



Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity, and Capitalism in 1990s Japan

Gabriella Lukács

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In *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves*, Gabriella Lukács analyzes the development of a new primetime serial called “trendy drama” as the Japanese television industry’s ingenious response to market fragmentation. Much like the HBO hit *Sex and the City*, trendy dramas feature well-heeled young sophisticates enjoying consumer-oriented lifestyles while managing their unruly love lives. Integrating a political-economic analysis of television production with reception research, Lukács suggests that the trendy drama marked a shift in the Japanese television industry from offering story-driven entertainment to producing lifestyle-oriented programming. She interprets the new televisual preoccupation with consumer trends not as a sign of the medium’s downfall, but as a savvy strategy to appeal to viewers who increasingly demand entertainment that feels more personal than mass-produced fare. After all, what the producers of trendy dramas realized in the late 1980s was that taste and lifestyle were sources of identification that could be manipulated to satisfy mass and niche demands more easily than could conventional marketing criteria such as generation or gender. Lukács argues that by capitalizing on the semantic fluidity of the notion of lifestyle, commercial television networks were capable of uniting viewers into new affective alliances that, in turn, helped them bury anxieties over changing class relations in the wake of the prolonged economic recession.

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