Review of book series proposal: *Entertainment Industries.* (Edited by Tanya Nitins, Stephen Harrington, Christy Collis and Alan McKee).

The editors propose a book series addressing the theme of '*Entertainment Industries*' a topic which has a lot of mileage and could definitely have market appeal across all areas of Media and Cultural Studies. The definition of *entertainment* as '*audience-centred culture*' is an oft-repeated but somewhat under-theorized statement. Do they mean commercial culture, or profitable culture? – surely this is market-oriented culture? As Raymond Williams famously said, culture is 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'. So, to define something as vague as 'entertainment' by reference to something as complex as 'culture', is confusing -- especially when qualified by the portmanteau term, 'audience-centred'. The statement: "It is the form of most culture consumed by the majority of citizens of Western countries" (p.1) adds no clarity. The category of 'entertainment industries' is not clear nor is the sense that these are different from any other kind of cultural or media industries.

The statement that 'remarkably little academic work addresses this area of culture' is contentious; I know of hundreds of books and articles about the media and cultural industries (for this seems to be what they are talking about); it is an expanding and exciting area of research in my field and forms an important part of my teaching and research. The editors refer to Adorno and Horkheimer and the Frankfurt School in a cursory manner – the collective and individual contribution of these scholars to our understanding of culture is caricatured (not untypically – few people seem to have actually read them first hand). The cursory handling of such central areas of scholarship (critical Marxism) is troubling.

The focus on specific 'industries' which are defined as 'audience-centred' is confusing – are they interested in the audiences or the industries? How can you tell an 'audience-centred' piece of work from any other? There is a large body of work focused on the audience for media and culture – but the authors do not refer to it.

The most troublesome aspect of this series, then, is the definition of 'entertainment industries'—it seems to be a mask for talking about media industries.

The Individual books:

I'm afraid that Harrington and Nitins get off to the wrong start when they declare that: "Entertainment has traditionally struggled for recognition and acceptance as a legitimate form of culture". That rather depends on how you define 'entertainment'; 'legitimate' and 'culture'. To state that: "Entertainment has therefore been dramatically under-valued in academia, where significantly greater amounts of attention are given to more conventional, high brow forms of 'art'" (p.2) is to ignore the several decades of scholarship in popular culture studies, media studies and

communications. They demonstrate a lack of knowledge of both the high/low culture debate -- a mainstay of British cultural studies debate -- and US communications scholarship related to ideas of mass/popular culture. This section is vague as to time, definitions and object of analysis – The reader is left uncertain of what they are going to investigate from this description.

There may well be some merit in some of the individual titles proposed, but there is insufficient information about these on which to make any determination. The authors should be encouraged to resubmit the individual proposals.

The Market:

From this section I get the impression that they are talking about media management and providing a text book for marketing or management students interested in working in the media industries. Again, there is a large market of literature relating to media/communication management and/or media economics which is not mentioned here. Isn't 'entertainment industry' just a label to avoid using the term 'media' or 'communications' in universities where this is politically inadvisable? Communications and Media Studies departments in the US, UK and Australia have been training people in media management for decades – it is hardly a new area of education. They seem to be over-claiming here.

Overall:

There is not much evidence of an 'evidence-based approach' here and poor conceptualization of "entertainment as a cultural system". I am unsure of what industries they are talking about – there is no direct reference to any of them – is it film, television, social media? Are they going to be investigating how cultural artefacts are produced or how they are consumed?

The proposal demonstrates a lack of knowledge of the literature on 'cultural industries'; 'media production studies' or 'communication management'. Issues related to 'entertainment' provide the bedrock on which much media and (especially) cultural studies is founded but the editors seem ignorant of this enormous area of scholarship.

Suggestions:

I would not recommend this as a series for Palgrave as it currently stands. With more focus and clarity as to object of analysis and location within the field it would be worth considering. The topic of 'entertainment' certainly does need to be revisited but it needs very careful definition.

It seems that this project could go in one of two directions: either focus on the themes of 'desire' and 'pleasure', topics long neglected in the debates around culture – this could be usefully allied to the concept of 'entertainment'. The location of pleasure and fun within media consumption could provide a more solid focus in this

case. Alternatively, if they took it in a more obviously 'business school' direction it could usefully be pitched as a management manual for people working in the media industries. Currently, it seems to fit uncomfortably between these two poles – industry/employment oriented vs. cultural studies/pleasure based.

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