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JOURNALISM AND THE QUESTION OF CITIZENSHIP

Toby Miller

Classical political theory accorded representation to the citizen through the state. The modern, economic, addendum was that the state promised a minimal standard of living. The postmodern, cultural, guarantee is access to the technologies of communication. In essence, then, the last two hundred years have produced three zones of citizenship, with partially overlapping but nevertheless distinct historicities. These zones of citizenship are the political, covering the right to reside and vote; the economic (the right to work and prosper); and the cultural (the right to know and speak). The first category concerns political rights; the second, material interests; and the third, cultural representation.

This chapter summarizes the impact of these three principal forms of citizenship on journalism, with particular reference to the contemporary United States. At first glance, one might assume that the three terms simply refer to three distinct news beats, respectively the congress or parliament (politics), the stock exchange or board room (economics), and the theatre or cinema (culture). There is a germ of truth in this distinction, but the three categories in fact inflect and overdetermine one another as their relative importance shifts over time. They help to account for the deplorable condition of US journalism today, along with the pressures imposed by new kinds of shareholder and new kinds of technology.

Political citizenship and journalism

Political citizenship gives the right to vote, to be represented in government, and to enjoy physical security. Democracy is conventionally said to arise and thrive in the interactions of governments and populations, with its model the French and US Revolutions. The polity is bounded by countries whose inhabitants recognize one another as political citizens, and use that status to invoke the greater good.

The journalistic corollaries of political citizenship are regular reportage of domestic political affairs, with a focus on lawmakers' deliberations and judicial review; the

associated notion that representative government depends on an open press that explains social-policy issues as defined by social movements and parliamentary parties; election coverage; and a concentration on international relations in terms of local and global security. The intent is to draw citizens into a vital part of the policy process – informed public comment, dissent, and consent. I focus here on the declining US television and print coverage of foreign affairs, which I suggest has been trumped by an emphasis on economic and cultural questions.

Given the expansion of US power over the last quarter of a century, it is noteworthy that TV coverage of governmental, military, and international affairs dropped from 70% of network news[1] in 1977, to 60% in 1987, and 40% in 1997. In 1988, each network dedicated about 2000 minutes to international news. A decade later, the figure had halved, with about 9% of the average newscast covering anything "foreign." Between May 2000 and August 2001, just 22% of network news was international – ten points below, for example, British and South African equivalents, and 20 points below Germany. Just 3% of US coverage addressed foreign policy. In 2000, three stories from beyond the US (apart from the Olympics) made it into the networks' 20 most-covered items. And all three were tightly linked with domestic issues: the Miami-Cuba custody dispute over Élian Gonzales, the second Intifada, and the bombing of the USS Cole off Yemen. The main broadcast networks have closed most investigative sections and foreign *bureaux*, other than in Israel. ABC News once maintained 17 offices overseas. Now it has seven. CBS has one journalist covering Asia, and seven others for the rest of the world (Miller, 2006).

The reaction to September 11, 2001 temporarily reversed this autotelic trend, but that catastrophe's news impact was short-lived, despite the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. And extensive content analysis discloses that September 11 saw coverage of terrorism differ very minimally from existing, narrowly-focused news norms. There was no significant documentary investigation. A study of articles carried in *US News and World Report* indicates that in the seven months after September 11, explanations for the attacks focused entirely on Al Qaeda and domestic security failings, avoiding US foreign policy as an element. The *New York Times* was intellectually unprepared to report on the phenomenon. Because terrorism mostly occurred outside the US prior to 2001, it was not rated as newsworthy. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, reportage of overseas terror took up less than 0.5% of the paper (Gerges 2003: 79, 87 n. 9; Love 2003: 248).

It should come as no surprise, then, that from September 2001 to December 2002, network-news coverage of the attacks and their aftermath basically ignored a stream of relevant topics: Zionism, Afghanistan after the invasion, and US foreign policy and business interests in the Middle East (McDonald and Lawrence 2004: 336–37; Traugott and Brader 2003: 186–87, 183–84; *Tyndall Report* 2003). And that corporate influence pushed hard to distort the US public's knowledge of the geopolitical situation. Viacom, CNN, Fox, and Comedy Central refused to feature paid billboards and commercials against the invasion of Iraq, and UN activities in the region, including weapons inspections, were the least-covered items on network news (Hastings 2003; Huff 2003). During the occupation, General Motors – the country's

biggest advertiser at the time – and other major corporations announced that they 'would not advertise on a TV program about atrocities in Iraq' (quoted in McCarthy 2004). And when US authorities finally admitted in January 2005 that no weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq, only ABC made it a lead story. Fox News barely touched on the topic, and CBS and NBC relegated it to a minor item – fewer than 60 words on the nightly news. The *New York Times* cravenly claimed that the admission was "little noted" around the world (Whiten 2005). Clearly, US journalism has turned away from a central element of political citizenship. The country that has the greatest global impact of any nation in world history is simply not committed to informing its residents of basic geopolitical facts.

