

Surrender to the Void
Life after Creative Industries

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Terry Flew

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This new book on creative industries opens with an evocation of the world of *Mad Men*, the fictional Sterling Cooper advertising agency, along with its real life Manhattan neighbours Andy Warhol, the Velvet Underground and the Factory. The first and the last discussion of a real cultural milieu in the book, it signals 'a world about to change'. (1) The extent to which a highly self-conscious television period piece made in 2007 can provide a 'snapshot' of the stirrings of far-reaching social, political, economic and cultural change is not clear—but the message is. The ad agency was balancing 'creativity and commerce' just as Warhol's Factory refused 'the modernist assumption' of the 'separation of art and commerce'. (1) This might have come as a surprise to the Bohemian avant-garde gathered to hear the Velvets' first shocking performance at the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*—they thought they were overcoming the separation of art and life. Rather than the martinis, chain

smoking and interesting hairdos about which Flew wanes nostalgic, a more apt scene to open the book comes at the end of season five of *Mad Men*. Don Draper, sensing a changing world, puts on, begins to listen to, then abruptly takes off, the Beatles' *Tomorrow Never Knows*. Don is happy to shift product but he's not buying into the counter-cultural dream. Indeed, as the rest of the book's introduction makes clear, it is the economic impact of this explosion of commercial creative culture that is crucial, and certainly not that branch of cultural studies which claimed to articulate the sixties' revolutionary promise. The counter-culture did not sell out, it was always working in the creative industries.

Though the term 'creative industries' is now widely used, its agenda has lacked a book length exposition. John Hartley's *Creative Industries* (2005) is an edited collection prefaced by a eulogy to the rise and rise of the citizen-consumer, followed by many chapters directly contradicting or at least confusing this message. Stuart Cunningham's work circulates on the margins between academic and 'grey' policy literature. Terry Flew, publishing across the fields of media, cultural studies and cultural geography, seems ideal for the task of outlining the dynamics, possibilities and challenges facing the creative industries in the next decade. This is not the book we get. Unlike in David Hesmondhalgh's *The Cultural Industries*, there are no detailed accounts of the workings of creative industries and their various sub-sectors, nor any case studies or sustained conceptual or historical accounts of the complex social changes underpinning the creative industries. What we get, from introduction to conclusion, is a series of running battles between the author and all those, mostly in cultural studies, who are critical of the creative industries. The result is a rather airless book, one no policy-maker would read (who cares what a bunch of cultural lefties say?) and of which students will struggle to make sense. It's rather like a parliamentary debate, lots of ding-dong arguments but very difficult to follow if you are not already immersed in the context.¹

The book's textbook mode—giving 'an empirical account of the key concepts related to the creative industries' (2)—sits awkwardly with its proselytising second aim—an 'historical account of the creative industries as a discursive concept'. (2) If the first aim concerns a set of activities with various social, cultural and economic conditions and outcomes, the second concerns a policy and academic agenda which makes (positive) normative claims about them. In textbook mode the book

summarises well-known academic and policy work about the peculiarities of cultural or creative products—their riskiness, their use of flexible creative labour, the marketing and management strategies used to overcome this and so on. But this is distorted by the constant need to defend the normative claims of the creative industries agenda; not just to describe them but to describe them as a good thing.

The world-changing scenario of mid-1960s Manhattan immediately shifts three decades later to Britain's New Labour, whose invention of the term 'creative industries' somehow set the seal on these global transformations. Flew claims that creative industries: 'is somewhat unusual as a concept in social and cultural theory as it has its origins in policy discourse'. (2) This is rather tendentious. Many designations originating within policy make their way as objects of investigation into social and cultural theory—'social exclusion', 'consumer choice', 'privatisation' or 'classless society' for example. These have proliferated further since the rise of policy think tanks over the last thirty years or so. Some are passing fads, some have more traction. Whether they become robust concepts depends on how they survive the rigorous testing of thought and debate. The creative industries began not as a concept but as a tactical political manoeuvre by the UK's Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to secure more funding for culture from the Treasury. The replacement of 'cultural' by 'creative' may be symptomatic of more profound economic and cultural shifts—something this book quite legitimately argues for—but it was never meant to carry the freight of a full-blown theoretical concept. It was in academic writing associated with Terry Flew and his colleagues at the Centre for Creative Industries and Innovation at Queensland University of Technology (CCI) that it was fleshed out as a sociocultural concept. It is significant that this is never mentioned in the book.

Chapter one outlines New Labour's introduction of the term 'creative industries' within policy discourse. A brief summary of Foucault's 'classic account of discourse analysis' (Foucault is a regular if contentious visitor to this book) and a 'lit. review' paragraph on policy studies are passed over without examination. This is a shame because it skips a key aspect of Foucauldian discourse analysis and of the cultural policy studies school of which Flew is part. 'Governmentality' is the power to name and classify and to assemble people and things around a particular project of government. If creative industries subsequently became a concept, then it did so

in order to take advantage of this on-going policy project. The objections to creative industries were two-fold. First, that it was incoherent as a concept. Briefly, 'creativity' was far too vague to characterise this particular industry—were not science, health, financial services creative?—and it consequently failed to identify the specificity of the object (its cultural element) thus undermining its effectiveness as policy. Second, that as a cultural and economic strategy for the United Kingdom's future it was either misplaced (it could never deliver on its economic promises) or undesirable (it reduced culture to economics). It was perfectly possible to take the first position and not the second; indeed, those arguing for the 'cultural industries' did this, as did many academics and consultants, who wanted to take (what they considered) an incoherent term and make it adequately describe this sector. This possibility is not considered in the book and there is a clear reason why not.

