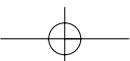
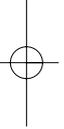
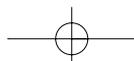
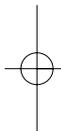
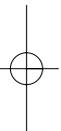




Media and Communication





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Paddy Scannell

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This book is based on teaching courses on media and communication over many years. I have a primary debt of gratitude then to all the students who, each time we went through some version of what follows, understood or didn't the point in general or particular of what we were about, agreed with it or not and by sheer dint of incremental repetition helped me to clarify, at least, what *I* thought we were up to. It has taken me a long time to grasp an elementary point: you only *really* begin to engage with what you teach and see what it's about after many returns to it. When I was younger I used to feel slightly ashamed at repeating the same course with small variations year after year. Now I enjoy finding different perspectives each year and trying out old and new material from different angles. And each time I do this I learn a little more and understand more clearly what I am trying to do and why.

A number of people have read sections of this book as I was working on it and I am grateful to Martin Montgomery, Shaun Moores, Andrew Tolson, Pete Simonson and Bill Schwarz for their comments on particular chapters. I am especially grateful to the four readers of the manuscript for their helpful, detailed responses to it. I have taken note of what all my readers had to say in the final revision of the text. My thanks too, to Maren Hartman who provided me with information about contemporary views in Germany of the Frankfurt School.

I first began teaching the contents of this book with David Cardiff in the early 1980s. David died three years ago at the untimely age of 59. It was always a great pleasure teaching with him. I like to think we were a good double act and that between us we entertained, enthused and informed a generation of students—well, some of them at any rate. This book is for him; an affectionate token of remembrance for a deeply missed colleague, co-author and friend.

Preface

My first concern in writing this book is to provide students seriously interested in the study of media and communication with an account of how academic studies of both developed in the course of the last century. Each of the first nine chapters provides an introduction to a key 'moment' in the study of media and communication. The chapters mostly deal with one or two authors, sometimes with a single text, and provide summary accounts of the issues addressed by their work and the new methodologies and concepts that they introduced. Thus each chapter may serve as the basis of a class or seminar and the end references indicate the readings that underpin it. The website that accompanies the book provides further teaching resources, including summary class notes, a glossary of key terms and selected key texts for each of the first nine chapters.

I had better make clear the limitations of what I have attempted. It is not in any way an exhaustive review of academic developments in the study of media and communication in the last century. One reader of the draft manuscript described it, not unfairly, as 'a view of the mountain tops'. Many important aspects of the study of media and communication are not included here. The fact that 'media' comes before 'communication' in the title of the book is the clue to what it is about. If it were called *Communication and Media* it would have a different emphasis and weight. I am here primarily concerned with how the academic study of what we now think of as 'the media' developed in the last century. It would be uncontentious, I think, to propose that it had two key historical moments: the development of a sociology of mass communication in the United States over a twenty year period from the mid thirties to the mid 1950s and the development of media studies as a branch of Cultural Studies in Britain from the mid 1960s to the end of the 1970s. These two moments are the twin pillars of the book. The first is dealt with in chapters one and three, while the second is accounted for in chapters four and eight. There is a third important strand involved in both these two constitutive moments; the German intellectual tradition of critical social theory that lies across the borders of philosophy, sociology and history. It came to fruition in the work of the Frankfurt School and in chapters one and two deal I explore its formative moment in Europe and in exile in the United States in the 1930s. In chapter nine I examine a key work

by Jürgen Habermas, the leading representative of post-war, second generation Frankfurt School.

Between them these three strands account for more than half the contents of the book. It follows then that alternative developments are largely overlooked. I do not, for instance, account for the important work, in the USA of the late James Carey and the approach to communication as ritual which he advocated as an antidote to the dominant 'effects tradition' whose origins I trace. Nor have attempted to follow through either of the two 'moments' that define this book's architecture. I have tried to trace in each case the development of a formative moment in the study of the media: what it was initially concerned with and why and how. In each case there is an identifiable point in time when innovation and discovery give way to consolidation and dissemination. I have been concerned with the former and not the latter. So I do not consider how mass communication studies expanded through American universities from the 1950s to the present and the key role of Wilbur Schramm and his contemporaries in this process. Nor do I deal with the expansion of media studies in Britain from the 1980s onwards, nor its remarkable diffusion since then as a cadet branch of global cultural studies.

