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## INTRODUCTION: JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISM STUDIES IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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This book is a response to the need for new theoretical and analytical perspectives on the condition of journalism and the public sphere in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is now more than ten years since McGregor and Comrie (2002) published the last of their edited volumes on the state of the country's news media, and nearly four years since the publication of the second edition of the vocationally oriented and widely used textbook, *Intro to Journalism* (Tully, 2008). Local journalism and news media researchers and educators have hardly been inactive in the interim period. The emergence of new journalism and media-related degrees at several universities, the ongoing contribution of local journals like the *Pacific Journalism Review*, the increased visibility of New Zealand-related journalism research in national and international journals, and the more general expansion of media and communication studies, all point to a stronger, more institutionally secure, academic identity.

That said, when evaluated critically, it is hard to disagree with Matheson's (2010) assessment that the Aotearoa New Zealand journalism and news media literature is still at a relatively embryonic stage, and that the particulars of the local journalism culture have yet to be satisfactorily captured by academic researchers. Moreover, the range of analytical perspectives informing the academic and wider public discussion of journalism in Aotearoa New Zealand has been narrow and stifling, indicative of a wider historical aversion to the value of self-consciously intellectual and theoretical investigations into journalistic culture and practice (Zelizer, 2004).

*Scooped: The Politics and Power of Journalism in Aotearoa New Zealand* has, from a general editorial perspective, two interlinked objectives. First, in line with wider international trends (see Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009), it signals the emergence of a more theoretically sophisticated and critically engaged journalism studies identity in Aotearoa New Zealand. As in many other countries, journalism has been historically thought of as a vocational trade in New Zealand; more as a domain of skills-based 'training', rather than scholarship and academic learning. This has consequently put limits on how journalism, and journalism education, are conceived within the academy and the wider culture, and has been the site of an often-fraught cultural politics about what journalism is and what it should be. For example, consider the repressive assumptions – later interrogated by some commentators – underpinning the *Dominion Post's*

(2011) recent matter-of-fact assertion that investigative journalist Nicky Hager, one of the contributors to this book, “in the common definition of the craft...is not” a journalist.

A skills-based practitioner perspective on journalism and journalism education may be essential – in fact, it would be hard to know what a robust journalism curriculum would look like without it. Yet, this collection assumes that a narrow focus on skills and the self-contained perspective of the practitioner is not enough if we want to understand the political, social, cultural and civic importance of the “journalistic field” (Bourdieu, 2005) *to all of us* in today’s mediated democracies. Journalism and news media analysis in Aotearoa New Zealand should also be a domain of serious scholarship and learning, which doesn’t have to apologise for using conceptual frameworks that challenge the standard commonsense discourses about journalistic practice and the role of the media in our everyday lives.

Second, this book wants to explicitly situate journalism *itself* as a form of cultural practice, politics and power. In one sense, everyone has opinions on the power of journalists and the news media. Yet, in another, mainstream journalists in Aotearoa New Zealand are often too quick to represent power as something others have, rather than something asserted by journalists themselves. Characterising journalistic practice as a form of power and cultural politics is itself a political gesture, though not in some simple-minded ideological sense. It is political because it wants to critically interrogate the dominant assumptions of the local journalistic culture and celebrate, rather than condemn, the divergent approaches taken by academics and practitioners to understanding journalism.

*Scooped* examines some of the most pressing economic, political, cultural and technological issues facing journalism and the “mediated polity” (Kemp, 2010) in Aotearoa New Zealand. Approaching journalism as a field of cultural production, the book brings together contributions from a diverse list of academics and journalists, thereby ensuring that no single perspective dominates others. Contributors may sometimes disagree and contradict each other. They may also write in quite different registers: some more theoretical, some more personal. Yet all are united by their shared concerns about the current state of journalism and the public sphere in Aotearoa New Zealand, in what some have described as a time of multiple “crises” for Anglo-American journalism cultures (Gitlin, 2009).