The 'open secret' (as Slavoj Žižek would say) for most academics reading this book is that in picking up the term 'creative industries' CCI were not just fleshing out a policy term into a full-blown concept, they were developing a brand used to promote a re-vamped arts faculty and a newly constructed 'creative campus'. This brand did not just rely on the growth in size and profile of the creative industry sector—new careers, new skills, new research opportunities—but on the profile of the policy term. There was nothing new about New Labour's identification of the increased economic importance of culture or the tendencies to convergence brought about by digitalisation—these were already well rehearsed in the cultural industries literature of the 1980s and 1990s. What was important was the brand value of the term 'creative industries' when embraced by a high profile government and successfully (if unexpectedly) exported around the globe. The need to retain the brand meant the two objections—its conceptual confusion and its political undesirability or unfeasibility—must be rolled together and rejected as one. Objections to the 'creative industries' as a concept have to be characterised as objections to the creative industries as a sector. So when Flew worries about the current UK government turning away from creative industries and warns of 'Wimbledonisation'—'where Britain retains a strong symbolic association with the field, even where most of the ownership and action has moved elsewhere' (31)—he is not (presumably) expecting one of the world's most influential sectors to up sticks and move to Asia. He is worried that the brand might move elsewhere. If it is

abandoned or marginalised in its policy homeland, the problem cannot lie with the concept but with that declining polity which has missed the wave of the future.

These two moments, the explosion of commercial popular culture and its eventual recognition at the level of policy, frame the book. They also provide the structural binary that divides the field between creative industry supporters and its critics in cultural studies and the critical humanities (economists just get on with it). The critics are engaged in a normative attack on the creative industries as a ‘Trojan horse’ for neoliberalism and are thus the main focus of the book’s polemical engagement. The binary is in effect double. First, that ‘between those who see popular culture as an essentially democratising force in society and those who understand it in more critical and ideological terms’. (7) Second, between those who wish to understand this growing sector in order to:

advise policy makers and those in these industries how they may work better in terms of economic indicators such as employment, sales and exports, [and those whose] purpose is to better understand [them] in order to more effectively critique their social and cultural impacts. (7)

These binaries allow Flew to deflect all criticisms of the creative industries—even those concerned with its conceptual coherence—into the camp of either those refusing democratic popular culture (arts and cultural elitists/traditionalists) or of the ‘revolutionary romantics’ (186) who refuse any truck with capitalist policy-making—or, indeed, both.

The notion that one can both embrace *and* be critical of popular culture, just as one can be critically opposed to a particular policy practice and its impacts (such as the creative industries agenda) *and* seek to change it to a different one, is simply not possible according to Flew’s mutually exclusive binary system. If, for example, one were to acknowledge the transformative power of popular culture and suggest that its reduction to a narrowly economic agenda is not desirable, then the creative industries brand would be in serious jeopardy, and so such a position is disallowed.

In *The Guardian* recently Jarvis Cocker of Pulp wrote of the Beatles:

Four working-class boys from Liverpool who showed that not only could they create art that stood comparison with that produced by ‘the establishment’—they could create art that *pissed all over it*. From the ranks of the supposedly uncouth, unwashed barbarians came the greatest

creative force of the 20th century. It wasn't meant to be that way. It wasn't officially sanctioned. But it happened—and that gave countless others from similar backgrounds the nerve to try it themselves. Their effect on music and society at large is incalculable.²

The incalculable effect cannot be reduced to the profit Don Draper might recoup. Its economic effects are enormous, so much is clear, but they are also ambiguous, double edged. The same can be said of their social and cultural impacts. The creative industries agenda, as outlined in this book, simply cannot produce such a nuanced understanding of the dynamics and effects of the rise of popular culture, nor of finding ways to intervene in this growing sector for a range of economic, cultural and social purposes. Instead, it consists in accepting every development in commercial popular culture as completely legitimate and desirable and every government policy to support this as something to be welcomed without reserve and facilitated as best we can. This constant labelling of all critical thinking as 'revolutionary romanticism' or (more prosaically) 'Marxist' corresponds to the violence inherent in the governmental ability to designate and assemble people and things in policy discourse, and delegitimise those outside this designation. It is a form of conceptual violence dedicated to the protection of a brand, which will refute the critics *by any means necessary*.

This conceptual violence can be found in the argumentative tropes used by Flew. There is the use of lists or thematic headings to summarise different strands of thought, as in a textbook. They give the cumulative impression of a body of evidence in favour of the creative industries but on closer inspection are often highly contentious, tangential or directly opposed to the overall thesis. In the chapter on public policy where we might expect a sustained analysis of the emergence of the creative industries we get a list of ten factors that when added up are supposed to make creative industries (for the doubters the last section is a critique of those who would call this neoliberalism). In chapter three the intellectual antecedents of the creative industries concept are itemised. From the Frankfurt School and its critics we move to 'political economy', then to 'cultural studies', then 'cultural economic geography', 'cultural and institutional economics' and, finally, 'production of culture/cultural economy'. These headings may just work in a textbook overview of different approaches to culture and economy but here their arguments are all lined

up as milestones on the road to the creative industries moment. We are presented with a series of ill-digested summaries whose consequences for the overall thesis are not examined: what is important for Flew is that they somehow discuss culture and economy together and therefore must legitimate the creative industries agenda.

