Media teaching in New Zealand: sketching out a history

by Roger Horrocks

Why a history? There are several reasons, beyond nostalgia. Media studies in New Zealand has been an amazing story of growth. Anyone who had called a 'media studies conference' in the 1950s would have ended up in an empty room. Though there had been some discussion of the mass media of communication since the 1920s, the term 'medium' or 'media' – with the social and technological associations it carries today – only gained general currency in the '60s. (It was Marshall McLuhan's 1964 book *Understanding Media* that popularised the term, though as Raymond Williams remarked, mass communication had grown so important that a 'general word' of this kind was 'necessary'.[1]) 50 years ago, however, New Zealanders would have been more likely to associate the term with spiritualists and séances.

Since then, Media Studies (broadly defined) in New Zealand has become a significant establishment. In the universities, there appear to be about 100 full-time jobs, if one includes secretarial staff but does not include tutors or students. Polytechnics and institutes of technology have a similar number of media-related teachers. And there are many high school teachers who teach media courses, although I am only aware of one who teaches the subject full-time.[2] Geoff Lealand notes that by 2005 the number of students taking NCEA courses in Media Studies in high schools had grown to 10,000.[3] This is remarkable expansion and it is worth taking a close look at how it was achieved, particularly as I don't think the subject has yet reached the limits of its potential for growth.

I had better add a word on why I am offering a New Zealand history since there are academics for whom the words 'New Zealand' or 'national' are automatically suspect. For any cultural phenomenon, I think it's important to know both the international history and the local history. But in this case the international context is well known and recorded, so here I focus on the un-documented local context. I am well aware that some may see this as provincial. Newly arrived academics often see parochialism as a major problem in New Zealand and so they develop a crusading zeal to promote international perspectives. Universities today are also drawn to international status, to an extent that is almost obsequious. There is also a desire today, among the ambitious young, to see the 21st century as an age of globalism, canceling out history, opening up unlimited horizons. But focusing on local history is not to ignore the rest of the world or to overlook new possibilities - it is to add to them. Local histories add a necessary complexity to whatever master narratives are in circulation, global histories that otherwise are likely to be simply someone else's local history writ large. I will also be arguing that there are some aspects of Media Studies as it has developed in New Zealand that are distinctive, though – like other native species – we will need to look after them if they are to survive.

I will focus on the startup period, the '70s, both because it is least known and because I think there are important lessons to be derived from it in getting our bearings for the future.

Hierarchies

Jacques Rancière reminds us that the development of a new subject is not merely a quantitative matter but depends on it becoming thinkable within our community.[4] When I was at high school in New Zealand in the late 1950s, and at university in the early '60s, a

very different paradigm of education was dominant. Rancière would call it a different 'distribution of the sensible' (what could be perceived, thought or said, and how those forms were ordered). New Zealand education involved a particular set of hierarchies:

(1) British culture was seen as more important than New Zealand culture. Indeed, no New Zealand literature and almost no New Zealand history was taught in most high schools, a situation corresponding to the country's then colonial relationship to Britain.

(2) Reception ('reading' or 'appreciation') was valued over production, at least in the case of students. Students were taught to analyse and admire the classics and not encouraged to create or be original. Our role was the consumption and veneration of imports.

(3) Within such New Zealand culture as education found room for, Pakeha was favoured over Maori.

(4) Male had precedence over female. Almost no women writers were discussed in English, and almost no women in history. As in the case of the other hierarchies, this was simply taken for granted.

(5) 'Culture' (as it was understood) was valued over 'entertainment' (what today we call popular culture). Popular culture had no place in education.

(6) 'The book' was valued over all other media. (The idea of teaching films alongside books would have been considered frivolous or subversive.)

(7) The past (tradition, history) was more important than the present. Our poetry anthology stopped at 1900, there was no fiction later than Dickens, and drama consisted mostly of Shakespeare. The test of time was needed to gain admission to the canon.

(8) Last but not least, the classroom context was itself highly hierarchical – the teachers' opinions and interests always took precedence over those of the students. Discipline was strict, there were many rules and much caning.

The national exam papers of the period were clearly based on these priorities. When Media Studies emerged, it gained force from its challenge to all of them – its focus was contemporary, it was egalitarian, it acknowledged all media and all culture.

This is *not* to say there were not some good individual teachers in the '50s, who acted humanely, did useful teaching and inspired students.[5] My focus is on the overall paradigm. This corresponded logically to the 'distribution of the sensible' within New Zealand society at large - an old-fashioned, male-dominated, Pakeha-run society. This was a time of moral panics (as illustrated for example by the 1954 Mazengarb report sent to all New Zealand parents[6]). It was a strongly religious and puritanical society (it was illegal to screen films on Sunday, and New Zealand had one of the most restrictive regimes of film censorship in the world[7]).

Photographer Marti Friedlander recalls arriving in New Zealand in the 1950s: 'There were all those [overseas] jokes about New Zealand - when you arrived you put your clock back twenty years. I knew that New Zealand was changing - I knew it would have to change - it seemed so far behind any other place in the world.'[8] This was a provincial, colonially-minded country with under-developed creative industries – there was nothing you could

call a 'film industry' (only a government Film Unit and a couple of struggling little companies). During the first 20 years of my life (1941-61), a time when film-going was at an all-time high, only one New Zealand feature film was made. The country was late in introducing television. There were almost no local publishers (only a couple of companies that produced a very limited range of books). To get a novel published, a New Zealand writer had to approach British publishers who tended to look down their noses as 'colonial' subject matter. There were almost no dealer galleries for art, almost no record companies. Original popular music was limited (musicians were mostly conveyers of cover versions). Hence, the distribution of jobs in New Zealand included few slots for media careers, to say nothing of media educators. The logic of a colonial culture saw New Zealand simply as a captive consumer market and as a source of raw materials (which included the talented people who emigrated to the UK in search of wider opportunities).