These crises involve both ideological and commercial issues. There is a perceived loss of professional confidence in many quarters as journalists struggle with competition from non-journalist sources in the blogosphere and what we can roughly describe as ‘citizen journalism’. There is also a well founded apprehension that the industrial business models that dominated journalism and news production in the 20th century are broken. The head of the famous

Sulzberger family (owner of the *New York Times*), Arthur Sulzberger, has described the financial situation facing newspapers as a “perfect storm” (Hirst, 2011). While it is important to tease out the contours and dynamics of both the political-ideological crisis and the economic uncertainty, it is also essential to note their distinct, if entangled, natures. Both appear to be driven by the digital revolution – the appearance of new technological paradigms that shift the balance of power away from traditional media. However, it would be a mistake to assume the ‘technogenic’ nature of this crisis period, as Hirst’s chapter argues. It is more than technology-driven, particularly in a context of global economic decline and the crisis in media outlets’ traditional advertising model. The news media is, first and foremost, big business, and the fortunes of the news industry are inextricably linked to those of the general capitalist economy – particularly in an economy as vulnerable to transnational capital flows as Aotearoa New Zealand (see Hope, chapter 2).

### Journalism, power and the fourth estate

Where does the power of journalism reside? This question is tackled in different ways by different contributors to this volume. The answer is partly determined by how one understands the concept of power. One argument in the political economy of communication research tradition (see chapters 1, 2 and 5 by Hope, Hirst, & Thompson) is that the power of the news media is based on the close economic, political and personal relationships between those who own and control the media and a network of corporate, political and cultural elites (Wasko, Murdock, & Sousa, 2011). McChesney (2000) calls this scenario “rich media, poor democracy” because it means that instead of serving the public interest, the news media often serve the interests of corporate oligarchs and shareholders. This ownership and control model provides a solid foundation for observing how power works in the interlinked industries of news, telecommunications and entertainment, particularly in an Aotearoa New Zealand media system and culture dominated by market-driven logics (Ellis, 2010). However, it doesn’t always account for situations where the independence of journalists asserts itself in exposure of corporate malfeasance or political intrigue and lies. Nor does it clearly capture the specifically cultural dimensions of journalism practice, as Matheson (chapter 7) suggests. It also downplays the significance of media representational power as a form of power in its own right – what Phelan (chapter 4) describes as the media’s power to constitute, rather than just simply report on, social reality.

Bourdieu’s concept of the field helps us conceptualise the power struggles and relational dynamics between different social spaces – the economic field, the political field, the cultural field and so on – each of which operates according to

its own distinct set of practices and logics (Benson and Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 1998). The journalistic field can be understood as the site of an inherently political conflict between different values systems and objectives. On the one hand, the culture of most newsrooms in capitalist liberal democracies like Aotearoa New Zealand is based on a strong sense of professional independence and an idealistic belief – the one that continues to draw students to journalism courses – that journalism should be on the side of social justice. The early 20th century journalist and writer Finley Peter Dunne mythologised this role as one of “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable”. On the other hand, these ‘pure’ journalistic objectives are locked into an ongoing structural conflict with two external forces: first, the economic power of media capital and corporations; and second, the often-repressive effects of the dominant commonsense assumptions within any particular cultural formation – including, as Richard Pamatau (chapter 11) illustrates, within the cultural practices of the newsroom itself. These tensions are embodied in different perspectives on the fourth estate model, which, as Comrie (chapter 7) shows, remains a key conceptual framework for understanding journalistic identities in Aotearoa New Zealand (also see Hollings, Lealand, Samson and Tilley, 2007; Matheson, 2007). To its supporters, the model is the normative basis of journalism’s role in a democracy. To its critics, however, it is part of a subtle ideological mechanism that legitimises the status quo, naturalises the assumptions of a capitalist society, and deflects attention from a wider infrastructure of power beyond the world of the Beehive, in which media institutions are themselves implicated.