A second trope is using authors who are otherwise critical (or who could be assumed to be critical) of the creative industries agenda to make the argument in its favour. Thus the Frankfurt School is taken to task for failing to understand the complexities and contradictions of the cultural industries, but the authors used to do this (Nick Garnham, Bernard Miege, Bill Ryan) are writing in the Marxist tradition, would vehemently resist being roped into a creative industries agenda and are most likely to be first to be thrown into the revolutionary romantic gulag. Jean Baudrillard is used to criticise Marx's use/exchange value couplet in favour of sign value and thus the possibility of a cultural commodity. But the use to which this is put by Baudrillard—a highly critical account of the economy of the sign—is nowhere to be seen. Marcus Westbury and Ben Eltham are enlisted to critique subsidies for large-scale arts institutions, but their main point about subsidies for smaller organisations is dropped. The most egregious example (other than Foucault, as we shall see) is the use of Hesmondhalgh (labelled throughout the book as Marxist and thus carefully quarantined) to refute his fellow Marxists (such as Marurizio Lazzarato and Angela McRobbie) arguing that the creative workforce is part of a new 'precariat'. Hesmondhalgh's telling critique of the proposed alliance between those in precarious labour—the Filipino cleaning woman and the harassed new media worker—is used to reject the wider critique of the degradation of labour conditions in the creative industries, even though Hesmondhalgh has published extensively arguing this very point.³

A third trope Flew uses is the 'neutral' textbook form, to lay out literature critical of the creative industries without addressing its specific points, and then present more favourable literature as if this were a corrective to the former. This is made worse when crucial evidence in favour of the creative industries is drawn from Flew's CCI colleagues without this being acknowledged. Combined, these tropes make for a disconcerting book, with its arguments morphing like an Escher drawing.

The chapter 'Globalisation, Cities and Creative Spaces', for example, is a fairly standard summary of the literature on how cities bring locational advantages to creative industries—focusing mostly on Allen Scott. It makes some reasonable points about the conceptual confusion around creative clusters and how top-down clusters have not been successful policy-wise. The final section of the chapter discusses Richard Florida's creative class thesis as a further example of how urban policy might be used to attract professionals and thus promote creative industries. With one page to go, Flew notes the objections to Florida: technical ones about cause and effect (does the urban milieu come before or after the creative class?) and political ones about gentrification. These critiques are standard for critics of 'creative cities' and one might expect a defence of a concept so frequently linked with creative industries. But no. Gentrification is the displacement by creative professionals of small-scale cultural producers and other vulnerable users in favour of high-end consumption-led development. This has been the contention at least since Sharon Zukin set out to explore the Lower Manhattan of Warhol and Sterling Cooper,⁴ and it can be seen in the 'artists against Florida' demonstrations in Toronto. But for Flew—after pages summarising Allen Scott's urban creative economies and with insert boxes about Creative London—creative class arguments become equated with 'hipsterisation strategies' and 'arts and culture' strategies dubiously claiming 'to benefit the wider economy'. (156) The consequence of promoting this line is that Jamie Peck's withering critique of both Florida and the creative industries agenda is reduced to a simple attack on investment in 'arts and culture'. If the creative cities agenda is reduced to arts, culture and 'hipsterisation', it is in the suburbs and unfashionable non-creative cities (such as Las Vegas!) that creative industry growth is happening. The evidence for this—ignoring the overwhelming mass of empirical evidence showing that the concentration of creative industries remains in large metropolitan centres—comes from Terry Flew himself and his colleagues, along with Chris Gibson who is on record as strongly opposing the idea of creative industries. Criticisms of gentrification and consumption-led development are instead used to justify a thesis—the rise of the creative suburbs—for which they were never intended, but this is, as we have seen, a key trope in the book. The rapid morph from the relational advantage of cities for creative industries to a deflection of the gentrification critique onto the 'hipster' eulogised on the very first page of the

book is simply driven by the fear that Flew might be inadvertently favouring metropolitan arts and culture over the everyday creativity of the suburbs.

The division between those for and against popular culture informs an assumption that arts policies are intrinsically elitist and that all attempts to assert cultural value within the economics of the creative industries—as the cultural industries approach did—is a surreptitious arts policy. Garnham, for example, is used as a critic of traditional cultural policy—that subsidies to protect art from the market can only be reactive and ineffectual. But this was part of his argument for an intervention within the economy, using economic tools, to secure cultural policy outcomes from that intervention. This cultural industries agenda is nowhere discussed, other than as a stepping-stone to that of the full recognition of the creative industries agenda.

