

Book Review: *Collaborative Production in the Creative Industries*, Graham, J. and Gandini, A. (eds), University of Westminster Press, London, 2017. 215 pages. ISBN: 978-1-911534-28-0

Published as Flaherty, R, 'Book Review: Collaborative Production in the Creative Industries' (2018) 12(3) Cultural Sociology 422

'Collaborative Production in the Creative Industries' is a stimulating and thought-provoking volume of selected essays focusing on creative labour and production that addresses the gap in knowledge regarding its collaborative rather than individual forms. It was born out of work done at The Creative Industries and Collaborative Production Symposium in 2015, where many of the authors presented and discussed their ideas on the "scope, nature and future of collaborative production in the creative industries" (5). The authors of the ten selected essays are experts in their fields, which cover digital humanities, creative industries, media culture and production, social and political sciences, information science and psychology. This enables this work to have a broad sociological scope while maintaining an impressive depth of knowledge and analysis.

Through discussion of a variety of contemporary formats of cultural production such as online self-publication on Wattpad and Tumblr (Chapters 4 and 8), photobooks (Chapter 5), and TV production by JJ Abrams (Chapter 6), this book addresses two main lines of argument. The first is a response to the research done on the specific traits and methods used in the production of contemporary media, especially the importance of networking for those working in the creative industries. It adds to the discussion (Brooker, 2003 and Mayer, Banks and Caldwell, 2009) on the importance of the "managerialised coordination" (5) of artists coming together in the hope that collaboration will improve their value, both personally and professionally. While the stereotype of the creative artist is one that works alone – for example, a writer or director – these roles usually require some form of collaboration with others for success. Writers need publishers, directors need producers, and TV shows need showrunners. This relationship is the first topic of concern.

The second line of argument is that regarding the political economy of creative works. Given the recent move towards usage of casual and insecure contracts of employment in this field, there is a consequential effect on such neoliberal ideas as sense of self-worth and individualisation (Curtin and Sanson, 2016). This collection contributes to the 'cybertarian' dialogue (Millar, 2016) on the needs of artists to focus both on their own work and on how that work operates within the network of others in their field. In order to achieve success and relevance, they must collaborate well with others, yet little research has previously been done on the issue of competition on this market. When each artist is vying for fewer and less stable job opportunities, collaboration and competition seem to be both vital and in direct opposition to each other. By investigating this, the authors seek to argue that there is a specific change happening to the structure and culture of production within the creative industries. The increased need for collaboration is recognised by the growth in social platforms such as Wattpad that aim to assist writers that wish to work together. However, by promoting collaborative work, there are many instances where by affecting competition within the market this can also lead to exploitation.

This book will make a meaningful impact on the current research being undertaken by scholars within the sociological aspect of the creative industries, as well as interdisciplinary researchers working within related fields such as socio-legal studies. While this reviewer is usually wary of

drawing conclusions from disparate case studies, it is undeniable that production and creativity is transforming with the growth in blogs, social media and independent publishers. By focusing on these topics, this work provides important academic awareness of new forms of work, and is likely to be of interest to policy work within those fields. This is especially important during the current debate in the European Parliament about how the Digital Single Market should operate, concerning protection for creative workers.

To develop the arguments further, it would be interesting to see this research updated with reference to competition, economics and new business models within the creative industries. This research discusses competition as an antagonist to collaboration, which opens a space in the debate for exploration of exactly how competition affects these types of creative spaces. Further, while this work has a well-written and structured introduction, it could benefit from a conclusion chapter to draw the themes together and permit the reader to know where these researchers believe their work is headed.

Ruth Flaherty, University of East Anglia Law School
713 words

Reference List

Brooker, Will (2003) *The Audience Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge

Curtin, Michael & Sanson, Kevin (eds) (2016) *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Mayer, Vicki, Banks, Miranda & Caldwell, John (eds) (2009) *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*. London: Routledge

Millar, Robin (2016) 'Cybertarian Flexibility – Where Prosumers Joint the Cognitariat, All That Us Scholarship Melts Into Air' in Curtin, Michael & Sanson, Kevin (eds) (2016) *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, pp. 19-32