The term ‘fourth estate’ has come to signify the news media’s assumption of an independent ‘watchdog’ role that should be protected and encouraged within the normal workings of liberal democracies (Louw, 2005). The social power of the role is said to derive from the vocational commitment of journalists to “speak truth to power” and to always act “on behalf of the people” (Schultz, 1998, p. 1). The term was first articulated this way in late 18th-century England, at a time when the institution of the press was rallying around the democratic ideals of an emerging class of merchants and industrialists. This new social strata – the bourgeoisie – was anxious to shake off the political and cultural shackles of earlier modes of economic production and establish capitalism as the dominant socio-economic formation.

English political thinker Thomas Carlyle attributed the ‘fourth estate’ label to the conservative political theorist and parliamentarian Edmund Burke who, in 1787, reportedly used the term during a parliamentary debate about allowing the press gallery to gather news more freely in the corridors of monarchical power. According to Carlyle, Burke said there were “Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters’ Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all”. Carlyle used the phrase in his 1837 book on the French Revolution to

praise the activities of independent reporters and publishers who supported the democratic aspirations of the growing European bourgeoisie.

From the late 18th to the early 20th century, the social power of the fourth estate was aligned with the interests and aspirations of small business, private enterprise and the emerging capitalist class. This rubbed off on the mainly male journalists of the time. From the 1860s to the early 20th century, the “dominant occupational strategy” for journalists was to turn themselves into independent publishers (Kaul, 1986, p. 51). However, this wasn’t always a successful strategy. For those who failed in this entrepreneurial exercise, the only alternative was to work ‘penny-a-line’, or go on the staff of a larger, more successful publisher. By the time the Industrial Revolution was completing its work, the competitive ethos of a now socially embedded capitalism soon replaced the earlier revolutionary ideals. So much so that, within 100 years of Burke’s parliament speech, another Anglo-Irish writer of a more caustic bent, Oscar Wilde, wrote scathingly of the fourth estate, lamenting that public opinion was now at the mercy of bad journalism:

*In old days men had the rack. Now they have the press. That is an improvement certainly. But still it is very bad, and wrong, and demoralising. Somebody – was it Burke? – called journalism the fourth estate. That was true at the time no doubt. But at the present moment it is the only estate. It has eaten up the other three. The Lords Temporal say nothing, the Lords Spiritual have nothing to say, and the House of Commons has nothing to say and says it. We are dominated by journalism (Wilde, 1891).*

The parallel emergence of a newspaper industry and fourth estate identity in 19th-century Aotearoa New Zealand was – as Abel, McCreanor and Moewaka Barnes (chapter 3) observe – part of the bigger political project of establishing the colonial state. Significantly, in the same year that Wilde’s observations were published, an organisation uniting journalists, editors and proprietors was being established in New Zealand to put daily journalism on a more ‘professional’ level. The alliance of owners and news-workers, organised under the rubric of the New Zealand Institute of Journalists, was intended to raise journalism above what, at times in the 19th century, had been perceived as a ‘disreputable’ occupation (Cryle, 1997). However, the desire for greater professional legitimacy and social status was marked by certain contradictions. Elsaka (2005) observes that “the ethos of professionalism that surrounded journalistic work [in New Zealand] was at odds with the reality of journalists’ wages and working conditions” (Elsaka, 2005, p. 76). As Wilde’s comment highlights, the bourgeois ideals of the fourth estate were gradually tarnished by the rise of a more commercially-oriented journalism in the 19th century, a historical theme that is traced right up to the present in Hope’s work (chapter 2) on the evolution of the Aotearoa New Zealand public sphere.

By the 1890s, the radical enthusiasm of pioneering Victorian news-workers had given way to the industrial system of journalism associated with the newspaper barons of London and New York, where editors and publishers were of a higher social class and often already rich from other business activity (Ornebring, 2010). By the 1930s, journalism was turned into a form of process work – turning facts and opinion into commodities to create a form of news palatable to advertisers, captains of industry and political masters. The destruction of what was essentially a craft-based form of journalism by the large news machines of the industrial age created new political demands from commercial and social elites, whose own public legitimacy was increasingly dependent on mass communications channels. In the 20th century, rather than agitating for change as independent bourgeois news proprietors had done during the French and American revolutions, and in the revolt against newspaper taxes in Europe, the role of the press became one of ‘manufacturing consent’ for the existing social and economic order. The wheel has turned so far today that many commentators decry how journalism has now become a form of ‘churnalism’, where it is argued that a steady diet of commercial propaganda, government spin and corporate PR has almost completely replaced public interest news (Davies, 2008).