In the '50s New Zealand universities operated within similar ways of thinking. Common rooms were full of white males, chaps puffing pipes and reminiscing about their Oxbridge days. Of course, there were a few individuals whose interests were broader. In the Auckland English department there was John Reid who wrote film reviews, and there were several New Zealand poets who hung out with artists like Colin McCahon at the Kiwi pub. But more typical of the times was our Professor of Classics who said he regretted that students did not have to wear gowns, as our lecturers still did.[9]

'The '70s'

The big period of change in New Zealand was the '70s - or more precisely, the end of the '60s through the '70s. Effectively, the '70s were our equivalent of the Anglo-American 'sixties'[10]. Granted, there was some activity in New Zealand in the '60s (particularly Vietnam war protest) but it was slow to gather momentum. I was very struck by the difference when I returned in 1966 after three years in the USA, including a year in Berkeley. When the cultural revolution did reach critical mass in New Zealand, it lasted much longer here than overseas because there was so much work for it to do.

A new wave of Maori activism emerged in the '70s via groups such as Nga Tamatoa.[11] Feminism also had plenty to do in this country when its new wave arrived (Christine Dann's history dates its advent from 1970).[12] After a protracted campaign, film censorship finally began to be liberalized in 1976. In these and many other areas, New Zealand's wave of change continued strongly all through the '70s – even to 1981 (if we include the Springbok tour protest, as seems appropriate).

Later, from 1984, Rogernomics (the neo-liberal 'New Right') attempted to take credit for opening New Zealand up to the world. It is true that the process of change still had a long way to go, but it was the 1970s (and the 'New Left') that had de-stabilised the old paradigm. Rogernomics and its sequels in the '90s were focused on economic or commercial change, and culturally they were in some respects a counter-revolution.

Schools and universities had certainly been overdue for a shakeup. The '70s brought to New Zealand an overseas model of education that focused on personal growth and a less hierarchical, more student-centred classroom. John Dixon's book *Growth through English* (published after a seminal 1966 conference at Dartmouth in the USA)[13] was a key document, although the broader context for this new approach was the general counter-cultural ferment of the period.

The time was ripe for media teaching to develop in New Zealand. It came first through Film Studies. Now there are obvious differences between Film and Media Studies, but in this context the links were more important than the differences. Film Studies was perceived by conservative teachers and academics as a dangerous newcomer, dangerous because it was a Trojan horse, a conspiracy to subvert the hierarchies. Once films were admitted, the doors of the academy would be open to contemporary popular culture in all its vulgar forms – from pop music to soap operas, from horror films to comic books. This was a time when heads of department in both schools and universities saw themselves engaged in a heroic battle to defend the primacy of the book. It was baffling to them why young teachers and lecturers were turning into hippies and plotting to introduce films or pop song lyrics into the classroom.

Everyone involved in film or media studies in New Zealand in the '70s has some war stories to relate. Film had always been popular in New Zealand as entertainment but it lacked cultural status. Attempts to upgrade its status were resisted not only because civilization was under threat but also because there was turf to defend. Existing subjects were afraid of losing students and funding. The two arguments were seen as complementary – to fight for one's own subject or art form was sticking up for standards. It didn't help to point out that English literature had had to undergo a similar battle for admission to the curriculum in the 19th century. Many senior academics could not take films seriously; and the insecure saw them as unfair competition – in the serious world of 'chalk and talk,' it would be setting a dangerous precedent for lectures to include moving images or other forms of entertainment.

During the 1970s similar battles were fought within the Arts Council as the established arts attempted to prevent funding being allocated to film. And both the Labour and National governments dragged their heels over the idea of establishing a NZ Film Commission. Ian Cross wrote *Listener* editorials denouncing the lobbyists for a Film Commission as confidence tricksters.[14] This bitter struggle, which dragged on until 1978, has been recently documented in a PhD thesis by Susy Pointon.[15]

Nevertheless, Film Studies did manage to take off in the '70s. Of course, there had been earlier stirrings. As Simon Sigley traced in his PhD thesis on the history of New Zealand film culture,[16] film appreciation had been promoted by film societies since 1929, courses had been run by the Workers Educational Association (WEA) since 1933 and the Film Society had held annual film schools since 1954. In 1963 John O'Shea, one of New Zealand's pioneer film-makers, attacked 'the educational system' for being 'doggedly out of touch with the visual images that bombard my own and other people's children.' O'Shea felt so strongly about the situation that he did some unpaid media teaching himself, running voluntary lunchtime sessions at Wellington High School.[17] And two Fine Arts lecturers (Tom Hutchins at Elam and Maurice Askew at Ilam) did pioneering work in the '60s teaching students to use movie cameras.

While acknowledging all this valuable pre-history, and honouring these ground-breakers, it was only in the 1970s that the subject took shape in the form we know it today and began to have a significant impact on the school or university curriculum. And this date of birth gave the subject a particular generational character:

First, Film and/or Media Studies was born as a rebel subject with an activist spirit.

Second, it inherited the non-commercial, communal ethos of the '60s/'70s. The varied countercultures of that period tended to overlap and to share a sense of common cause, difficult as that was to articulate. In the same spirit, there was an unusual amount of contact and cooperation between those involved in media education – at primary, secondary and tertiary level and at teachers colleges.

Third, the battle to establish film education saw itself as parallel to, and closely linked with, the battle to create an independent film industry, which was at its most intense in the '70s. This need was specific to New Zealand as a small, semi-colony that still lacked an established film industry. (Of course, this was also a distinctive feature of the Media Studies that was emerging in Australia in the same period.[18]) There were many links between educators and film-makers, and both were influenced by the anarchism and self-reliance of the period. A characteristic attitude of both teachers and film-makers was: 'Wait for official funding? They'll never give it to us, let's just do it.'