This fear of culture pervades the highly technical discussion on defining the creative industries (one for the enthusiasts this chapter). The problem with the DCMS list is that it is just a list—how do all these activities hang together? Two solutions emerge. The first, taken by Will Hutton (and the European Union), consists of trying to identify a specifically cultural sector and a wider creative sector. This model derives from David Throsby (an economist, a group otherwise held not to concern themselves with such niceties) whose concentric circle model has core arts at the centre followed by cultural industries and creative industries. The problem with these models is that a set of activities associated with the traditional arts is held both to involve a purer creativity and provide the original input into the value chain. Flew, and many others (including myself) disagree with this. However, Hutton's intent (like the somewhat fudged European Union version) was to identify products that were primarily cultural ('expressive value') and those that included cultural/expressive inputs but also had material-functional elements. There are lots of problems with this account, but it is an attempt to get over the problem that 'creative' is far too broad a concept and that policy might need to identify a more specific sector whose primary product is 'cultural'.

Hutton clarifies:

Expressive value (in the sense of symbolic value) is represented in software programs and video games such as the *Grand Theft Auto* and

Metal Gear [and in] the range of user-generated material around on the internet. [Quoted in Flew (27)]

For Flew, this distinction between expressive and functional value is one that is 'difficult to maintain', (27) and one that he cannot accept. He suggests that the distinction reflects a deeper tension in the creative industries concept in the United Kingdom: is it 'an economic policy associated with promoting generating [*sic*] successful industries and new forms of IP' or a 'policy to support the arts and cultural sectors'? For Flew, Hutton's argument is clearly a case of the latter, and he associates Hutton with Tessa Jowell at the DCMS and her attempt to re-assert 'excellence in the arts'. Despite Hutton's explicit plea for expressive value not to be equated with traditional art forms, and his invocation of video games and social media, Flew simply dismisses 'expressive value' as a 'traditional conception of aesthetics'. Flew persists, how would you identify expressive value in media? In genre? 'Drama and documentary but not in soaps'? But what about comedy? And 'if there is expressive value in *Metal Gear*, then why not in *Top Gear*?' (28) It is not clear who exactly Flew is having an argument with here. The answer to where expressive value lies is 'content'. That is, all of the above. Hutton is not seeking to exclude Jeremy Clarkson and Michael McIntyre, just suggesting they might differ from a Dyson vacuum cleaner.

The second solution, preferred by Flew, is referred to as the NESTA model (but was in fact authored by Burns Owens Partnership, Manchester's Creative Industries Development Service and myself).⁵ With this model, there is no distinction between cultural and creative, just between different business models—experiences (live), originals (one offs), creative services (design and so on) and content (media, games). Rather than an original invention, the model draws on some well-established distinctions between 'edit and flow', 'complex and simple' (in the sense of numbers of people involved in production) products that cultural industries literature has long rehearsed. Flew's assertion that the NESTA model was there simply to generate successful industries is incorrect. The NESTA model was there to facilitate policy decisions. If you want employment growth, one might choose services or content. Other priorities (such as urban regeneration) might emphasise museums or art or live music. That is, the model did not flatten all to a list but allowed intelligent policy choices to be made across a range of priorities based on different economic

dynamics. Flew sees it as simply a taxonomy to direct economic investment; for Flew having a cultural and an economic policy is simply not thinkable.

This is not to say that Flew has no cultural policy, it is just that is not made explicit:

The DCMS Mapping Documents were described as ‘nothing less than a new manifesto for cultural studies’ (Hartley, 2003:118), as they flattened the traditional hierarchies of cultural authority and privilege, sitting art alongside architecture, software with Shakespeare, and Big Brother with the British Museum. Alas, it was not to last. (22)

The quote is revealing. It endorses the cultural policy approach famously associated with John Hartley but with no explicit exposition or discussion, and it uses yet another CCI author as an authority without acknowledging their affiliation. More crucially, this ‘flattening’ of authority relates purely to the matter of public subsidy—art, Shakespeare and the British Museum now have to slug it out on the market with *Big Brother*, software and (rather oddly) architecture. That is, the market decides everything in the end. Leaving aside that this was never anywhere near the intentions of New Labour, this single criterion of justification is precisely the basis of that accusation of neoliberalism and populism levelled by the creative industry critics. But its implicit, almost utopian presence points to something else—the combination in CCI between a governmentality approach when it comes to art and publicly funded culture (exemplified by Tony Bennett’s ‘culture is the object and instrument of government’, quoted by Flew) but a Hartley-esque celebratory approach when it comes to popular culture. Why the latter can’t be governmental is not clear, but in this account it sounds suspiciously like James Murdoch’s claim at the 2009 Edinburgh Television festival that ‘profit is the only guarantee of independence’.

Which takes us to the more polemical final chapters. By the time we get to the last chapter on public policy it has been established that cultural industries are either a precursor to the more full-developed creative industries or are a lapse into an art-centred public subsidy policy. That settled, Flew moves on to enumerate the diverse currents which have now converged onto the new creative industries—from ‘technological change’, the ‘impact of political shifts’, onto ‘re-thinking innovation policy’ and the ‘new politics of copyright’. There remain only the die-hards who

associate creative industries with neoliberalism to deal with, which is the subject of the final section and conclusion.

The distinction between empirical description and discursive construct outlined at the beginning has now been simplified: 'the emergence of creative industries policy discourse [is] a response to wider trends in media and cultural policy'. (176) But there are others (the 'critical humanities' of course) who see it 'less as a descriptive category of a distinctive way of framing media and cultural policy questions but instead as an ideological category' (176)—in particular as a manifestation of neoliberalism. The sense that discourse does not describe, but brings into being real entities has disappeared; Flew now has a binary of those who would simply describe creative industries against those set on portraying them as neo-liberal ideology. In response, Flew's rebuke is that neoliberalism, like postmodernism, means everything and nothing and like evil imperialism is 'everywhere and in everything'.