Economic citizenship and journalism

Like political citizenship, economic citizenship has been alive for a very long time, via the collection and dissemination of information about the public through the census and related statistical devices. This became an interventionist category during the nineteenth-century transformation of capitalism when paupers came to be marked as part of the social. Their wellbeing became a right, a problem, a statistic, with society more than a market.

Economic citizenship developed in the Global North during the Depression and the Global South during decolonization. It redistributed capitalist gains to secure employment, health, and retirement, and the state invested in areas of market malfunction. The great task of the New Deal was "to find through government the instrument of our united purpose" against "blind economic forces and blindly selfish men," via "a new chapter in our book of self government" that would "make every American citizen the subject of his country's interest and concern" (Roosevelt 1937).

After the Second World War, the state effectively said 'we are asking you to get yourselves killed, but we promise you that when you have done this, you will keep your jobs until the end of your lives' (Foucault 2008: 216). Two historic promises were made by established and emergent governments: to secure the political sovereignty of citizens and their economic welfare. Universal sovereignty required concerted international action to convince colonial powers that the peoples they had enslaved should be given the right of self-determination. The ensuing postcolonial governments undertook to deliver economic welfare via state-based management of supply and demand and the creation of industries that would substitute imports with domestically-produced items. But these new nations remained dependent on the metropole, and were unable to grow economically. Formal *political* postcoloniality rarely became *economic*, apart from some Asian states that pursued a more trade-based capitalism.

After the global economic crises of the 1970s, even those Western states that had *bourgeoisies* with sufficient capital formation to fund a social welfare system could no longer hedge employment against inflation, while development policies were dismantled as state socialism eroded. Economic citizenship was turned on its head through policy renegotiations conducted by capital, the state, and their intellectual

servants in economics. Anxieties over unemployment were trumped by anxieties over profits, with workers called upon to identify as stakeholders in business or as consumers. Reforms redistributed income back to domestic *bourgeoisies* and First World metropoles. Corporations became privileged economic citizens, and individual citizens were conceived of as self-governing consumers. I focus next on how this shifting discourse has affected journalism.

English-language media references to "the economy" as a subject, with needs and desires, derive from the Great Depression. Press attention shifted from relations between producers and consumers of goods (a labor-process discourse of the popular newspapers which dissented from conventional economics) and onto relations between different material products *of* labor, with a similar change in emphasis from use-value to exchange-value. The discursive commodities "the economy" and "the market" were anthropomorphized and valorized (Emmison 1983; Emmison and McHoul 1987). With the crisis of the 1930s and the diffusion of Keynesianism, "the economy" entered popular knowledge.

Today's journalistic corollaries of economic citizenship, however, focus on national and multinational corporations and the stock market, along with a residual, romantic account of small business and a barely-breathing labor beat. There is saturation coverage of the discourse of life as a competition and the self as a rational subject ready to build its capacities, with Gary Becker (1993) an informal deity. Each person is intelligible through the precepts of selfishness, because people are supposedly governed through market imperatives. The market becomes "the interface of government and the individual" (Foucault 2008: 253). At the same time, consumption is turned on its head. Internally divided – but happily so – each person "is a consumer on the one hand, but … also a producer" (Foucault 2008: 226). Foucault identifies cash-operated think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute as the intellectual handservants of this practice, vocalists of a "permanent criticism of government policy" (2008: 247). Today they do "research" in order to by pen op-eds in the newspapers and provide talking-points on cable news.

The result? TV parrots the market's specialized vocabulary; assumes a community of interest and commitment to fictive capital; and takes the deep affiliation and regular participation of viewers in stock prices as watchwords. The heroization of business executives by fawning journalists became part of a doubling of time dedicated by television news to the market across the 1990s. In 2000, finance was the principal topic on ABC, NBC, and CBS nightly news, and second only to terrorism in 2002. Promoting stocks where one had a personal financial interest became *de rigueur* for anchors and pundits. By 2002, even the New York Stock Exchange was worried, and called for regulation requiring reporters to disclose their investments, so egregious had been their complicity with the dotcom overinvestment of the 1990s (Miller 2007).