This alliance produced a strong emphasis within Film Studies on production alongside history and theory. Some high school teachers learned film-making through class projects and then moved on to become noted directors - for example, Merata Mita and Geoff Murphy. Murphy was a teacher for nine years and during that time he was joined in his school film projects by Bruno Lawrence, Alun Bollinger, and other Blerta members. Tony Brittenden made the feature film *Lincoln County Incident* with a high school cast. The opportunity to create films for schools (such as the *Winners and Losers* series) was very important to the emerging industry as an early funding source. Meanwhile, lecturers helped the industry to lobby and were active in public policy. University film classes supplied extras for feature-films (see the cover of this booklet for an example), and films that began in a student context sometimes reached the cinema – for example, Auckland student David Blyth's *Angel Mine*, and Ilam students Vincent Ward and Tim White's *State of Siege.* Schools and universities were among the first groups to obtain video equipment and would sometimes lend it unofficially to film-makers for casting or location scouting. In return, film-makers would supply offcuts for students to do editing exercises. Everyone had such limited resources that we helped one another. The hippie economy made things happen by barter, and barter was very helpful for start-up ventures. What enabled the new film industry to get off the ground was the fact that the film crew was like an extended commune and members were used to working together for little pay.[19]

To make films locally was seen as a necessary part of breaking out of a colonial mind-set. Film was a key forum for Maori perspectives (*Tangata Whenua*, *Te Matakite o Aotearoa*, Merata Mita's films, and so on), feminist perspectives (documented in Deborah Shepard's thesis and book[20]), and left-wing perspectives (documented in Geraldene Peters' thesis[21] and paper at this conference). Parallel to this was the development of local television drama series such as *Pukemanu* and *Close to Home* (covered by Trish Dunleavy in her PhD thesis and recent book[22]). There was also an upsurge in original forms of local popular music in the '70s – such as Split ENZ and Blerta (who combined music with film-making). A number of New Zealand publishers emerged, and the '70s and '80s brought a number of best-selling local novels. Media teaching was about encouraging young people to be both more critical *and* more creative, because earlier education had not done a good job of either. Such teaching was often seen as part of a larger jigsaw, the general campaign to construct a local media culture that would be strong in both theory and practice.[23]

Why was film the first medium campaigned for? Film had the greatest affinities with the book because of its emphasis on close reading and authorship (though 'the death of the

author' had already been announced). Also, the '70s came at the end of a great period of film-making, arguably the greatest period ever – the 20 or so years from the mid '50s to the mid '70s, which encompassed the peak years of the French New Wave, Godard's revolutionary films, great films by Bergman, Fellini, Antonioni, Hitchcock and Kubrick – and then, from 1967 to 1975, the golden age of American independent film. The '60s had seen the emergence (in New Zealand) of art house cinemas and film festivals. This had also been a golden age of film theory, starting with Bazin and *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Then from 1969 through the 70s, the British magazine *Screen* had introduced us to semiotics, structuralism, Lacan, and new forms of feminist and Marxist film theory.

Key tasks of the '70s

The recognition of film as an important art was of course a world-wide development, arriving at different times in different places. As Rancière has noted: 'What is interesting about film? In a certain sense, it is the paradox that film was once considered a despicable thing outside of real art. It's very striking that now when people think about authorship and art they don't think so much about, for example, sculptors, but about people like Godard. Film is now, I would say, in a certain way the paradigm of art.'[24]

As this new paradigm developed, what were the key tasks in New Zealand in the '70s? First, obviously, we had to learn how to carry out the serious study of films and other media. I have also mentioned support for the emerging New Zealand media industries. But there were other aims also. A key task was boosting the *status* of film, to give it equality with the book, or (Rancière's example) sculpture. Though we did not think in hierarchical terms, this was a battle we had to fight because status had so much influence on university and arts funding.

Another task for Film and Media Studies was to serve as a gateway, a place in the curriculum for new ideas of many kinds. The '70s was a period of intellectual upheaval. 'Theory' reached us later than the UK and the USA (which received it a decade or two after France). There were stirrings in the '70s (we drew on *Screen* magazine for our film courses) but it was not until the early '80s that there was a burst of New Zealand magazines powered by theory, still very controversial at the time – *New Zealand Cultural Studies Working Group Newsletter* (1981), *NZCSWG Journal* (1982-4*), Sites* (1984 on), *And* (1983-5)*, Antic* (1986-90)*,* and *Illusions* (1986 on). The best of this work was not merely in the import business because it offered new local modifications and applications of theory. It was also, in the particular context of New Zealand, a campaign not only to introduce new theories but to champion the importance of theory *per se*. New Zealand culture has always been strongly pragmatic - even anti-intellectual – to a greater extent than any other national tradition I know (including Australia's).[25] New Zealand Film and Media Studies have never gone overboard for theory, yet they have functioned as one of the strongest points of entry. The challenge they have always faced is how to make theory relevant and accessible to a culture that is so quick to dismiss such talk as pretentious intellectualism.

As a final task, Film Studies made it possible for important and historical films to be available for study. You can't imagine how difficult it was to see old or foreign films before video cassettes became readily available in the '80s. There is a technological history of media teaching in New Zealand to be written – the arrival of 16mm, then video tapes, then video cassettes, then DVD, then digital cameras and editing, email and the Internet. For both teachers and students, each decade has brought a distinctly different

media environment. In the ‘60s and ‘70s film study at any level was difficult since teachers had to work with temperamental 16mm projectors and vulnerable film prints. Feature films cost money to hire and their availability was limited. There was generally, at best, one 16mm copy of a film classic in Australasia. You could rent it for only a few days. And it was nerve-racking trying to do any close study – any stopping and starting - because if you broke or scratched the print, the damage was permanent. One reason my course attracted a number of film-makers in the ‘70s was because it was the only place in Auckland to see certain kinds of film. Later, any course with a video library of film classics was a magnet for young film-makers. Today, increased availability has largely eliminated this function of media courses, although I think students will always expect film and media teachers to be able to introduce them to good stuff they’re not yet aware of.

16mm is one of the reasons the early years don’t hold a nostalgic glow for media teachers. Sheer survival was the key issue. If I talk about my own experience, it’s simply to make you aware how different universities were then. I had the largest MA class at Auckland University, with 40 students each year from 1975 on, but resources were minimal because the class was seen as my personal eccentricity. I was considered lucky to be allowed to teach it at all, and it had to cost as little as possible. No campus rooms were set up for film screening so for many years I had to walk to the far end of the campus each time to borrow the university’s 16mm projector from the AV section, and return it after the class. I had to tape up curtains to create blackout, and negotiate complaints from other lecturers in the building who felt that the noise of the film was leaking through the walls. To minimize this problem, and to be able to fit feature films into the timetable, I scheduled classes at 4 pm onwards on Thursdays and Fridays. My budget for film hire was $300 per year. (I managed to lever it up to $300 by getting the course listed in Art History as well as English.[26]) The hire and shipping of prints was expensive, and considerable ingenuity was required to ensure that I had – by fair means or foul - a film print to screen each week. To expand the possibilities, I helped to run the Auckland Film Festival and the Film Society. It was a great blessing when video cassettes came along, but for the first years of cassettes I had to purchase most of them myself, both blanks and pre-recorded, to build up a class library, since English department policy was still ruled by a kind of technophobia. Meanwhile, I was prohibited by the Arts Faculty from introducing any undergraduate courses in film or television. My Masters paper was viewed as the kind of specialized enthusiasm that could be safely indulged only at graduate level.