To take a small smattering of examples from a voluminous literature, neo-liberalism has been associated with: the rising popularity of Bollywood-style weddings (Kapur, 2009); the prevalence of violence in recent Australian cinema (Stratton, 2009); the financial difficulties of the University of California (Butler, 2009); the death of politics (Giroux, 2005); standardized national educational curricula and national testing (Apple, 2004); the privileging of access to databases over space for books in Australian public libraries (McQueen, 2009); and the performative sexuality of the character of Mr. Garrison in the animated comedy series *South Park* (Gournelos, 2009). (178)

That there is a tendency to characterise all manifestations of contemporary capitalism as neoliberalism and blame this for present woes is clear. However, to recognise a need for a more precise definition is not the same as dismissing the concept—otherwise creative industries would have disappeared long ago. Precise definitions of neoliberalism do exist and are used precisely, and it should be the task of a textbook such as Flew's to bring these out. Flew uses Andrew Gamble to disentangle some of its strands—an economic school, the programs of Thatcher and Reagan, the new global order—but does not discuss how these might relate to the

creative industries. The point is simply to show neoliberalism is a complex concept and therefore cannot be applied to them.

Flew then argues that the Marxist dominant ideology thesis (current default: neoliberalism) is functionalist; that it does not understand that markets have existed for a long time across different social formations nor that neoliberalism is related to liberalism and thus to democracy (quoting Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in the familiar *by any means necessary* trope). We are told that neoliberalism has not spread across the globe (the example of China shows this *pace* David Harvey). Finally one critical (read: Marxist) cultural studies person says neoliberalism is a withdrawal of the state and another says there is a growth in state surveillance: therefore the concept is incoherent. After what is frankly a woeful passage of argumentation, Flew concludes that whatever problems with creative industries 'the criticism that it is emblematic of or furthers neoliberalism is one that now needs to be discounted'. (191) Not once does Flew engage with the specific criticism of the creative industries in relation to neoliberalism; he's put a stop to such criticism by abolishing neoliberalism. Deprived of its support, all that remains of his critics is a self-indulgent 'rhetorical flourish and a burnishing of [their] radical credentials'. (190)

The notion that there has been a fundamental shift in relations between state and economy, bringing not only the erosion of public provision but the active involvement of the state in breaking down barriers to markets and (in the public sector) establishing quasi-markets, is pretty incontrovertible (for good or ill). That, as Flew argues, it has always been portrayed as negative (something Flew seems to take as an argument against the concept) is a reflection of forty years of its 'success', perhaps now come to some sort of impasse. The complex confluences involved in such a program are to be expected. Its radical modernising program was introduced by cultural conservatives (Thatcher and Reagan) waving traditional values and the flag. The increasing sense that culture too could be part of this radical restructuring of the polity has not only been subject of much cultural and sociological work but an essential aspect of cultural policy studies as it emerged in Australia in the late 1990s. If culture is the 'object and instrument of governance' then it is perfectly reasonable to explore the changing ways in which the cultural self has been reconstructed over the past forty years. How can such large-scale changes be unrelated to the cultural

transformation evoked by Warhol's bohemian Manhattan? The creative self, the foregrounding of creative innovation, the construction of identity around consumption and the occupations and products that stem from these—if the changes designated by neoliberalism have occurred (for good or ill) then how can they not be implicated in the creative industries? This does not mean these industries have to be rejected *tout court*, but some critical appraisal of their relationship to neoliberalism (which might even be oppositional in certain contexts) is surely appropriate.

Flew misrepresents critics of neoliberalism as attacking a 'dominant ideology', but the main tendency has been to approach it from the governmentality perspective on which cultural policy studies itself is based. This aspect of the argument draws on Foucault's notion of power as constructive, endlessly generative of new subjects and apparatuses of power to control them. It is not an ideology, though it sets ideas in motion as part of its operations. Flew refuses such an accommodation between 'Marx and Foucault' (that is, a critical Foucault) in a rather bizarre fashion: by making Foucault reject Marx and then tentatively embrace neoliberalism. Escher is in full flow here. For Flew, Foucault's *Birth of Biopolitics* can't be used to develop a critique of neoliberalism in the age of Bush because he was writing in a different period.⁶ And in this period Foucault was critical of Marxists and Marxism and had a different view of power, politics and the state to them. Indeed, he calls on socialism to develop a theory of governmentality. Though Flew means this to be a counter argument, none of the neo-Marxist Foucauldians mentioned would demur from any of it. Flew then refers to Michael Behrent to the effect that Foucault was presenting a 'qualified endorsement of indirect methods of exercising governmental power preferred by the neoliberals, particularly when contrasted to the top-down "social statism" of the PS and PCF' (*Parti socialist and parti communist francaise*). (180) 'At any rate', continues Flew, 'Foucault rejects the easy critique of neoliberalism as ideology'. He concludes by telling us the real problem Foucault presents for the creative industries does not concern neoliberalism but simply the question of 'too much or too little government'—public policy being about getting the balance right. Nobody with the slightest acquaintance with his life and work would accept Foucault as a proto-neoliberal, or that his

critical analysis of contemporary governmentality boiled down to a nonsensical (for Foucault especially) question of ‘too little or too much governance’.