However, consent is, by its very nature, a two-way process that involves the dominated classes acceding to someone else’s power in return for perceived benefits. Despite the widespread contamination of journalism’s public interest objectives by commercial logics, the news media still assert some public legitimacy and independence, some field ‘autonomy’ from the business side of news, but this autonomy is limited and the journalistic field remains a semi-autonomous sphere of action (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 41).

Today, many would argue that it is the ethos of journalistic professionalism that best assumes the mantle of the traditional fourth estate model and the noble idea that journalists are there ‘to serve the people’. The historical outcome of these competing social pressures, in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere, is a professional journalism ideology comprised of an uneasy and unstable blending of fourth estate principles; a sense of professional pride based on perceived codes and educational barriers to entry; and a residual social democratic identification with an industrial trade union ethos and a class focus on news as labour (Hirst, 1997).

Writing in 1998, Julianne Schultz (1998) argued that the principles of the fourth estate could be revived, though she knew at the time it would be difficult because of the rise of “junk journalism” (p. 231). Despite the corrosive effects of news sensationalism (Louw, 2005), the ideals of the fourth estate still motivate many journalists. The most recent survey of New Zealand journalists suggested that most felt “the media was generally performing

its watchdog role well” (Hollings et al, 2007, p. 175), though less sanguine respondents “indicated that the watchdog role could not be performed without more journalists on staff, more time allocated to pursue investigations, and more pay to attract and retain experienced journalists both to perform investigations and to mentor newer staff into the investigative role” (p. 187). These concerns about resourcing illustrate the extent to which the question of the future of the fourth estate, and the possible alternatives to that model, is enmeshed with a far bigger issue: questions about the very future of journalism itself in the digital age (Hirst, 2010). Two chapters in this volume discuss this issue in detail.

Hirst (chapter 2) argues that the internet suggests the possibility of a more democratically empowering model of journalism, which links the blogosphere and the world of user-generated news-like content with professional journalism. His hope is that this might potentially give journalism much greater autonomy from the news industry. Manning (chapter 10) discusses how his own transition into internet-based journalism was a response to the failure of the commercialised mainstream media to serve fourth estate ideals. Rather than renouncing the fourth estate model, Manning argues that it can be reclaimed by an online model of citizen journalism that transcends the arid objectivity norms of mainstream journalism practices.

## Comparatively situating Aotearoa New Zealand journalism

The argument put forward in *Scooped* is that the Aotearoa New Zealand journalistic field’s interaction with wider power structures in society is defined both by contextual factors – political, economic, cultural and ideological – and by journalism itself, a set of practical schemes that determine what is important, appropriate and preferred in the everyday work of journalists. This set of practical schemes, often taken for granted and unconscious, that Bourdieu (2005) calls the journalistic *doxa* holds the key to understanding the basis of journalists’ professional authority to mediate – thereby simultaneously constructing – reality for their readers. In a national context, this ethos of journalism assumes a specific form of symbolic power that allows journalism to function as a coherent interpretative community (Zelizer, 1993), which is a by-product of particular national histories, institutional conditions, and political and socio-economic formations.