This trend is international: leading sources of wholesale video news, such as Reuters, make most of their money from finance reporting, which infuses their overall delivery of news. But the influence of economic discourse on news has special poignancy in the US. Business advisors dominate discussion on dedicated finance cable stations like CNBC and Bloomberg, and are granted something akin to the status of seers

when they appear on cable-news stations and the networks. During his time as Chair of the Federal Reserve, the now-discredited and always laughable Alan Greenspan was filmed getting in and out of cars each day as if he were *en route* to a meeting to decide the fate of nations, each upturned eyebrow or wrinkled frown subject to hyper-interpretation by a bevy of needy followers. The focus fell on stock markets in Asia, Europe, and New York; reports on company earnings, profits, and stocks; and portfolio management (Martin 2002; Martin 2004). The obsessive pattern is repeating as a farce in the latter part of the decade, as financial markets crumble into self-indulgent, infantile fury and tears.

Along the way, economic and labor news have been reduced to corporate and shareholder news, with politics measured in terms of its reception by business. There is a sense of markets stalking everyday security and politics, ready to punish political activities that might restrain capital. Journalists' veneration of the market is ever-ready to point to infractions of this anthropomorphized, yet oddly subject-free sphere, as a means of constructing moral panics around the conduct of whoever raises its ire. Meanwhile, the leftist media, which had investigated Enron and other sites of malfeasance for years, were either ridiculed or ignored.

Cultural citizenship and journalism

And cultural citizenship, which seems to have trumped, or perhaps incorporated, these other two categories? Of course, citizenship has always been cultural. For instance, the Ottoman Empire offered rights to non-Muslims, and the first constitutional guarantees of culture appear in Switzerland in 1874. But that was unusual until after the Second World War. Today, cultural provisions are standard in post-dictatorship charters, blending artistry and ethnicity. Concerns with language, heritage, religion, and identity are responses to histories structured in dominance through cultural power and the postcolonial incorporation of the periphery into an international system of "free" labor.

The ideal citizen is frequently understood as a clear-headed, cool subject who knows when to set aside individual and sectarian preferences in search of the greater good. This sounds acultural. But it has frequently corresponded, in both rhetorical and legal terms, to male, property-owning subjects protecting their interests from the population in general. The specificity of this apparent universalism has been called into question. Similarly, many philosophical liberals insist on a common language and nation as prerequisites for effective citizenship. But cultural differences bring this into question, because nations are split and remade by migrant languages, religions, and senses of self. Malaysia, for instance, has been a predominantly Islamic area for centuries. Colonialism brought large numbers of South Asian and Chinese settlers, along with their religions. The postcolonial Constitution asserts a special status for ethnic Malays and Islam. Muslims are the only people who can evangelize, and they have religious courts. Other varieties of superstition are tolerated, but may not proselytize, and are governed by secular rule. In the Netherlands, Sudan, Yemen, Slovenia, Bahrain, and Portugal, citizenship rests on language skills. In Sweden, it

depends on leading "a respectable life" and in Sudan having, "good moral character." "Attachment" to local culture is a criterion in Croatia, and knowledge of culture and history in Romania. Liberia requires that citizens "preserve, foster, and maintain the positive Liberian culture," something it avows can only be done by "persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent." This racialization also applies in Sierra Leone, and Israel restricts citizenship to Jews plus Arabs who lived there prior to 1948 and their descendants. Partial racial and religious preferences also rule in Bahrain and Yemen (Miller 2007).

These new sovereign realities are influenced and indexed by the wider political economy, which has seen a turn to culture not just as a pleasurable pastime or article of faith, but a core material concern. The First World recognized in the 1980s that its economic future lay in finance capital and ideology rather than agriculture and manufacturing, and the Third World sought revenue from intellectual property as well as minerals and masses. Changes in the media and associated knowledge technologies over this period have been likened to a new Industrial Revolution or the Civil and Cold Wars. They are touted as routes to economic development as much as cultural and political expression. Between 1980 and 1998, annual world exchange of electronic culture grew from US$95 billion to US$388 billion. In 2003, these areas accounted for 2.3% of Gross Domestic Product across Europe, to the tune of €654 billion – more than real estate or food and drink, and equal to chemicals, plastics, and rubber. The Intellectual Property Association estimates that copyright and patents are worth US$360 billion a year in the US, more than aerospace, automobiles, and agriculture. And the cultural/copyright sector employs 12% of the US workforce, up from 5% a century ago. Global information technology's yearly revenue is US$1.3 trillion. PriceWaterhouseCooper predicts 10% annual growth in the area (Miller 2009; Collins 2008).

