- BOOK REVIEW -

Graeme Turner. 2016. *Re-Inventing the Media*.
London and New York: Routledge.
ISBN 9781138020702

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In his latest book, Graeme Turner sets out to interrogate how changes to media modes of delivery and media forms are changing both the media landscape and media theory. As the title signals, a key concept in the book is 're-invented' media—a term Turner applies to both mass media and new media which are now 'networked in their structure and hybridised in their patterns of use . . . identify[ing] as commercial organisations rather than cultural institutions' (125). He argues that this shift has occurred due to the dominance of entertainment over information. As part of his definition of the re-invented media Turner also suggests that the relation between the media and the nation-state is becoming increasingly important, with the growth of celebrity culture playing a significant role in this re-invention.

The reasoning behind this definition, discussed throughout the book, adds flesh to Turner's key argument: that media power has not declined but increased in contemporary society due to a re-invented media, and that media and cultural studies need to refocus on analysing media power in the changed media landscape. As Turner's definition of the re-invented media suggests, the changes taking place in the media landscape are not caused by new technologies and platforms alone, but by a number of larger political, cultural, economic and historical factors as well. He argues that media and cultural studies need to 'correct' claims that overstate the democratising potential of new technologies, which he dubs 'digital optimism' (4), and rethink their view of the media. Turner is also concerned about the divide of the media studies curriculum into teaching either traditional mass media or new media, and argues that a united curriculum that would approach media industries as a complex whole would serve media studies education better.

The book is organised around three themes: rethinking the media; the media and the nation-state; and the consequences of celebrity. All three parts contribute to discussion on the characteristics of the re-invented media and the way they reshape the relationship

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between media and society and media power. In the first part, Turner argues that while the media today have changed significantly when it comes to affordances and choices available, there has been no real re-distribution of power. This is discussed through his observations on the changes brought about by digital media, media convergence (or hybridity), and the rise of entertainment.

Beginning with the notion that online platforms and mass media have amalgamated into one economy, Turner calls for a careful and critical approach to 'digital optimism'. Drawing on a broad body of research, he argues that media convergence has not enhanced audiences' empowerment—and therefore democracy—but rather increased market concentration; he criticises current literature on convergence culture for its lack of discussion on the commercial interests that drive convergence, or hybridisation developments. He suggests that media studies should pay more attention to analysing the capturing of social media by commercial interests.

Further, Turner argues that due to the need to retain audiences the traditional media have engaged in a process of re-defining themselves as platforms for entertainment. Building on remarks put forward by leading media scholars such as James Curran and Nick Couldry, he assesses that in the re-invented media there has been a systemic change towards self-interested behaviour–that of generating private profit–at the expense of the public responsibility role of the media. Turner also has reservations towards the 'culture of search'—that is, they way we use the Internet to obtain information about issues of interest to us, big and small. While information available online may have expanded the public sphere, Turner sees the capacity of the 'culture of search' to compensate for the shift from news to entertainment as extremely limited. He also raises concerns about the commodification of personal information online.

The second part of *Re-Inventing the Media* looks at the role of the nation-state and regulation in the changing media landscape. According to Turner, the key feature of the re-invention of the media is an ongoing restructuring of the power relations between the media and the state. This statement is based on his exchange of research with other scholars around the world who have come to the conclusion that the state has not only retained its significance but in some cases even expanded its influence when it comes to the functioning of the media. The key element in this relationship is national regulatory regimes.

Suggesting that the concept of the nation-state has been put on the backburner in media studies and calling for its re-inclusion into analysis of the media, Turner makes the important observation that the market cannot be left in charge of overseeing the media's service to the public –which, he suggests has happened in contemporary society due to a neoliberal shift of responsibility. Following the arguments outlined in the first part of the book, he states that it is naive to assume that the ability people have today to choose from a number of products or information available in the market is equivalent to political power. He refers to the commercialisation of news as a major concern, stating that the

news media no longer serve the public but themselves. While Turner discusses government subsidy as a way to ensure in-depth, multiperspectival coverage of various issues, he does not say whether this would be the way ahead in Australasia. Perhaps it would be a topic for a whole other research project. The overall purpose of the second part of *Re-inventing the media* is to raise the need to rethink the role of media regulation as a means of retrieving the public service aspects of the media as a matter of urgency.

Devoting two chapters for discussion on celebrity in the third part might seem somewhat surprising at first, but Turner makes a convincing argument about how much the culture of celebrity affects re-invented media. Offering examples from scholarship on celebrity, he notes that celebrity culture has 'permeated other spheres of activity as well', such as politics, business, art, and science (94). Turner argues that together with other factors discussed in the book, such as commercialisation, the rise of entertainment and increasing concentration of media ownership, celebrity has brought about change in the structure and practices of the media industries. For example, the practices of celebrity news, including implying close relationships between journalists and their subjects, have made their way into traditional news making, and the media have become more tolerant towards what it regards as news. This is, of course, an issue for the public service role the media are expected to play.

Some of the other worries that follow the pervasiveness of celebrity, according to Turner, are that young people today regard fame as a realistic life ambition. Such fame is sought via reality TV as well as self-made videos published on platforms such as YouTube. He voices concerns about the kind of cultural and social values that the 'ordinary' celebrity is popularising – for instance, self-absorption. Turner also warns that while participating in reality TV can be an empowering experience, it can also lead to exploitation.

I found Turner's critical approach to the changing media landscape refreshing. While technological changes have yielded positive effects to do with, for example, choice and affordance, Turner justifiably re-directs focus on critical thinking of the media, old and new; his various discussions demonstrate that, regardless of technological advances enabling citizens to access numerous sources of information or to generate their own content, the media still hold significant power in society. He offers an engaging analysis of what the media do today as well as what how media theory and education should be 'renovated' to provide a better understanding of the role the re-invented media play in society.

Reminding us of the importance of the larger contextual factors that also keep shaping the media in times of radical technological change, *Re-Inventing the Media* makes a timely contribution to the field and a thought provoking read for researchers, media educators and current or future media professionals alike.