Of course all new subjects have to spend time in the wilderness. English gradually became more supportive. I had good friends there, and even in the ‘70s it was more accommodating than most other departments. To cite one example, a young German lecturer who wanted to teach German films was prohibited by his HOD from going anywhere near them – whereupon he had the good sense to leave. (He went on to become a well-known Professor in Australia.)

As for research funding, I will offer one more personal anecdote. In 1972 Dr Wystan Curnow and I tried to obtain a modest amount of research money for a project on New Zealand popular culture. Noone was researching or documenting this ephemeral material, so we planned to collect stuff over a sample month, analyse it, and then donate it to the University library as a kind of time capsule. When we presented our idea to a committee of top professors, we were literally laughed out of the room. It continued to be a joke around the Arts Faculty that a couple of young academics had had the chutzpah to try to

score research money in order to see films, read comic books and listen to pop music. (Yeah right!) At this time our project was simply not 'thinkable' by the university.

I am no friend of Rogernomics, but it had some positive as well as negative effects on media teaching. Successive Labour and National governments wanted to encourage competition in the tertiary sector so they shifted funding to an EFTS or 'bums on seats' model. This had the effect of making Media Studies a lot more attractive to universities. The conservative HODs in Auckland were no longer able to prevent this vulgar femme fatale from seducing students away from more serious subjects. Between 1995 and 2005, EFTS at Auckland University in Film, Television and Media Studies– first as a Centre and later as a Department – increased steadily every year, from 45 in 1995 to 420 in 2005. This curve of growth made such a lovely graph that the University had no option but to take us seriously. It also meant that at last we came to be funded fairly. Some professors hoped to use us as a cash cow for the Faculty, but eventually the funding became transparent and fair.

To balance my cynicism, I should note that by the end of the '80s there had been a significant change in attitudes, and media teaching now received intellectual - not merely opportunistic - support.[27] Language and other Arts departments made increasing use of film because this medium was acknowledged to have become central to society. (Not that the medium's appeal to students was altogether irrelevant.) Lecture theatres were equipped with video projectors. Meanwhile, the underlying beancounter approach to education created a new problem. Media production teaching was expensive because it was dependent on equipment and small classes, and the government would not adequately weight the funding of such courses. At Auckland we solved the problem by cross-subsidy, covering losses on our production classes with the profits from our large history and theory classes. We continued to do this because we believed that any self-respecting media department needed some production teaching – theory and practice ought to inform each other.

As for PRBF, our programme was sufficiently established by the time this new funding model arrived – in 2003 – in order to benefit from the change. Still, I see some irony in the fact that PBRF – with its insistence upon refereed journals and other forms of academic status – may discourage the emergence of new subjects in the future. When I look back at my list of publications during the first 20 years of media teaching, I am struck by the fact that many would not qualify today – at that time there were simply no local refereed journals. The kinds of community work we did then would win few brownie points now. The PBRF model – based as it is on scientific research – is not a precise fit for the humanities. Cultural work that is truly new or experimental may fly beneath its radar.

High Schools

Meanwhile, what had been happening in schools? Film study was sanctioned by the external UE English exam only when the film selected was an adaptation of a novel considered worthy of inclusion in the literary canon. By 1977 there were six high schools in Auckland with film teaching as part of English, although there were also enthusiasts at work in Art, Social Studies, and other areas.[28] Any history needs to pay tribute to these pioneers who had the initiative to develop their own resources in an environment that was far from sympathetic. 1983 was a turning-point, starting with the establishment of the Association of Film and Television Teachers (later NAME or the National Association of

Media Educators) as a voluntary network of teachers who shared advice and lesson plans. This was not an official organization but an informal, grass-roots initiative.

In the same year media-related activities within the English classroom were legitimated by the innovative (and therefore controversial) *Statement of Aims: Forms 3-5* which incorporated not only films but a range of other media.[29] Not all teachers took advantage of the new approach, but the themes of 'watching,' 'viewing' and 'shaping' certainly encouraged them to use a more diverse range of texts.

I gained a sense of the change taking place in classrooms from the odd sales pattern of a textbook for high school film studies that I co-wrote with Philip Tremewan in 1980.[30] It is customary for a textbook to sell well in the first year or two and then to gradually tail off. The reverse happened to ours. Initial sales were appalling, but they increased each year until over 20,000 copies had been sold. This was clear evidence that film teaching grew steadily over the course of the decade.

High school English became a leading site of change in teaching methods and classroom materials. English teachers were a feisty group, with an increasing interest in media studies, feminist ideas, and Maori culture. There were lively conferences, particularly when a conservative academic such as C.K. Stead came to criticise the 1983 curriculum.[31] As an arena of change, schools moved ahead of universities in the '70s and early '80s.