The question of where journalism in Aotearoa New Zealand stands in comparative context to other journalism cultures hinges on the question of how journalistic norms, values, conventions and strategies *here* differ from journalism in other parts of the world. Although the history of national journalism has still

to be written,<sup>1</sup> our contributors agree that Aotearoa New Zealand journalism shares the general characteristics of other Anglo-American journalism cultures. The prevailing British influence on the development of the press has been colourfully described as a kind of “enduring hangover from the days of the British Empire” (Norris 2001, p. 85), a genealogy encapsulated in the ongoing naming of the country’s second biggest-selling daily newspaper as the *Dominion Post*. Patrick Day’s (1990) history of the New Zealand press demonstrates, for example, how newspapers in the first half of the 19th century, like the press in the USA and UK a few decades earlier, generally reflected the point of view of one person – their publisher. Newspapers acted as political advocates for individual politicians until the 1860s, when, with the establishment of the *Otago Daily Times*, New Zealand newspapers began a circulation growth as “the increase in population made it possible for the first time for newspapers to be profitable commercial concerns” (Day, 1990, p. 235).

Different features of the Aotearoa New Zealand journalistic field, both in terms of its historical formation and current condition, are explored in *Scooped*. Abel, McCreanor and Moewaka Barnes (chapter 4) discuss how the ongoing tendency to represent Maori identities in sensationalist and negative ways can be traced back to newspapers’ political desire to legitimise the colonial state and disparage the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi settlement. Matheson (chapter 7) examines the poor quality of Aotearoa New Zealand’s international news coverage, and highlights the factors that reproduce an ‘insular Anglo-Americanism’ and ‘neo-colonial’ sensibility in the journalistic culture. Pamatatau (chapter 11) reflects on his time as Radio New Zealand’s Pacific Issues Correspondent, and probes the unconscious stereotypes that were projected on to his ‘Pacific identity’ by newsroom colleagues. Gajevic’s case study analysis of the newspaper coverage of Russell Coutts’ departure from the Team New Zealand yachting team documents how nationalist discourses ideologically define the submissive position of individuals, journalists included, in relation to the supremacy of the New Zealand nation (chapter 8).

One reoccurring theme relates to the rise of the journalism profession. Day says that the social position of the journalist was highly regarded in the early years of the colonial state. Journalists belonged to a respected profession with “publicly recognised political influence and power” (Day 1990, p. 168). The contrast with the present seems stark. A 2008 *Reader’s Digest* survey of trusted professions in New Zealand ranked journalists 34<sup>th</sup> out of 40, only a few spots above astrologers (35<sup>th</sup>), prostitutes (36<sup>th</sup>), real estate agents and car salesmen (38<sup>th</sup>), politicians (39<sup>th</sup>) and telemarketers (40<sup>th</sup>). Similar international surveys show that, over

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most significant attempts to profile the historical development of the New Zealand journalism profession is Elsaka (2004).

the past 20 years, the public view of journalism's professional respectability has plummeted, but legitimising appeals to journalistic professionalism continue to be invoked (Hirst, 2011). The ideological implications of professionalism are discussed by Hirst (chapter 2). He argues that the discourse of professionalism is something of a dead end for a robust journalistic culture, because it masks the degree to which the dominant conception of professionalism is ideologically complicit with a capitalist media infrastructure that is now in crisis. Similarly, Hager (chapter 13) argues that the development of a robust professional journalistic identity in Aotearoa New Zealand has to be nurtured independently from the news industry, because the commercial imperatives of the latter are the enemies of good journalism.

The form, structure, content, and design of the news in Aotearoa New Zealand follow the cultural patterns and conventions of journalism in the USA and the UK. When asked to list the main values that define their work, New Zealand journalists state a set of journalistic norms that can be found in any democracy: accuracy, objectivity, fairness, balance, integrity, and independence (Lealand, 2004). Still, when asked where these principles can be found in written form or what document clarifies them, there is a kind of confusion: is it in the Press Council's Statement of Principles, the union's code of ethics or the news organisation's style book?

