

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Terry Flew, *Global Creative Industries*. 2013. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 189 pp., \$76.95 hardcover (978-0-7456-4839-2)

In *Global Creative Industries*, Communication and Media Studies scholar Terry Flew draws on a breadth of literature to gauge the degree to which it would be possible to conceive of the creative industries as truly global in scale. This examination is undertaken through six chapters: 1) Industries, 2) Production, 3) Consumption, 4) Markets, 5) Places, and 6) Policies. Throughout the book, Flew draws upon a wide range of concepts and traditions, as well as various case studies, and attempts to pool them coherently under the umbrella of the global.

In “Industries,” the first chapter of the book, Flew compares the various categorizations of creative industries, such as Hesmondhalgh’s Symbolic Texts Model, the UK DCMS model, Throsby’s Concentric Circles model, the WIPO Copyright Model and the UNCTAD model for Creative Industries. He uses this comparison to assert that “creative industries sit within a complex ecology of activities, which have elements that are connected and those that are profoundly different” (p. 15). Flew considers various case studies of fields within the creative industries: by looking at the fashion industry, for example, he examines the baggage that comes with labelling an industry creative. He considers the creative work involved in the fashion industry, such as the designing of fashion goods; but also the not-so-creative dimensions of the industry, namely the global distribution of fashion items. He refers to the latter type of work as constitutive of the ecology in which creative work is embedded. Flew is critical of the fact that existing social scientific studies of the creative industries tend to approach these on a national scale. As an alternative, he promotes more global-scale frameworks such as the UNCTAD model and the UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics.

Having dealt with mainstream theoretical frameworks on the creative industries (national/global in scale), Flew’s subsequent chapters examine, always with a global outlook, creative production and then processes of consumption. His main focus in the second chapter, “Production,” is the “blurring of lines between producers and consumers” (p. 33). His discussion of production is two-levelled: first he focuses on the conditions in which creative workers operate, the drivers of creative

production; he then considers the technological conditions that have enabled the reproduction of culture by consumers: “a fusion of digital technologies and human creativity” (p. 51). In the subsequent chapter, “Consumption,” Flew begins his discussion by outlining the work of key theorists including Marx (on use-value and exchange-value), Veblen (on the trickledown effect of aesthetic standards and consumption habits), Simmel (on the blasé attitude of urbanites), Baudrillard (on his introduction of sign-value), and finally Bourdieu (on cultural capital). When reading this specific chapter, one might wonder how and why Flew chose to engage with the above theorists, and how and why he chose to do it so briefly (each is given a page-and-a-half on average). The transition between pages, discussions, and chapters is seamless, but I remain undecided on whether this is a credit to Flew’s writing or a reflection of a breadth-over-depth level of engagement. Still, Flew maps out the development of these traditions in light of contemporary processes of globalization, reviewing literature on cultural homogenization (and its critics), glocalization, and the political nature of cultural consumption and productive consumption. He argues that the concept of a global culture (pertaining to global creative industries) would make sense if we conceive of culture as “symbolic or signifying systems through which social identities are formed” (p. 72).

The discussion of producing and consuming (reproducing) culture then moves into a market-oriented analysis. The fourth chapter, “Markets,” is where Flew primarily relies on Hirschman’s concepts of exit and voice as tools through which to understand the production and consumption of culture within the market setting and the power dynamics reflected in these markets. Placing markets in their geographical contexts is the subsequent chapter, “Places.” Here, the author reviews literature on the cultural economy of cities and the role relationships between cities play in giving rise to creative clusters. As an example, he argues that Hollywood would not have come to be what it is today were it not for New York’s previous dominance of creative industries in the US. Flew then unpacks some of the exclusionary tendencies of creative cities, using this as an introduction to the final chapter, “Policies.” It is here that Flew’s policy oriented background comes to the fore: indeed, the author has carried out extensive policy related work on the creative industries. He deals with the chicken-and-egg question of what comes first: creative industries or policies promoting the creative industries. Flew is particularly keen to focus on the specificities of places and markets and their relationship with processes of production and consumption: He refers to the case of Nollywood and his own work on cultural policy in Brisbane towards delivering the central argument of his final chapter.

Cultural policy, according to Flew, should maintain: a) the fine balance between a *laissez-faire* attitude towards the informal economy through which cultural industries develop, and b) the requirement to formalize such arrangements to the extent that this formalization is not detrimental to the emerging industries in cities.

Global Creative Industries may be relevant for early-career social science researchers or research students in the field of cultural sociology; it could also be informative to policy makers working in the field of cultural production. The breadth of literature drawn on makes for descriptive, rather than critical, engagement. Flew touches on masses of literature only fleetingly in less than 200 pages. For instance, one might wonder why the production of culture perspective, for example, has not been engaged with much — it would certainly seem logical to do so. Having said that, the author clearly states that the primary goal of *Global Creative Industries* is not to be an in-depth engagement with relevant literature, but to provide an assessment of how realistic it would be to conceive of the industries in question as truly global in nature. While Flew does indeed set a framework that allows for a global understanding of these industries, there remains a lingering feeling that in some instances, like the very brief case studies he provides, Flew's promotion of the global is not adequately reconciled with local specificities informed by a more sociological perspective.

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