The new English school curriculum gazetted in 1994 identified "visual language" as one of the three strands around which the subject was to be structured. There was again a struggle with conservative lobby groups such as the Business Roundtable who wanted English to return to a more old-fashioned approach to reading and writing. But teachers insisted on retaining the expanded conceptions of 'text,' 'reading' and 'literacy' that they had gained in the '80s. As one of the curriculum team I was pleased to see this kind of passage included: "The study of visual language, which draws on semiotics, provides an understanding of the ways in which visual and verbal elements are combined to produce particular meanings and effects…. It lays the foundation for advanced studies that extend beyond the scope of English, such as advanced design, media studies, or film-making".[32]

University media graduates have now become teachers. But the '90s have been frustrating in other respects. From the late '80s, as media studies courses multiplied in the universities, the tertiary sector caught up with the schools and surged ahead. Resources for the new school English curriculum were produced by people with only a limited understanding of the 'visual language' or semiotic aspects. NCEA no longer leaves enough time for practical film-making in English. Film is conspicuously absent from the new Arts curriculum[33] which is like a replay of the old Arts Council battles of the '70s. Meanwhile, though Media Studies has developed as a separate subject in schools, its growth has been slowed down by the lack of approval for a national curriculum. Campaigners Gordon Lawrence and Dr Geoff Lealand have vividly expressed the frustrations felt by media teachers over the past decade.[34]

From Film to Media Studies

Although I have argued that Film Studies brought a new paradigm to the university, the transition from Film to Media Studies was still difficult. Film was closer to the humanities, with its emphasis on art and authorship, close-reading, semiotics and post-structuralism, whereas media such as television were closer to the social sciences, with

their emphasis on sociology, anthropology, politics and commerce ('political economy'). By the end of the '80s, however, it was clear to us that the two sides could benefit from each other. Effectively we had the pleasure of making up a new subject. Our programme became a gathering place for those interested both in media issues and in contemporary cultural theory who felt unaccommodated by their own departments. So we had staff shifting from Sociology, European languages, and English. There were also contributions from Political Studies, Art History, and Anthropology. In one sense, this was necessary as the quickest way to staff a fast-growing programme, but more importantly it was a chance to develop an interdisciplinary dialogue. To learn to talk between the humanities and the social sciences involved a lot of patience and experiment but the results were worth it. We started a Stage Two "Film and Television Studies" course from this premise, applying both perspectives to both media.

I see other departments negotiating these traditions in their own way. In some places the communications tradition, with its emphasis on political economy, still exists separate from programmes with a cultural and textual approach. Film Studies sometimes prefers to keep its distance from Media Studies. To insist on separateness is a perfectly consistent position. There are students who want to study only film, or only media. During the first years of our interdisciplinary course on Film and Television, I remember the headaches when lecturers would contradict each other from one week to the next, in a way that left students baffled. Nevertheless, the space of overlap is still for me and for some of my colleagues the most interesting place to work. When Auckland University was at one time debating the possibility of regrouping Arts departments to form a Humanities group and a Social Sciences group, we insisted we would have to belong to both as we had so thoroughly merged the two traditions.

One of the other good things about creating a 'new' subject in the '70s and '80s was the constant struggle to persuade the university that our subject was solid. There were thoughtful academics who raised serious objections, and that exerted a useful pressure on our work. It was the necessary corollary to our desire to keep the subject open and exploratory – we still needed a clear starting-point. We found our ground in the media themselves, their industries and processes of production. Even if one's interest lay elsewhere (in aspects of consciousness), the media provided our point of reference. To quote our 1996 formulation: 'The social and cultural importance of the mass media of communication call for a centre of teaching and research where these media become a primary subject of enquiry. This enquiry needs to be informed by a knowledge of the media in their complex specificity – their particular histories and contexts and the traditions of theory and analysis that have developed around them.'

Now that our subject is firmly established, I hope it can still retain its sense of experiment. I am delighted that the list of recent research in my former department still strikes some academics as a baffling mixture. It includes, for example, a novel that won major literary awards in New Zealand and Australia; a book raising theoretical issues in painting and photography; a study of Scottish films and novels; a documentary about ethnic food cultures in New Zealand; a book on hyperreality and global culture; a documentary about a turn-of-century English composer; a study of trans-national popular music; and so on. Each of these projects is based on solid research and a sophisticated understanding of the medium it uses and/or discusses. The list of abstracts for this conference from other universities is no less rich. We need to keep re-inventing our subject, while continuing to mine its history. We need to be prepared to fight hard with our institutions to retain diversity in the staff we hire. At the same time there needs to be a centripetal as well as a

centrifugal impulse – we should always be clear what our subject is and why it is not some wishy-washy, pluralist hodge-podge.

A New Zealand approach to Media Studies

Has a local tradition of media studies developed? Particularly in the '70s and 80s, I think a distinctive tradition did emerge. It's a tradition based on practice as much as on theory, defined by teaching and research methods and social activism as much as by publications. This is not to imply that it does not also have a coherent intellectual position. To spell out the tradition, and its possible implications for our teaching today, is an attempt not to be prescriptive but simply to clarify our sense of where we have come from. This is a tradition that each of us can choose to build on, or modify, or ignore.

A LOCAL DIMENSION

(1) It is a first principle that anyone doing media studies in New Zealand should think about the implications of that location (such as the small size of the country, its marginality, its colonial history – issues that have strongly shaped its media environment). So far as possible, imported ideas and theories should be tested on the local situation and not simply asserted.

(2) Research on local media production and use needs to be one aspect of student and staff research in each media department. This is because local media history remains relatively under-documented, and because of the opportunities it provides for primary or field research.

(3) To study the local situation is not merely about strengthening our links with the community – it also has pedagogical value. The small size of the country and its struggle to build and sustain media industries make it interesting and graspable (on a workable scale) as a case study potentially of international interest.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

(4) From its beginnings in the '70s, local media teaching in the university had strong links with the community – with school teachers and the school curriculum, with the emerging media industries, and with public policy. This is one of several respects in which the character of New Zealand media studies is similar to that of Australia, which was developing film and television industries at the same time.

(5) Media studies began as a counterculture activity and there was a strong communal or cooperative spirit among the participants. The sense of a united front is not as strong today; but the proposal to create an 'association of media teachers,' if more than simply a vested interest group, can do much to refresh the links.

A STRONG INTEREST IN PRODUCTION

(6) Local media teaching was strongly associated with the '70s movement to make New Zealand into a more active, creative society with its own media industries. In today's period of rapid media change, academics have an on-going role to play in analyzing developments. Anyone involved in the local media industries is aware they are more vulnerable than most people realize, like an ecosystem highly

sensitive to any change in the environment. The challenge will be to sustain local production in a variety of forms and not merely on a small scale.

(7) An interest in production, and an understanding of it, inform some of the best media research and teaching. This is not merely a matter of 'industrial studies' but a broader awareness of the various contexts of construction that shape a text. (As I have suggested, there are links here with Australian Media Studies.)