The journalistic corollaries in the US are an increased focus on the cultural/service side of the economy; mixed lamentations and celebrations of the loss of agriculture and manufacturing; expanded but still restricted access of readers to news – so old-style newsroom tips and letters to the editor have turned into almost-live images from cell phones of dramatic events and comments on blogs (great sources of free intellectual property); and more and more space dedicated by journalists to such topics as cuisine and health. I investigate these tendencies here with a look at the way that newspaper coverage of food has changed over this period, alongside various moral panics about diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and its preferred treatment, Ritalin®.[2] In each case, lifestyle trumps politics.

In 1940, the *New York Times* published 675 food stories, of which just 4% were light background fare (what is now known as "foodie" news, such as profiles of chefs or recipes). The remainder reported on food poisoning, nutrition, or famine. Twenty years on, the corollary proportion of "foodie" news had doubled to 9%. But 20 years after that, in 1980, 36% of food stories in the *New York Times* were lifestyle-related. Approximately 25% of US newspapers added "Style" pages between 1979 and 1983, of which 38% had circulations of more than 100,000. Fairly rigorous distinctions were being drawn between *dining* out (costly, occasioned, planned, and dressed for) and

eating out (easy, standardized, and requiring minimal presentational effort). By 2000, 80% of the *New York Times*' 1,927 food stories were on chefs and recipes. The "foodie" trend in reportage and interest is celebrated as a response to affluent consumers, a skilled working class, efficient and effective transportation, and cosmopolitanism (Jones 2003; Barnes 2004; Danford 2005; Harris 2003: 55; Makala 2005; Finkelstein 1989: 38; Fine and Leopold 1993: 167; O 'Neill 2003).

Consider the shifting discourse on cuisine in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Philadelphia Magazine*. In the early 1960s, the *Inquirer* ran recipe columns and advertisements related to home dining, with women the target. Functional aesthetics articulated with home economics: simplicity and thrift were called for, other than on special occasions. In the 1970s, a section appeared in the Sunday *Magazine* on places to go, dramatically displacing "Food and Family." The restaurant was now described as a public, commercial, and cultural site of urban sophistication. By the 1980s, the Sunday food section included a wine guide. Food writers were dubbed "critics," and they offered instruction on enjoyment rather than production. Aesthetics had displaced functionality (Hanke 1989).

This trivialization comes at a time of serious public-health crises: 30 years ago, food-borne disease was rare in the US, and generally attributable to cutesy-pie events like church picnics. Now, 76 million people are laid low through infected food each year. Five thousand die, and 325,000 are hospitalized, at a public-health cost of US$10 billion. The Federal Government makes a quarter of the food-safety inspections compared to two decades ago, with the percentage of imported food examined dropping from 8% in 1993 to 2% ten years on. Under George Bush Minor, it provided links between fast-food outlets and the President's Council on Physical Fitness, and attacked the World Health Organization's findings that fruit and vegetables help ward off obesity and diabetes. As rewards, Republican politicians receive 80% of campaign contributions handed out by the livestock and meat-processing industries, and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association endorsed Bush Minor in 2004 – its first such decision in a century of promoting death and despoliation. But the proportion of food stories that engage the political economy has become minuscule by contrast (Miller 2007).

And serious conflicts of interest are generated by interlocking directorates between media and food corporations. General Electric (owner of NBC) and the *Washington Post* share company directors with Coca-Cola, and Pepsi's board has people from the equivalent group within the *New York Times*, Gannett, and the Tribune Company. Tribune also has directors in common with McDonald's and Quaker Oats, while General Electric is represented at Anheuser-Busch and Kellogg. Attempts by investigative journalists to reveal corporate malfeasance in the food sector are met with the delightful new domain of litigation public relations. Potential jurors, attorneys, judges, and journalists are targeted by corporations seeking to discredit revelations of their venality by focusing on clandestine newsgathering. This sounds perfect fodder, as it were, for investigative journalism. But why bother when your column inches are dedicated to culinary tourism and critique?