Journalistic self-regulation in New Zealand, and the process of monitoring journalistic standards and handling disputes, follows the general norms of "liberal media systems" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), in that it is organised in a relatively informal way within individual news organisations or the wider news industry. In the United States there is no press council or press complaints commission; in Canada local press councils, voluntary and relatively weak, are funded by the press; in Britain the Press Complaints Commission is still run by the newspaper industry; and in Ireland the recently established Press Council asserts its independence from both the news industry and government. The processes of journalistic self-regulation in New Zealand, "the vehicles for media responsibility and accountability" (Tully & Elsaka, 2002) are largely voluntary and reactive to complaints rather than proactive – with the New Zealand Press Council regulating the print industry and the Broadcasting Standards Authority governing the television and radio industry.

The discrepancy between the journalistic ideals of providing context and background to a story, and the reality, where journalists produce stories around 'rent-a-quote' sources, has consequences for the quality of news coverage, as Comrie's chapter on political reporting discusses (chapter 6). In line with an increasing division of labour in the newsroom, the journalistic job has changed instead of being gatherers of news, journalists have become news processors. These global changes take a specific form in different national contexts, and

one of the key objectives of *Scooped* is to capture some of the particulars of the Aotearoa New Zealand news culture. What we know from existing comparative studies is that a vibrant news culture comes about as a result of an “intervening variable between people – journalists, sources or public – and a given ‘objective’ situation – political and economic context, legal framework, media events, organisations, infrastructures, and systems, through which citizens inform or are informed” (Deuze, 2002, p. 134). New Zealand journalists are reluctant to assume this kind of deliberative role because it is considered to belong to advocacy journalism (Matheson, 2007). What the majority of them seem to value above all else is the profession’s abilities to “provide objective reportage”, “influence public debate and discussion”, and “communicate between the various sectors of society” (Lealand, 2004, p. 190). These commitments are articulated through a detached reporting style, an emphasis on fairness and the balancing of sources, and an insistence on a strong distinction between facts and views – an empiricism that believes the ‘facts speak for themselves’ and which refrains from a more intellectually engaged form of reporting. This line of argument is explored in detail in Phelan’s chapter (chapter 4). It discusses how fact-based reporting reproduces a methodologically individualist view of the world, which fails to take satisfactory account of how identities are structured by social forces – including the media itself.

Another widely observed feature of the New Zealand journalistic field cited by different contributors is its alleged anti-intellectualism. This journalistic tendency is backgrounded by a more general consensus that Aotearoa New Zealand is averse to the idea of the “public intellectual” (see Simmons, 2007). Various contemporary political columnists, such as Jane Clifton, Colin James, Rod Oram, Chris Trotter, Karl du Fresne and Rosemary McLeod nonetheless have the status of influential political analysts and commentators. They not only publish their articles, but give public talks, join radio and television panels, and are invited to make a contribution on public matters in ways philosophers were called upon to do in ancient Greece – as people who know more than others and are able to interpret and predict, a role that both Anglo-American and continental European journalists still assert in the public sphere. Some studies of journalistic practice in New Zealand (Rupar, 2006; Ashwell, 2009; Matheson, 2007) show that journalists and current affairs presenters readily take the position of mediators in public disputes, though sometimes in a fashion that is spectacle-driven and demagogic (Atkinson, 2010). Thus, irrespective of the question of how the committed is articulated, the idea of journalism as the “voice of the public”, which Hallin (2006) links to the American journalism of the 60s, is still alive in Aotearoa New Zealand today.

So, if journalists can in one sense be described as “intellectuals of the everyday” (see chapter 3 by Hirst), what then is the basis of the claim that the New

Zealand journalistic field veers towards anti-intellectualism? This introduction is not the place for a detailed parsing of the question, but Macdonald (chapter 12) offers one interesting perspective on this issue. Reflecting on his time as editor of and staff writer at the *Listener*, he discusses how the magazine's relatively modest attempt to articulate a more "questioning, opinionated and occasionally crusading" brand of journalism, different from the mainstream, fossilised into the "shallow stereotype" that it was a bastion of "left wing radicalism" and "cultural snobbery". Macdonald's analysis suggests it would be foolish to bracket New Zealand journalists, en masse, as anti-intellectual, and he discusses, for instance, how the *Listener* played a particularly important role in the construction of a literary public sphere in New Zealand. That said, the repressive cultural dynamics documented in his chapter are still evident in the hostile response of at least some journalists – on both the right *and* left of the cultural and political mainstream – to ideas and theories that question commonsense norms that are, of course, partly moulded by journalists themselves (Phelan, 2011; Phelan, 2008; Hirst, 2008).