Comment on media texts should be informed by a detailed understanding of their local contexts of funding and broadcasting. I have always been impressed by the way people who live in countries where government political censorship is strong develop a subtle understanding of when and how a film or television programme is pushing the boundaries. New Zealand producers face constricting pressures of other kinds – commercial and institutional – and local commentators should be alert to those nuances. This is not to discourage people from taking a critical view of local material but simply to require a knowledge of the pressures and an ability to recognise when boundaries are being pushed.

(8) We are strongly aware of distribution in all its forms because of the particular problems associated with it in this part of the world. More work on the subject can help to remedy the relative neglect that overseas Media Studies has paid to this factor. (Production and reception have been well researched but distribution tends to be a missing link.)

THEORY AND PRACTICE

(9) Involvement in the struggle to create media industries in New Zealand has helped to establish a strong dialogue between theory and practice. Of course there are complex debates surrounding the definitions of these words – 'theory,' 'practice' and 'dialogue.' But it is a strong feature of New Zealand Media Studies that we so often feel a need to debate these issues. At the most literal level, I would suggest that any media department benefits from the presence of film-makers or other active producers (as it does from media theorists and historians). If we are lucky, the categories will overlap or at least interact a lot. Similarly, a media department will benefit from having at least one production course.

DIVERSITY

(10) One of the revelations of the '70s for Pakehas was the discovery that Maori culture was a key part of New Zealand culture. Engaging seriously with that issue is important for any Media Studies programme.

(11) This is also the case with regard to the Pacific Island communities that make up an increasing part of our society and student population. And we need to engage with other ethnic and immigrant communities. This is one of the ways in which we can connect with the world and move beyond the limits of the Anglo-American tradition, which has tended to dominate Media Studies.

(12) Local media researchers have been very aware of the struggle to sustain a diversity of media forms in a small country – including the development of

specialized broadcasters (such as Maori television) and the defense of public service broadcasting (a very fragile tradition in this country).

LOCAL/GLOBAL

(13) 'Nationalism' and 'globalization' have always been hot issues for New Zealand, as for other small or post-colonial countries such as Australia. Both terms have acquired different nuances of meaning here than in countries such as England or the USA; and an anti-nationalist position regarded as left-wing in those countries may line up in New Zealand with right-wing, neo-liberal interests. It is healthy to have on-going debates about nationalism, but we should expect them to be informed by local traditions and local politics as well as by overseas points of view.

It is traditional for Media Studies academics to champion 'minority' forms of media, but notions of mainstream and minority also take on a different character in an extremely small semi-colony such as New Zealand. As for globalization, it has its own local set of positives and negatives. The advent of each new technology has brought to our media environment threats as well as opportunities different from those experienced by larger countries. New Zealand's smallness and marginality make it possible for us to contribute some distinctive experiences and perspectives to international debates.

Conclusion

I have celebrated the start-up phases of a new subject. I have sought to define the '70s/80s legacy of Media Studies in New Zealand. Personally I feel strongly that Media Studies should not be simply in the import business, functioning as the local franchise for overseas ideas – it should continue to be ambitious in developing a local tradition that draws on many sources while maintaining links with its region and community.

Admittedly some of the features of this tradition are not unique to New Zealand but are shared for example with Australia. It is odd that a media tradition that is not studied often enough in New Zealand is that of Australia. The production industries have many links across the Tasman but we need to develop more links in the academic world.[35] Graeme Turner has sought to do this from the Australian side, and it's a pleasure to see him again at this conference.

Our subject is now firmly established - it is time for the t-shirt, and almost time for the alumni reunion. But we should not allow the institutional definition of Media Studies to solidify. The '70s was a period of experiment, and we should try to retain some of that spirit. The subject should continue to be a strong entry point for new ideas, new methods, and new forms of interdisciplinary work. This does not mean that the university can locate Media Studies anywhere it finds convenient, pushing it into an arranged marriage with other disciplines. Media Studies has had fruitful links with Film, Theatre, Fine Arts, English, and other subjects, but such relationships need to develop over time and be mutually desired.

I have argued that the most productive forms of Media Studies I have seen in my vicinity have involved a dialogue between the humanities and the social sciences. That is a broad

definition but it serves to distinguish us from other subjects that deal with media texts but remain firmly based in one of the two camps (for example, English on one side and Political Studies on the other). This issue crops up when some Media Studies departments today no longer include anyone from a film tradition, thus risking the loss of certain skills of textual or aesthetic analysis.

Learning 'to speak both languages well' is one way to ensure that the openness and interdisciplinary spirit of Media Studies never reduce the subject to a muddle of 'anything goes' – like the diluted versions of Cultural Studies that have developed in some overseas departments.

Today we are all living through a period of accelerated change similar to the start of the 20th century, when in a short period of time people had to come to terms with cars, aeroplanes, films, radios and telephones. Today we are experiencing the concentrated impact of digital information technology. Although Rancière reminds us that technology does not, in a McLuhan-esque way, directly determine consciousness, it is clear that a new distribution of the sensible is developing around us.

Media Studies faces the challenge of continuing to be the most active site for debating and interpreting these changes. The need for all citizens to be media savvy has intensified. As lecturers and teachers we have a lot of work to do to keep up with the changes. I have described a similar situation in the '70s when teachers had to absorb a wave of change – not only new forms of film but the advent of television, second wave feminism, Maoritanga, and the many forms of French theory. Today Media Studies must run even faster to maintain its reputation as the key subject where contemporary culture is confronted and analysed.

And this is another reason why the subject needs to remain open and not become a new establishment with new hierarchies, new cliques and new clichés. Again, Rancière is eloquent in reminding us of the dangers of too much order.[36] Media studies is – or should be – a subject perpetually in the start-up phase, and this calls for a particular sort of departmental and professional culture. I've spoken a lot about community. This is always at its best when people can debate and disagree yet remain good colleagues. It doesn't always happen, alas, but hopefully this conference and the proposed association are going to embody that spirit.

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[1] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society,* London, Flamingo, 1983 (expanded edition), p.203. Williams noted the 'rapid popularization' of the term 'since the 1950s' (p.204).