This culturalist shift leads us to another area spurred on by the media's recent uptake of citizenship. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, popular magazines were locked in a

contest for audiences with color television. They reacted by addressing young people both as readers (through stories on popular culture) and as problems (through generational stereotyping). This practice continued as the cultural industries promoted the existence of catchy-sounding generational cohorts to advertisers ("the Greatest Generation," "Baby Boomers," "Generation X," "Generation Y," and "Generation Rx") with supposedly universal tendencies and failings. When the Partnership for a Drug-Free America® (free of recreational drugs, not corporate ones) released a report on teens in 2005, the *bourgeois* media leapt at the neologism "Generation Rx" as part of an emergent moral panic over prescription abuse – without noting this was just the second occasion such substances had been included in the national survey (Miller, 2008a).

Recognizing the media's power, the pharmaceutical corporation Ciba-Geigy spread the gospel of brain disorders as the key to depression and other abnormalities wherever possible, for example by financing public television's series *The Brain* during George Bush the Elder's celebration of the brain, when ADHD became known as the "diagnosis of the decade." Across the 1990s, there was a veritable explosion of stories, mostly credulous, in popular periodicals from *Better Homes & Gardens* to *Seventeen* (Miller and Leger 2003; Miller 2008c).

Because of the desire to address young people and spread anxieties about them, and despite corporate concerns, from the 1970s, horror stories about Ritalin® began appearing in the *bourgeois* US press, as part of its drive to identify appealing topics unrelated to old definitions of news. In the late 1980s, there were articles skeptical of ADHD and critical of Ritalin® in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, and a segment on ABC's *Nightline* (Miller 2008b). *Good Housekeeping* magazine queried "the rush to Ritalin," dubbing it "kiddie cocaine" and lamenting that "at the slightest sign of trouble – a child keeps running back and forth to the water fountain, has an unruly week pushing other kids on the playground, or plays drums on his desk with pencils – parents are circled by the school's teachers, psychologists, and even principals, all pushing Ritalin." *Newsweek* went from an unfortunately-worded endorsement of Ritalin® as "one of the raving successes in psychiatry" to warning that it "may be causing some hidden havoc … in an impatient culture" (quoted in Miller 2008a).

Congressional hearings were prompted in 2000 by a story in the *Washington Post* that raised the specter of mind control and merged with popular concerns about diet to suggest a more "natural" treatment. Over the next three years, Ritalin® made guest appearances on *Dateline NBC*, CNN's *Larry King Live* (featuring Bush Minor's dyslexic brother and ADHD-diagnosed nephew explaining why Ritalin® must be abjured), *48 Hours* and *Eye on America* from CBS, and Cleveland's WKYC-TV. These programs screened investigative reports and idiot punditry on Ivy-League Ritalin® abuse and drug dealing, emergency-room visits, and school complicity. PBS and A&E ran documentaries (Sussman *et al.*, 2006). But minimal attention, if any, was paid to the political economy of the pharmacorps, their investment in marketing versus research and development, their direct-to-consumer commercials, their corruption of medical academia, and the like.

Conclusion

So what can we conclude about cultural citizenship and journalism? I have emphasized the culturalist turn's impact on US coverage of political and economic issues – how conventional politics has shifted from the centre of the news, especially international relations; how the shift in economic discourse from rights to responsibilities and the shift of the economy itself to a culturalized one has changed the way finance is discussed; and finally, how cultural topics themselves have been transformed to suit the demographic calculations of media corporations about audiences and their marketability to advertisers. The positive sides to citizenship that I outlined, across the three forms, are barely relevant to contemporary US journalism.

It doesn 't have to be like that, of course, and the vast, loose, rhizomatic network of alternative news outlets across the nation offers very different stories, from Al Jazeera on Livestation to *Democracy Now* on radio and *Left Business Observer* in print. But even as the nightly news and the daily paper slide into desperate waters across the country, they decline to address their failures through a reintegration of citizen address across the three zones I have outlined.

Journalism education and research stand at what should be a wonderful point in their history. The mass extension of literacy worldwide sees readership at levels one could barely have imagined five years ago. New outlets are emerging all the time – in the Global South. Sadly and ironically, the cultural nationalism and neoliberalism of US journalism professionals ill-equips them for life in this providential world, so tied are they to the fiscal fortunes of their own country and its stockmarket fetishes. We can only hope that a truly internationalist perspective, of political, economic, and cultural citizenship, will inspire them anew.

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Notes

1 Defined as the nightly news on the major broadcast English-language networks.
2 For more on cultural citizenship in this context, see Harrington 2008; Hermes 2006; and Stevenson 2003.