## The journalistic field and the academic field

*Scooped* wants to contextualise the charge of anti-intellectualism with reference to the institutional relationship between the journalistic field and the academic field. The relationship between journalism and the academy is often an antagonistic one in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere (see, for example, Skinner, Gasher and Compton, 2001; Turner, 2001). The tensions between practitioners and academics sometimes illustrate very different views about such issues as journalistic objectivity, journalistic engagement, journalistic professionalisation, and the relationship between industry and journalistic interests. These differences sometimes generate debates that reinforce lazy stereotypes and assumptions, rather than encourage open-ended critical reflection. These tensions are exemplified in the enduring tendency to see 'theory' and 'practice' as irrevocably opposed, a simplistic and hackneyed distinction that covers up the extent to which practice is – if we are to understand it critically and historically – ultimately grounded in theoretical assumptions (Hirst, 2010; Phelan, 2008).

These antagonisms are sometimes most visible when the question of journalism's formal educational status is being discussed. Is journalism simply a vocational trade and skill that is best learned on the job, as some would argue? Or should a journalism education also constitute, as Thomas argues (chapter 9), a domain of scholarship and learning that explores a critical space beyond the situated perspective of the practitioner (Hirst, 2010)? How one answers these questions depends, in part, on how the social role of the university and tertiary

sector is conceived. Is the university primarily a training ground to “serve” (Skinner et al, 2001) the news industry – in effect, a more socially prestigious version of the polytechnic model? Or does the university, as a distinct public sphere in its own right (Giroux, 2007), have a duty to produce more than ‘industry-ready’ graduates, but also critically engaged citizens with the capacity to find voice and intellectual agency within a knowledge economy organised around increasingly precarious and exploited forms of ‘creative’ labour?

University managers and technocrats are often very good at invoking the traditional idea of the university when it is strategically advantageous. However, many would argue that the traditional idea of the university – as a domain of critical thought and scholarship – is increasingly under threat *within* the university itself (Couldry & McRobbie, 2010). Far from the stereotypical image of the university as a hotbed of radical intellectuals, today’s Aotearoa New Zealand university is an increasingly docile and apolitical space where one is much more likely to publicly hear the managerial and corporate language of ‘benchmarking’, ‘stress-testing’, ‘auditing’ and ‘stakeholder relations’ rather than the language of critical theory. The role of the university is also routinely described as one of simply ‘serving’ the economy and society. These assertions are often made as if they were utterly straightforward claims, rather than inherently ideological statements that obscure how the constitution of ‘society’ and ‘the economy’ are sites of political and social struggle.

Situated in the context of today’s neoliberalised university, *Scooped’s* appeal to a more critically-inflected journalism studies identity is therefore somewhat ironic. On the one hand, the appeal is partly articulated in response to the need to give the study of journalism more intellectual and scholarly legitimacy within the academy. Yet, on the other hand, today’s university is increasingly keen to mimic the kind of industry-centric model that has historically structured the relationship between tertiary institutions and the news media industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. The political and cultural context is effectively analogous to the one Thompson describes (chapter 5) on a state-facilitated capitulation of Television New Zealand (TVNZ) to market imperatives. As with the institutions of public service broadcasting, the university is becoming increasingly colonised by the logic of the market *within* the institution itself – more eager to serve the figure of the student-customer rather than stimulate the consciousness of the critical citizen.