[2] Gordon Lawrence, HOD Media Studies, Pakuranga College, Auckland. (See Lawrence's 2000 'Overview of Media Education in New Zealand': http://www.waikato.ac.nz/film/NAME/script/casestudy.html)

[3] Geoff Lealand, 'The *Lord of the Rings* effect: media teaching in New Zealand,' paper for the 2006 ATOM Conference (Canberra). For earlier figures, see Gordon Lawrence's 2000 Overview cited in the previous footnote.

[4] Jacques Rancière, *The politics of aesthetics,* trans. Gabriel Rockhill. London, Continuum, 2004.

[5] I certainly remember some with gratitude – for example, my English teachers J.G. Brown and Tom Newman.

[6] See, for example, Redmer Yska's *All shook up: The flash bodgie and the rise of the New Zealand teenager in the fifties,* Auckland, Penguin, 1993.
[7] See, for example, Chris Watson and Roy Shuker's *In the public good?: censorship in New Zealand*, Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1998.
[8] From an interview in *Marti: The passionate eye,* documentary directed by Shirley Horrocks, Point of View Productions, 2004.
[9] Cf: 'Dr Orange arrived in Canterbury in July 1962 to a vastly different university than today [as] academic staff wore gowns and students were called "Miss" or "Mr"' ('Playing a part in history,' *Chronicle,* University of Canterbury, vol.38 no.5, 17 April 2003, p.8).
[10] Anglo-American media coverage is so influential in New Zealand that local memories of the '60s have become thoroughly confused with the overseas history and mythology of that decade.
[11] Cf. Ranginui Walker, *Struggle without end,* Auckland, Penguin, 1990.
[12] Christine Dann, *Up from under: women and liberation in New Zealand, 1970-1985,* Wellington, Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1985.
[13] John Dixon, *Growth through English: a report based on the Dartmouth seminar 1966*, London: National Association of Teachers of English, 1967.
[14] E.g. 'The sting' (editorial), *NZ Listener,* 15 February 1975.
[15] Susy Pointon, 'The independents: the creation of a New Zealand film industry,' PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2006.
[16] Simon Sigley, 'Film culture: its development in New Zealand, 1929-1972,' PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2003.
[17] John O'Shea, 'A stab at screen education,' *Comment,* July 1963.
[18] See, for example, Graeme Turner's comments in *The Australian TV book,* ed. Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham, St Leonards (NSW), 2000, pp.9-10 (or Turner's other books on Australian media).
[19] Examples include Blerta's films, or the Huia feature-film *Test pictures.*
[20] Deborah Shepard, 'Reframing women: a history of women and film in New Zealand,' University of Auckland, PhD thesis, 1999; and *Reframing women: a history of New Zealand film,* Auckland, HarperCollins, 2000.
[21] 'Oppositional voices: radical left documentary in Aotearoa New Zealand,' University of Auckland, PhD thesis, 2005.
[22] 'New Zealand television drama: the first thirty years 1960-1990,' University of Auckland, PhD thesis, 1999; and *Ourselves in primetime: a history of New Zealand television drama,* Auckland, AUP, 2005.
[23] For example, see my editorial on the various 'ingredients' of 'film culture' in *Alternative Cinema,* February 1979, p.4.
[24] Truls Lie, 'Our police order: what can be said, seen and done' (interview with Jacques Rancière), *Le Monde diplomatique:* http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-08-11-lieranciere-en.html
[25] I document this in my essay 'A short history of "the New Zealand intellectual"' *Speaking truth to power: public intellectuals rethink New Zealand,* ed. Laurence Simmons, Auckland, AUP, 2007.
[26] HOD Tony Green and his colleagues were always supportive. Art historian Robin Scholes co-taught the Film Studies course with me in 1975-76 before embarking on a film-making career (as producer of such films as *Once were warriors, Rain, Broken English,* and *Crooked earth*).
[27] The new, supportive approach was represented at my university by Vice-Chancellor John Hood and Deans Warren Moran and Doug Sutton. HODs Michael Neill (English), Barry Reay (History), and Andrew Sharp (Political Studies) were also strong allies. Long-term supporters included Joe Atkinson, Suzanne Tyndel, and Lee Wallace, among others.
[28] See Roger Horrocks, 'Experiments in film teaching', *English in New Zealand,* July 1977.
[29] *English: Forms 3-5 statement of aims,* Wellington, Department of Education, 1983.
[30] Roger Horrocks and Philip Tremewan, *On film,* Auckland, Heinemann, 1980. An expanded second edition (*On film II*) was published in 1986.
[31] See *NZATE Newsletter,* No.4, July 1982, pp.4-5.
[32] Ministry of Education, *English in the New Zealand curriculum,* Wellington, Learning Media, 1994, p.39.
[33] Ministry of Education (2000) *The arts in the New Zealand curriculum*, Wellington, Learning Media Limited, 2000. Cf. the comments on p.9 of Roger Horrocks and Ngaire Hoben's 2005 report, *Media Studies and English in the New Zealand curriculum*: http://www.tki.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/docs/media-studies-and-eng.doc.
[34] Lealand and Lawrence, op. cit. (footnote 1).
[35] There are some relevant comments in Lealand's 'Life after hobbits: the New Zealand screen industry in 2006,' *Media International Australia,* no.121, November 2006.
[36] 'The lesson of Rancière,' Slavoj Zizek's afterword to Rancière's *The politics of aesthetics,* offers a useful summary.

APPENDIX: A timeline of media teaching in New Zealand

by Roger Horrocks

Early contexts

[See Simon Sigley's 'Film culture: its development in New Zealand 1929-1972' *(PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2003) for the earliest history.]*

1941: A National Film Unit is established. A National Film Library for schools is. established in the following year.
1946: A new Federation of Film Societies is established. It runs an annual Film School in Wellington from 1954 on.
1960: Television finally reaches New Zealand.
1962: The Lido, the first of a new style of 'art house' cinemas, opens in Auckland.
1963: John O'Shea teaches a lunchtime film course at Wellington High School.
(O'Shea attempts to create a NZ feature film industry with *Runaway* in 1964 and *Don't let it get you* in 1966, but runs out of resources.)
1960s: a few other enthusiasts do some informal film teaching at schools, outside the curriculum. Meanwhile other enthusiasts offer 'adult education' or WEA courses on film.
Late 60s/early 70s: the Curriculum Development Unit of the Education Department (Peter Miles) and the National Film Library encourage the use of film and other media as teaching aids in schools. 'Educational technology' courses are offered to teachers.
Late 60s/through the 70s: a new wave of young film-makers emerges. They make documentaries, short dramas, and experimental films.
1969: First Auckland International Film Festival.