This conjunction of Marx and Foucault takes us back to the cultural policy studies moment from which this elaboration of the creative industries concept emerged. We might say cultural policy studies did two things with Marx. It separated the analytical from the emancipatory; Marx’s theory and methods might still be useful but the emancipatory project that went with it—the reconciliation of subject and object of history if you like—was theological. Second, drawing on Foucault among others, writers such as Tony Bennett suggested Marx had no theory of politics or governmentality: ultimately the actions of the state simply responded to the deeper logic of capital or ‘the economic base’.⁷ Three developments flowed from this. First, governmentality was now not conceived as ideology but as actively constructing the reality to which its actions were directed (a finding developed further in cultural economy literature). Therefore it had a much greater scope for autonomous action than the Marxists would allow. Second, that this expanded field of governmentality included that very culture which claimed autonomy from economy and state. This cast the emancipatory promise of culture—transposed by cultural studies to ‘the popular’—in some doubt. The creation of the cultured self was a key site on which the modern state had built its foundations. This being the case, third, cultural politics had to be played out within the parameters set by the state rather than claim some transcendent critical purchase. Tony Bennett, writing of cultural policy in 1992 suggested:

Intellectual work [should] be conducted in a manner such that, in both its substance and its style, it can be calculated to influence or service the conduct of identifiable agents with the region of culture concerned.⁸

Tony Bennett’s call in that same piece to learn to ‘talk to the ISAs’ (ideological state apparatus) can be understood in a certain context in which radical critique went hand in hand with its own marginalisation. Indeed, becoming a ‘situated intellectual’ is now perhaps part of the modern academic persona. Even if we accept this assessment, two points need to be made. First, the recognition of limits does not necessarily mean an abandonment of critical thought; Foucault might not promise emancipation in the classic Marxist sense, but he was always clear-eyed about power. Second, between ‘influence’ and ‘service’ lies a whole range of choices, from

crusading activist, through annoying gadfly, to full-on functionary. A growing tendency within cultural policy studies was that to influence or to serve one had to drop the critical thought, which is mostly equated with 'Marxist'. Flew's book clearly bears the marks of this pragmatic turn—setting out to provide governments with the policy instruments to promote the economic growth of the creative industries and bemoaning the infantile antics of those who hold to out-dated critique. But there was a problem—did not cultural policy studies imply that all we could do was choose between different governmentalities? Without its emancipatory charge, did not cultural policy become mere administration?

John Hartley's work broke this impasse. Hartley agreed that art and culture were about governmentality; they were elitist and used to dominate the lower classes. That was not the whole story. Effectively overturning Bennett's proposition about governmentality, Hartley (notably in his 1999 introduction to *Uses of Television*) argued for the progressive self-education of the masses, the citizen-consumers, through their own self-generated popular culture.⁹ The explosion of commercial culture from the 1920s and the spread of the internet were the end points of this emancipatory process. We can now see how the two themes that frame Flew's book—the democratic promise of commercial popular culture and the need to service the interests of policy—culminate in a stark dichotomy between governmentality for art and culture (elitist, dominating, yet for all that characterised by 'market failure') and emancipation through popular culture. It is equally clear that the charge that creative industries reduces culture to economics therefore misses the point: the market is the privileged carrier of popular culture and thus any attempt to assert some cultural element which might temper the economic can only be an elitist attempt to reinscribe the hierarchical value of 'art'. The pursuit of the economic agenda for the creative industries is at the same time a pursuit of the democratic popular culture agenda.

What stands in the way of this agenda? Obviously, the critical humanities and other revolutionary romantics, but once these have been dispatched to the dustbin of history there are three final issues that close the book. First, definitional questions still need work, especially the task of understanding the links between creative industries and 'entertainment'. But a second, larger problem looms—the hourglass structure of the creative industries:

where a relatively small number of gate-keepers—be they major performing arts companies and centres, large media corporations, or cultural funding bodies—constitute a distributional ‘bottleneck’ between the large number of prospective creative content producers and their potential audiences. (191)

This unfortunate propensity of the creative industries sector squeezes out ‘individuals, small groups and SMEs’ (small and medium sized enterprises) who lose out when faced by the ‘political power and lobbying clout of the incumbents in the sector—large corporations, established trade unions and producer organisations’. (191) The internet and consumer groups will help challenge this and allow in these excluded individuals and small companies (though presumably not the hipsters in the metropolitan centres), who are now ‘the mainspring of innovation in the arts, media and cultural sectors’. (191)

Saving this rare programmatic statement for the penultimate page means it receives no elaboration, but it is as telling as the statement about *Big Brother* and Shakespeare. Flew completely ignores the many pages in which he has presented the findings of political and institutional economists about the specific dynamics at play in the creative industries. The reason we have large-scale media corporations is not because they are good lobbyists (though they are that) but because of the way they have dealt with the ‘market forces’ through which they must make a profit. Economies of scale, massive up-front capital costs, large marketing budgets, vertical integration, managing a dispersed, autonomous labour pool—these are some of the characteristics long noted in this risky sector. They are competing for limited attention and free time with uncertain products in a volatile market. That is, it is the realities of cultural commodity markets that create the ‘distributional bottleneck’ not the gate-keepers from the cultural sector or the corporate domination of public policy.