In the parlance of administrators at one large tertiary institution, students are increasingly taken on a ‘journey of experiences’, rather than inculcated in critical study and reflection on social issues and trends in their field. The rhetoric of ‘journey’ implies a simple linear education with a beginning, managed trajectory, and a final destination. It is an instrumental view that operates upon the EFTSU (equivalent fulltime student unit), rather than with or through the

student's own sense of agency. At the end of the journey, the transformation of the EFTSUs is assumed to be complete – they are 'transitioned' into ILUs (indentured labour units). Their education already prefabricated by industry imperatives, journalism graduates are deemed 'fit-for-purpose' and can slot into the industrial process of news production, without necessarily encountering critical and theoretical reflection on what they did along the journey. As Penny O'Donnell puts it so well: "universities might well be encouraging precarious. . . and market-oriented work practices such as self-censorship in journalism", rather than pushing the boundaries of a strait-jacketed professionalism and challenging industry norms (2006, p. 35).

The danger with the strategic confluence of neoliberalised identities and perspectives outlined here is that the articulation of a journalism studies identity in Aotearoa New Zealand could end up assuming quite an uncritical and theoretical form, mainly giving an academic veneer to the old model of 'serving' the industry and reproducing inherited cultural norms. These risks are noted by Thomas, who suggests that, despite the increasing numbers of New Zealand journalism students enrolled in University courses, "this shift has, as yet, made little difference to the traditional emphasis on teaching mainly vocational skills". The subtlety of Thomas' point should not be lost. There is "nothing wrong with" vocational and skills-based practices, she suggests; rather, the point is that "they need to be tempered with a broader approach", where journalism students are encouraged to engage with the interdisciplinary fields of critical communication and media studies in a way that enriches their perspective on journalism practice. In that respect, the objective articulated in the first issue of the journal *Journalism Studies* captures the spirit of the kind of journalistic and academic field relationship that this book would like to see normalised in the Aotearoa New Zealand of the future:

*The overriding ambition.... is to provide a... critical forum for journalists, academics, journalism trainers and students of journalism, to debate the central issues confronting journalism understood both as a subject focus for scholarly and intellectual inquiry as well as a field of professional practice. This desire to meld theory and practice represents a substantial ambition but, if the marriage between journalism and the academy is problematic, we believe that divorce is not merely undesirable but unthinkable* (Franklin et al, 2001, p. 5)

## Conclusion: the possibilities of the present

The desire to signal the emergence of a critical journalism studies identity in Aotearoa New Zealand is not a modest one. However, the editors of *Scooped* are very aware that this book is simply a starting point in bringing this identity

to the attention of a wider student, academic and public audience, as well as crystallising recognition of the kind of work that has already been done by researchers either based in, or writing about, Aotearoa New Zealand journalism. We would hope that it would encourage others to do work that develops and critically interrogates the arguments and perspectives articulated in this book. And we would also hope that it might help cultivate more productive and intellectually engaged forms of communication between the academic field and the journalistic field, rather than tired re-enactments of the familiar antagonisms (Phelan, 2011).

The present historical moment is a crucial one for anyone concerned about the condition of our mediated democracies in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere. What is at stake has been described by the American media scholar Robert McChesney as a “critical juncture” – a moment in the development of global media systems where the future is indeterminate and open to the possibility of a radically democratic media ecology that puts the citizenry first and redeems the idea of public interest journalism (McChesney, 2007). It is a moment afforded to us by the digital revolution and the uncertainty surrounding what it actually means to be a journalist today. At one level – almost utopian and anarchistic in its simplicity – everyone today has the potential to be their own reporter and there has never been so much apparent consumer choice of news sources. At another level – that of ownership, control and economic power – the news industry has proved remarkably resilient ever since the Industrial Revolution. What’s more, it’s a historical moment when the traditional public service alternatives to market-driven media models are also in crisis, nowhere more so than at TVNZ.

The critical juncture represents an opportunity to reassess the politics and power of journalism in Aotearoa New Zealand and offers perhaps the opportunity to redirect it towards a more critical and reflexive position of intellectual confidence and independence. Perhaps this will happen in collaboration with audiences – or those people we used to call the audience, but who now produce their own “news-like” content. One thing is clear; it is no longer business as usual for the news industry, journalists or news citizens.

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