholarly work on the depiction of the city in cinema (Barber, 2002; Brunsdon, 2007; Mennel, 2008[1]), a thorough study of the representation of the city on the small screen was still lacking. Challenging the common characterization of television as a mainly suburban and domestic media, Brunsdon proposes to look at the way television made the city visible through multiple narrative and technological devices. Examining central fiction TV shows identified with those three cities, Brunsdon analyzes how television re-creates the urban landscape for viewers. Instead of the more common association between television and the "imagined nation," Brunsdon attempts to explore how major social, economical and cultural changes are reflected in the televisual depiction of the city.

The book is composed of a theoretical introduction presenting the rationale behind the book and three chapters, each of them presenting a "television city" as a case study. The first chapter, "The Modernity of Maigret's Paris," analyzes the televisual representation of Paris in BBC's detective series *Maigret,* broadcast from 1960-1963. Conceived as a prestigious project with high production values, the adaptation of George Simenon's stories was highly popular in Britain, but according to Brunsdon it was also produced with an eye for an international market. Combining visual analysis with rich archival work, the chapter dissects the televisual construction of Paris as a place mediating the encounter with modernity. Brunsdon's description of the economic and technological calculations of "producing" Paris for British viewers gives a very interesting take on media practices and consumer culture from an historical perspective. The production efforts to guarantee the supply of French cigarettes and alcoholic drinks for filming the interiors represents an historical document on the restricted circulation of goods and people at that stage of globalization.

Chapter two, "Living-Room London," examines the televisual construction of London from 1968 to 2010 through the analysis of British television series produced during this period. The case studies selected in this chapter explore the forms in which television elaborates the images of an Old imperial London within the context of a post-imperial present. The chapter begins with an examination of Victorian London in Dickens's adaptations to television and moves to explore the representation of multiethnic and multicultural London neighbors in TV shows like *East Enders*

(1985-), *Desmond's* (1989-1994) and *Holding On* (1997). Dickensian London as it appears on the television set emphasizes the centrality of the river Thames and its surroundings in the action, plot and location. According to Brunsdon, the adaptation of Dickens's London functioned as a critique of social and moral values that goes beyond the nineteenth century, echoing into the transformation in the economy and culture during the conservative period (1979-1997). The movement of television set to new neighbors during the 1980s reflects, according the author, the incorporation of a more mundane everyday reality related to post-colonial, multi-ethnic London with its complexities, ambiguities and tensions. The last section of the chapter examines the representation of London in twenty-first-century TV drama. The television series *Sherlock* (2010-), *Ripper Street* (2012-2016) and *Call the Midwife* (2012-) are seen by the author as a return to London as a Dickensian city on and outside the small screen. If the twenty-first-century economy resembles nineteenth-century London with the huge gaps between social classes, it also encourages the return to the past in terms of branding TV products in a marketable, recognizable form.

Chapter three, "Portable Cities: Baltimore," discusses the fictional construction of Baltimore through the analysis of three police television series focusing on the east coast city: *Homicide* (1996-1999), *The Corner* (2000) and *The Wire* (2002-2008). All three series were created by David Simon and were praised for their uncompromising realism and complex description of Baltimore's social and urban texture. The chapter open ups with a sparkling analogy between global television production and consumption practices in the first decades of the twenty-first century and the decadence experienced by small or middle seaport cities with the containerization process of the shipping industry. Much of the chapter is focused on *The Wire*, a highly acclaimed crime TV series which became the focus of several academic studies. Despite the realistic editing techniques, narrative structure, and rhythm, Brunsdon supports Linda Williams's claims about *The Wire*'s generic melodramatic elements that are wisely integrated into a language and esthetics of realism.[2]

The argument about the centrality of the city on the small screen and the attention given to televisual representation of the city are the major theoretical contributions of this book. However, the cases explored in it do not completely fulfill the promise of the book. Although the author looks at the television city to unravel the notion that television is a "nation"-centered medium, the cases analyzed in chapters one and two contradict that claim. London and Paris, both cities examined in those chapters, are television series produced in the UK mainly for British audiences reducing the scope of the analysis mostly to a single national case study. As the author hints, a future work on television cities incorporating broader geographical and cultural horizons could shed more light on the small screen cities during the nationally regulated terrestrial television period (1950-1990).

The choice of Baltimore as the third television city of this book seems to be an appropriate choice since it signals the major changes in the urban landscape and its representation on the small screen during the last two decades. The analysis of David Simon's TV series highlights the innovative stylistic and narrative techniques of crime series as well as the generic continuities that connect them to a deeper history of television fiction. The closing of the book after "Portable Cities: Baltimore" seems to be rather abrupt. It is perhaps after this well elaborated chapter that a concluding chapter dovetailing the main theoretical and historical arguments made over the course of the book was needed. Despite this, *Television Cities* is a well written and well researched

book that opens new prospects for television researchers on the history and the future of the medium.

NOTES

[1] Stephen Barber, *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002); Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema: The Cinematic City Since 1945* (London: British Film Institute, 2007); Barbara Caroline Mennel, *Cities and Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2008).

[2] Linda Williams, *On* The Wire (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

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