Moreover since each moment defined the study of then new media (radio in the 1930s, television in the 1970s) in particular ways many other important aspects of their study are thereby excluded. I do not deal with the media industries of radio, television and the press, nor their economic and political underpinnings which are, of course, crucial to their institutional formation and development. And so the political economy of media, the sociology of news, not to mention institutional histories of the press and broadcasting are all passed over in silence because they were not focal concerns of the American sociology of mass communication at the University of Columbia in the 1930s nor of British Media Studies at Birmingham in the 1970s. In the first case the new medium of radio was treated as a social question, and in the second case the new medium of television was treated as a cultural question. Why this was so and with what the consequences is a core concern of the book as a whole.

The book's title proposes that the question of the media is intimately linked to the question of communication. However this was not so in either of the moments that established them as objects of academic enquiry. The sociology of mass communication in the USA in the thirties and forties and British media studies in the 1970s were more concerned with the social and cultural impact and effect of then new media (radio in pre-war America: television in 70s Britain). Thus my title has something of an advocacy intent. I want to argue that the question of communication has not yet been properly addressed in the study of the media and that it is, or should be, quite central to their study if we are at all concerned with how they work for viewers, listeners and readers. This book is the first in a trilogy and one of its functions is to serve as an introduction to the next two books in which the

question of communication and media will be a core concern. By way of preparation for the work that follows I have included in this volume accounts of what I take to be key developments in the study of communication in different academic fields in the second half of the last century. They are outlined in chapters six and seven which go together. These two chapters have a somewhat different function to most of the others and are written in a plainer exegetical style, with less biographical and historical detail. A fuller historical analysis of the developments outlined in them will be offered in the final volume of this trilogy.

In the course of writing this book I have become more and more fascinated by the historiographical issues it has posed and particularly the relationship between the academic work of writing history (historiography) and history itself. Although for teaching purposes each chapter can be treated as a stand-alone topic, there is a strong, unfolding narrative from one chapter to the next as they progress.

The chapters are arranged chronologically, though several overlap, and deal mainly, as indicated in the subheadings, with academic developments in the United States and Britain, while further strands trace developments in Canada and Germany (though in the latter case the emphasis is on the impact of Critical Theory in the USA and the UK rather than Germany itself). The last chapter is the clue to the whole book and in it I examine the issues at stake in writing the histories of academic fields before proceeding to explicate the historical narrative threaded through all that precedes it. I aim to account for what the study of mass media was concerned with in its historical development and why it had those concerns and thereby to justify my claim that the question of communication was not central to the study of media in the 20th century.

I do not want here to anticipate my conclusions, but I should like to make a couple of points about what I have *not* tried to do. I have not attempted to write a history of ideas, nor have I attempted a comparative history of academic developments in Britain and America. The history of the formation of academic fields is a particular kind of historical writing that poses particular problems. I have sought to emphasise the work, the labour that goes into the production of academic texts, particularly those that are later found to have had a defining role in the establishment of an academic field. I have tried to show how academic texts get written, the hidden histories of their production. I do this especially in chapters three and eight where I reconstruct the life-histories of two famous texts (*Personal Influence* by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld [1955], and 'Encoding/Decoding' by Stuart Hall [1980]) and how they got to be, in the end, written as published. I apply the same method to the study of radio and television programmes in the next volume. The aim is to make visible the hidden labour of production, whether of books or articles produced by academics working in universities or of the output produced by broadcasters working in, for instance, the BBC. The explanation and justification of this method, which

discloses the care-structure of humanly made things, is a matter for the next two books. It has the effect, I hope, when applied to academic work, of making clear that academic 'texts' (like anything else) have life-histories; that the history of their making is about the institutional working lives of those who made them and that this is what goes into the final products which never simply 'happen' as if they fell like manna from the skies. Histories of ideas (and academic writing generally) tend to idealise texts-as-published that seem to have appeared from nowhere to float and circulate in an airy inter-textual world. My aim is to show something of the effort involved in coming up with what eventually gets to publication, to show academics at work, how things get to be written (and sometimes not). The point of this is not just to provide descriptive institutional or biographical background; it is to account for the form and content of the realised end-product as determined by the hidden life and the unseen labour (the effort, the care) that produced it as such. That has been the basis of all my work on radio and television and I continue with that approach in the volume that follows this. Here I have applied it to academic institutions and the labour process of intellectual production.

