Journalism’s Long Cosmopolitan Turn

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Abstract

The figure of the journalist as a ‘citizen of the world’ is deeply inscribed on journalism culture, yet in recent years new media scholars have appropriated the concept of cosmopolitanism for citizen and networked journalism. Using scholarship on cosmopolitanism, and profiles of several journalists well known in public discourse, this paper explores the meaning of cosmopolitanism in journalism. We argue that histories by Rantanen, Stephens and others demonstrate the historical basis of cosmopolitanism in journalism culture and practice. We analyse the inherent qualities of journalism that mark it as cosmopolitan, exploring these in archetypal examples drawn from celebrated journalists’ work. We advance the hypothesis that cosmopolitanism has long been an aspiration in journalism generally, and argue that recognition of this matters to the future of journalism. We also explain how this hypothesis will be explored in future cases involving the work of less well known journalists.

Keywords: journalism culture; journalism practice; media history

Introduction

Since 2012, staff redundancies and dwindling resources for content creation and production have seriously diminished the quality of Australian newspapers. Our research shows that the Saturday Books pages of Fairfax Media’s major dailies have altered in ways that reflect the industry’s sea change (Nolan and Ricketson 2013; Ricketson and Nolan 2014). Decreased commissioning and increased sharing of reviews have resulted in much attenuated literary sections with reduced offerings of critical voices and distinct declines in local flavour and perspectives. The effect on the journalists involved in producing the pages is less clear and has received less attention, but we know enough to be concerned about it.

As the newspaper industry has confronted the reality that its historical business model is irrevocably broken, thanks to the flight of advertisers to mobile internet and the advent of social media as publisher, the occupational roles and identities of journalists still employed in the mainstream industry appear to be changing irrevocably too. An important research paper on the effect of journalists who left Fairfax Media and News Corporation Australia in the mass redundancies during and
after 2012 commented that the industry’s severe contraction and restructuring have severely restricted the opportunity for “creative autonomy and socially purposeful work” for those journalists who remain within the mainstream news media organisations (O’Donnell, Zion and Sherwood 2015, p. 3). We agree. It is clear from various studies including our own that key aspects of journalists’ work which once made the job so rewarding are being lost or at the least diminished. These changes, we argue, are a threat to the core vocational identity of journalism and should concern anyone who cares about the state of contemporary journalism in a democratic society.

One way to test this argument would be to carry out an investigation akin to the Australian Research Council research project led by Zion, *New Beats: A Study of Australian Journalists Who Became Redundant During and Since 2012.*¹ That team (which includes the second author of this paper) is using surveys and interviews to document the post-redundancy experiences of more than 1200 journalists. In our research we are currently more interested in developing theoretical frameworks for discourse about the future of journalism, by exploring and naming the qualities of traditional journalism we believe are under threat. This focus seems imperative, given that change in journalism is occurring at such a pace that many once-accepted aspects of a stable work culture are rapidly vanishing or transforming. When in 2000 Jean Chalaby predicted the end of journalism as the dominant public discourse and the likely corresponding decline of the major media institutions (Chalaby 2000, p. 34), his claims must have seemed improbable to many. Yet within fifteen years his prophecy has come to pass. We live in the era of the Facebook newsfeed in which the major currency of media is entertainment rather than news. Chalaby foresaw that in this new era journalism studies would have a crucial role to play, because “historical knowledge of the profession can provide guidance in an era of fast changes” (2000, p. 34). By raising new practitioners’ awareness of professional norms at a time when those norms are deeply challenged, and by documenting earlier and existing journalism practice and culture, benchmarks for future practitioners can still be established, he argued.

It is in that spirit that this paper seeks to elevate in discourse about journalism the idea of cosmopolitanism, a concept that seems to us to have always been implicit in journalism’s occupational identity, yet now in danger of being lost from understandings of traditional journalism, in part because of journalists’ much-diminished working conditions. We do not advance our claims about the connection between journalism and cosmopolitanism defensively: we do not profess the automatic virtue of the role of journalist, or attempt to deny or justify journalism’s frequent cultural biases and blind spots. Our fundamental premise is grounded in a simple observation from our professional experience as journalists and journalism educators: that no one ever aspired to become a journalist because they imagined it would entitle them to sit at a desk in an artificially lit office and do the work of two people. Nor that said work would all be performed online, without speaking to another human for hours or setting foot outdoors. Indeed, since we first argued this,

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¹ Both a Discovery and Linkage project.
results of the largest study of Australian journalism students ever conducted have been published, and support our view. “The chance to meet different people” and “the varied and lively work” were the top reasons given by students for selecting journalism as their field of study, with more than 75 per cent indicating these were “very or extremely important” (Hanusch et al. 2016, p. 106). Our hypothesis is that cosmopolitanism has long been a residing aspiration of journalism, guiding journalists’ ideas about the nature of the job and their own roles in it, however humble or local the outlets for which they work.