Increasing the access of SMEs to the market has been one of the main focal points of cultural and creative industry policies for the last thirty years. There are a number of reasons for this attention: policy-makers have looked to local economic growth, at city and regional levels; concerned to increase access to participation in the sector for economically and socially excluded groups; promoting diversity of cultural expression, and so on. Policy-makers have had to face the realities of

creative industry dynamics and structures with a range of policies, such as identifying potential subsectors; improving access to finance; promoting cultural entrepreneurship; identifying local products and skills; providing key infrastructures and much more. Despite its paeans to policy, none of this nimble and often precarious policy agenda is discussed in Flew's book. Neither does the book discuss real cases in the industries, where it is clear that larger companies are finding ways to draw on the innovation of SMEs and absorb it into their own structures—as they have attempted to do for the last century. Furthermore, the levels of innovation in large organisations, such as Apple or the BBC, often far outstrip those of small SMEs.

In short, the notion of removing the bottleneck in the creative industries sector bears no relation to the sector's realities and betrays a deep naivety about the nature of markets—it amounts to saying: if only government would step back from supporting the big corporations and cultural gate-keepers, then the small businesses would flourish in the sector. It's the equivalent of the Tea Party for creatives. Equally, the idea that the internet is going to achieve this democratisation of production–consumption of its own accord bears no scrutiny in an age of Amazon, Apple, Google and Facebook. In effect we are left with a utopian fantasy in which, once the distributional bottleneck is broken apart by the internet, there will be the ecstatic creative communication of everybody with everybody, all consuming and producing interchangeably.

Flew's third challenge is to declare that we must move from a creative economy to a creative society. It is highly appropriate that the two themes of the book should come together on the final page of the book. They converge in the figure of Li Wu Wei, a party bureaucrat-academic from the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, who calls for the universalisation of creative industries. Li Wu Wei's book is a fairly banal manifesto for creativity commissioned by the national government in Beijing, which is translated by another CCI colleague.¹⁰ Li Wu Wei's call for universal creativity prompts Flew to ask if we should not be thinking about a future creative society. The logical consequence, for Flew, is that the creative industries should move from a niche position to become central to '21st century culture and policy'. (192) This utopian vision of the creative economy—that is, of everybody consuming and producing creatively—is nowhere else discussed except at this belated stage,

nor is the question of how 'creativity' might ground a social order addressed. What is striking is how far this vision is an unreflective repeat of other such visions of modernity: the emancipatory promise of 1960s' counter-culture, the interwar avant-gardes, traditional bourgeois aesthetics (Schiller), and indeed of that 'Young Hegelian', Karl Marx.

While Flew appears oblivious to these historical echoes, they take us back to the question of modernity and its deepening or second acceleration since the 1960s. Culture has changed and has become intertwined with the economic in ways we are still figuring out. What is clear is, like the rest of modernity, it brings both opportunity and danger. What these might be and how we might face them are crucial, open questions. We have gone beyond the moment of cultural policy studies, which is in danger of being stuck in a sterile opposition of pragmatics or (impossible, totalitarian) revolution, and consequently trapped by its refusal of any function for culture other than unwitting governmental compliance and determination. While this has produced some lucid puncturing of the self-delusions of cultural reformers and radicals alike, it has also produced pragmatic accommodations with the agendas set by government indistinguishable from the most servile functionaries of authoritarian states—except that the latter mostly do it under duress. What is striking about the cultural policy studies' agenda is the thinness of its achievements—it talks real world, commercialisation and industry, but has little to show in these areas; cultural think tanks, consultancies and activists have been more rewarded for their willingness to ask radical questions. The obedient dog of policy studies has delivered the body of a once fearsome cultural studies to the feet of its master, who has politely and gingerly picked it up and put it on one side.

We need the moment of critique, of the negation, in order to engage with the present. This will include working with (what can no longer be called in polite company) the ISAs; but it will also include opposing them. 'Culture' as a sphere of (relative) autonomy and its promise of emancipation and fulfilment rapidly became characterised as a site for discipline and biopolitics. But it was never just that, as the late Foucault began to make clear. Its emancipatory promise remains elusive, but it remains nonetheless. It need be said that this was something John Hartley was correct to assert, but for him that promise could only be through commercial

popular culture, the rest is elitist noise. Cultural policy inevitably has to work with government, as Adorno recognised in 'Culture and Administration', but its task is not simply to extend the remit of the powers that be or indeed to be reduced to the promotion of its economic dimension.¹¹

Cultural policy is more than a technology of economic growth; it must also mean care for culture, as the site of a self and a social formation in which a certain access to truth and meaning is made possible. This is surely what Raymond Williams meant by the idea of culture, and it also emerges in the late Foucault.¹² Caring for culture means making a judgement; the grounds of that judgement are inevitably contestable and contested, but they have to include the economic conditions which make that culture possible, which may also threaten to make it thinner, poorer, subservient.