1970s contexts

1972: The Alternative Cinema coop is established in Auckland. Many film-makers use the equipment available at its Hobson Street headquarters. Alternative Cinema publishes a magazine (1972-1986) which serves as a useful record of this period of film culture.
1970s: Video cameras (with reel to reel tapes) become available. Universities and schools purchase some cameras. Video cassettes are launched on the American market circa 1977. There is a war between VHS and Beta, won by VHS which comes into wide use in the '80s.
1977: Sleeping Dogs is the first of a new *wave* of 35mm feature films in New Zealand.
1978: Finally after many years of lobbying, the Government agrees to establish a NZ Film Commission.

Universities

1958: Maurice Askew becomes lecturer in Design at Ilam School of Fine Arts at Canterbury.
In the'70s Askew (who had worked at Granada Television) teaches film making to students such as Vincent Ward and Tim White. . He retires in 1981.
1965: Tom Hutchins becomes the first full-time lecturer in Photography at the University of Auckland. He begins to teach film-making to students such as Leon Narbey and

Rodney Charters. Around 1970 he champions the idea of a university film school, but his attempt is not successful. Hutchins retires in 1981.
1972: A film course (Film Analysis, at 300 level) is first offered in Drama Studies at Victoria University in 1972, taught Phillip Mann. In the late 1970s Dr David Carnegie joins the Drama Studies staff and introduces History and Criticism of Film at 200 level.
1975: Film Studies is introduced as an MA subject at Auckland University *(*via the English Department, in association with Art History). Roger Horrocks has been attempting to get permission for this course since 1970. For the first two years, Robin Scholes co-teaches the course with Roger before leaving to make her career in film and television. In 1979 the first Film Studies thesis is completed (Karl Mutch's 'Two New Zealand Film Makers: A Critical Study').
1970s: Professor Bob Chapman at Auckland University encourages his Political Studies students to take a serious interest in the role of the media in politics. In 1974 he begins to compile a unique archive of radio and television news broadcasts (recording them on audiotape until the mid-'80s when he starts to use videotape).

1970s schools
1977: By now some enthusiasts are doing film teaching as part of high school English. classes (described in 'Experiments in Film Teaching', *English In New Zealand,* July 1977).

1980s contexts
1980s: Video becomes popular equipment in homes.
1981: Jonathan Dennis establishes the NZ Film Archive.
Mid-'80s: First campus email systems (1984 at Victoria, 1985 Auckland). Personal compu ters are becoming more common.
1986: *Illusions* magazine begins publication.
1980s universities
1980: Chris Watson introduces an 'Educational Technology and Media' course at Massey. In 1981 this becomes two papers, one of them focusing on the analysis of media texts, In subsequent years, various film papers are introduced at Massey.
1981: The NZ Cultural Studies Working Group is formed at Massey and begins publishing a newsletter. (This becomes *Sites* in 1984.) The group is influenced by Birmingham but seeks to develop 'a distinctively New Zealand cultural studies.'
1982: Russell Campbell joins the staff at Victoria and *revives* film teaching within Drama Studies.
Mid-'80s: Media Studies is introduced at Massey as an interest shared by Graeme Bassett, Roy Shuker, Chris Watson (Education), *Steve* Maharey and Brennon Wood (Sociology), and others. A Diploma in Media Studies is offered.
1986: The first Film Studies PhD at Auckland University is completed by Brian McDonnell ('The Translation of New Zealand Fiction into Film').
1987: Waikato introduces a first year 'film appreciation' paper, followed by 'NZ Film' at 2nd year and 'Film Genre' at 3rd year. These are taught by Sam Edwards and Stan Jones, and initially linked through Jones with the German Department.

1980s schools
1983: The *Statement of Aims: Forms* 3-5 (new English curriculum for schools) includes 'watching, viewing and shaping.'
1983: The Association of Film and Television Teachers is established as a grass-roots network of high school teachers who share advice and resources. AFTT commences

the publication of *Script* (still being published today). AFTT later became NAME (National Association of Media Educators).
1984: Media Studies is offered for the first time as a subject in secondary schools, for Sixth Form Certificate (which was internally assessed).

1990s contexts
1990s: Rapid development of the Internet
1996: First DVDs.

1990s universities
1990: Drama Studies at VUW becomes the Department of Theatre and Film. John Downie begins teaching Film Production.
From 1994: *NZ Journal of Media Studies.* Initially hosted by Massey University, this magazine was later hosted by Victoria University and available on-line (http://www.nzmediastudies.org.nz/).
1994: The Centre for Film, Television and Media Studies is established at Auckland. University (it becomes a Department in 2000).
1995: A Media Studies programme is initiated by Brian McDonnell at Massey's new Auckland campus.
1997: Theatre and Film at VUW becomes part of a new School of English, Film and Theatre. Today the school also includes a Media Studies programme.
1998 Media Studies at Massey becomes part of a School of English and Media Studies.

1990s schools
1991: AFTT broadens its coverage from 'film and television' to 'media' – and becomes NAME.
1994: The new school English curriculum includes 'visual language' (along with oral and written language).
1995: NAME prepares a detailed Media Studies curriculum for schools but is unable to gain official acceptance for it. .
1999: The Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) conference is hosted for the first time in New Zealand (by NAME and the Universlty of Auckland).

2000-2007
2000s: Digital cameras become common. Also cellphones with cameras, iPods, and hard-drive recording (My Sky, etc).
2001: FTVMS at Auckland University introduces a new production programme in the old TVNZ building in Shortland Street (later the Kenneth Myers Centre).
2002: Medianz is established as an on-line discussion group for Media Studies staff and students.
2003: Level 2 Achievement Standards for Media Studies are introduced.
2004: Level 3 Achievement Studies are introduced; also, Media Studies becomes a Scholarship subject. (The Ministry is not willing to authorise Standards for *Level* 1.)'
2007: Medianz Conference is held at Victoria *University.*

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