Not, then, a history of ideas. Nor a comparative history either. I am not really after comparisons between the USA and Britain for instance, though I am concerned with the connexions and differences between North America and Europe, the new world and the old. North America means Canada as well as the USA and in chapter five I examine the distinctively Canadian work of Harold Innis who pioneered the historical study of technologies of communication. It is not an incidental bit of biographical detail to note that Innis was Canadian. The experience of the United States as a powerful next-door neighbour shaped his thinking and his work. I *am* interested in the core distinction between the old world and the new—Europe and North America. The USA and Canada were colonised by European settlers escaping from the old world for one reason or another to find a new life in a new world. There is an umbilical connection between Europe and North America that persists to this day and the tensions between the two continents is something of a subterranean stream that runs through the chapters that follow. But the key reason I disclaim an interest in comparative history is that I treat developments in North America and Europe as responses to the same single, unitary historical process of world modernization. All particular histories—whether of individuals, institutions or nation-states—are determined by History itself. But what that could possibly mean is a matter progressively to be explored in all three volumes. In the next volume I examine the work of broadcasting in the history-making process, and in the final volume I return to the relationship between the academic discipline of historiography and the time-horizons of human history.

The primary obligation which the author of a text-book must acknowledge to his readers is that of providing a fair, balanced, reasonable and reliable account

of the authors and issues under review and this I have tried to do. It is not my business to impose my views on the matters to hand, or to dish out praise and blame. That said it does not follow that I agree with everything in the accounts that I offer here. I have my own views on these matters and I intend to pursue them more fully in the books that follow this. Writing *Media and Communication* has fulfilled a number of purposes, not the least of which has been the process of self-clarification it entailed and readers will gradually find something of the author in the text that follows. Working through the thematic concerns of this book has been, for me, a way of settling of accounts with the intellectual traditions that defined the field in which I began to work some forty years ago. In that respect it serves as a necessary clearing of ground before turning to my own more particular concerns and ways of thinking in this book's two companions.

The first is called *Television and the Meaning of 'Live'* and extends the work begun in *Radio, Television and Modern Life* published in 1996. That in turn was the product of the foundational historical study of broadcasting that I wrote with my late friend and colleague, David Cardiff. The key thing I learnt from that study concerned the relationship between the production process in radio and television and its final products, the programmes as broadcast, and I have carried forward that concern in all my subsequent work on broadcasting. The question of communication lies at the heart of the production process if it is the case, as I take it to be, that programmes are made *for* audiences. How to communicate with their audiences, how to make programmes that work for them, was and remains a crucial question for people making programmes for absent listeners and viewers. One key purpose of this book is to provide introductory accounts to what I regard as adequate approaches to thinking about communication that have, over the years, come to inform my own work on the output of radio and television. Those accounts are set out in chapters 6 and 7. The concluding part of chapter seven makes explicit the lines of enquiry that I and others have pursued in our work on the communicative ethos of radio and television. It emerges from the development of a pragmatics of language outlined in the main part of the chapter and the sociology of interaction as examined in the preceding chapter, and serves as an introduction to *Television and the Meaning of 'Live'*.

Inside any academic book there is always, I suspect, at least one more struggling to get out since it is bound to raise more questions than it could possibly answer. The final book in this trilogy, *Love and Communication*, serves as a commentary and reflection on the two that precede it. It allows me to identify my own preferred approach to the study of communication and media, to supply reasons and justifications for it and, from that position, to engage in a critical discussion with other approaches to their study. It has taken me a long time to be clear about my own way of thinking and why I would advocate it and how I would defend it as a relevant contribution to thinking about matters of

concern to all of us interested in the question of the communication as it shows up in all 'new' media as they have entered into the life of modern societies from the 19th to the 21st centuries. I defer that discussion to my final book. Here I will simply identify and offer a preliminary definition of my own 'take' on the media and communication. I would call it, for want of a better word, phenomenological and I would define it as an effort at an understanding of the world uncluttered by the usual academic baggage. This is intended not as a frivolous but an exact description of what I mean by phenomenology and what I aspire to in my own thinking and writing.

Paddy Scannell

September 2006