There are rapid transformations in progress as cultures and economies morph and fold with digital communications and globalisation. Making the case for cultural values not against but within these processes is a complex and difficult take, and it does no service simply to promote 'economic growth' and dismiss the rest as arts elitism. In his arguments against neoliberalism, Flew tells us there are many forms of capitalism; accordingly, it seems perfectly reasonable not to want the neoliberal version and not thereby be classed a romantic revolutionary. Indeed, the treatment of economics in Flew's book is mostly superficial. It includes statements such as 'Human societies have always engaged in consumption' (110) or 'the study of markets is characteristically the domain of economics', (115) which are either banal or meaningless in a book dealing with the changing relations of culture and economics. What cultural economy has taught us is that these are highly historically specific and constructed entities. This does not mean they can be reconstructed at will; it does mean that understanding the specifics of, say, a market transaction, involving all manner of market 'devices' and subjectivities, needs to be undertaken in a critical, clear-eyed manner not assumed as an eternal and inevitable social reality to which critical theorists must bow down.

If the creative industries agenda is really to get to grips with the complexities and contradictions of the contemporary cultural economy then it needs to start thinking again, not just—as this book does—devote its attention to demolishing its critics. CCI's celebratory brand of 'creative industries' fails to engage productively

with the multiple and various critiques that have been thrown up against it, merely dismissing opponents as 'Marxists'. Defending creative industries by disavowing the legitimacy of critical thought is now surely dysfunctional. Without the moment of critique, Flew's model of creative industries (and that of CCI with which it forms part) becomes one dimensional and limited. Everything it espouses is necessarily good and wholly good at that (the internet, mobile phone apps, teen pop music, reality television, porn) and, conversely, everything that does not fit its model of the good is bad and irredeemable, such as 'high culture,' which is malign, elitist, anti-democratic and, worst of all, not sufficiently commercial. This CCI model requires the high-low cultural divide, even as it dismisses it. Once established in its dichotomy, we know that everything good is completely good and the rest is redundant, backward and not part of the future. This is the guiding theme not only throughout Flew's book, but throughout all of the CCI discourse and its treatment of favoured items of study and scrutiny. It is ideological in the older sense of the word; it lines people up on each side of a creative-commercial divide, where we immediately know which side is correct—the side of the future!

Critique certainly needs to work with the materiality of the 'real', not just set up a transcendental ideal to which the real must aspire. But those who would stress 'reality' must also acknowledge the highly constructed nature of that 'real' to which thinking and writing contribute. Equally, critique must challenge the exclusive right of power to set the terms on which that real is engaged. Recently, a UK government minister responded to someone who said a university without philosophy is not a university with the words: 'then we will call it something else'.¹³ It recalls Bruno Latour's quote from Ron Suskind's encounter with a US aide:

'That's not the way the world really works anymore,' he continued. 'We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.'¹⁴

Critique is not the posturing of a radical persona who knows the truth behind the ideological veil, as Latour tellingly argues.¹⁵ Access to that truth demands real thinking, of the kind that challenges the self as well as the object. In *The Uses of*

Pleasure Foucault talks about the value of losing one's way in the pursuit of knowledge.¹⁶ He uses the term *égarement*—here also meaning disorder and disarray. Walter Benjamin in *Central Park* wrote: 'He cannot master the labyrinth who has not stood powerless before it.'¹⁷ I suggest the author needs to step beyond the airless circle of the creative industries, to allow in some critique, some negation, in order to think through the concept in the light of the complexity and contradictions of the real. Unlike Don Draper, the author might follow Lennon's advice on *Tomorrow Never Knows*, and learn to surrender to the void. *It is not dying ... It is shining...*

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¹ John Hartley (ed.), *The Creative Industries*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2005; Stuart Cunningham, 'From Cultural to Creative Industries: Theory, Industry, and Policy Implications', *Media International Australia*, no. 102, 2002, pp. 54–65; Stuart Cunningham, 'Creative Industries After Cultural Policy', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 7, 2004, pp.105–15; David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*, 2nd edn, Sage, London, 2007.

² Jarvis Cocker, Review of *The John Lennon Letters*, edited by Hunter Davies, *The Guardian*, 10 October 2012.

³ David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011.

⁴ Sharon Zukin, *Loft-living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, John Hopkins Press Ltd, London, 1982.

⁵ NESTA, *Creating Growth: How Can the UK Develop World Class Creative Businesses*, NESTA research report, NESTA, London, 2006,

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⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Picador. New York, 2010.

⁷ Tony Bennett, *Outside Literature*, Routledge, London, 1990.

- ⁸ Tony Bennett, 'Putting Policy into Cultural Studies' in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, Routledge, New York, 1992, quoted in Flew, p. 3.
- ⁹ John Hartley, *Uses of Television*, Routledge, London, 1999.
- ¹⁰ Li Wu Wei, *How Creativity is Changing China*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2011.
- ¹¹ T. W. Adorno, 'Culture and Administration', in Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991 [1960], pp. 93–113.
- ¹² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1958.
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- ¹⁴ Bruno Latour, 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik—An Introduction to Making Things Public' in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, *Making Things Public-Atmospheres of Democracy*, catalogue of the show at ZKM, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2005, pp. 4–31.
- ¹⁵ Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern'. *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2004, pp. 225–48.
- ¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Uses of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality Series, Vol. 2*, Pantheon, New York, 1995.
- ¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'Central Park', *New German Critique*, no. 34, 1985, pp. 32–58.