Our paper identifies inherent cosmopolitan qualities of journalism, first through a discussion which contextualises the scholarly literature, and secondly through a series of short case studies. Putting cosmopolitanism at the centre of discussions of traditional journalism is a reminder of various ideal qualities of journalism that we and many others would like to see sustained: first, journalism’s remarkable ability to immerse itself in the moment and in the place, to report synchronously and in a deeply situated way, an essential quality that is endangered in this era of “churnalism” (Davies 2008, p. 59); secondly, its energetic engagement with the world’s problems as well as its pleasures, and its commitment to the idea that the world and its news are worth knowing for their own sakes, whether that news is far away or close to home.

The notion of journalists as citizens of the world, however recognisably part of journalists’ vocational identity for journalists themselves, is curiously underplayed in traditional journalism studies. Barbie Zelizer captures this disconnect in her reminiscences of leaving the newsroom and arriving in the academy: “Although many academic works separated journalists from the world around them for the purposes of academic inquiry, journalism continued to thrive in the world, regardless of what academics did or did not say about it” (2004, p. 3). As a former wire services reporter, Zelizer found few academic studies captured the world she had left: “Where were the small but unmistakable triumphs, the unending tensions, the tedium blasted by moments of wild unpredictability, the unexplainable loyalties, the pettiness tempered by camaraderie, and the irresolvable dilemmas that comprised my time as a journalist?” (2004, pp. 2–3). In scholarly discussions of journalism, cosmopolitanism is invoked almost as a global rather than a general concept, discussed in the context of global ethics (Ward 2011) or international journalism (Gillespie 2013; Hafez 2013; Hannerz 2007; Robertson 2010; Cheah 2013).

Furthermore, since the late twentieth century, the rise of theories of cosmopolitanism in the social sciences and humanities has resulted in the concept’s embrace by scholars of citizen journalism and new media. While conceptions of cosmopolitanism vary from discipline to discipline, in journalism and media studies anthropologist Ulf Hannerz’s work has been particularly influential. In a seminal paper published in 1990, Hannerz defined cosmopolitanism as “a stance toward diversity itself ...a willingness to engage with the Other” (1990, p. 239). This definition has been accepted and developed in subsequent media studies, including one of particular interest to this paper, Lilie Chouliaraki’s The Spectatorship of Suffering (2006, p. 14). Hannerz attributed the rise and rise of cosmopolitanism to
the growth of transnational networks in the late twentieth century (1990, p. 241). These networks turned out to include new media platforms, ‘networked journalism’, i.e. journalism facilitated by the new technologies of global distribution (Beckett and Marshall, 2008, p. 93), and citizen journalism.

Against the development of a networked world, it is entirely unsurprising that citizen journalists and scholars researching journalism in the global network era would claim the cosmopolitan turn as a guiding light of their endeavours. Yet, defined as their scholarship is by the network moment, and enmeshed as the network moment is with theories of cosmopolitanism, this field of scholarship often assumes that journalism before the network moment either was pre-cosmopolitan, or so enmeshed in Western liberal ideology as to be incapable of real cosmopolitanism.

Take, for example, a recent issue of *Journalism Studies* co-edited by Chouliaraki and Bolette Blaagaard, and dedicated to the subject of “how technology and power are reconfiguring the cosmopolitanising potential of journalistic reporting” (Franklin 2013, p. 149). Blaagaard, citing Chouliaraki, discusses cosmopolitanism as “citizen journalism’s possibility of presenting a moral critique … of professional journalistic practice of objectivity” (2013, p. 187). She acknowledges that professional journalists have emotions, but argues that their training in pragmatic objectivity leads them to deny that their stories – and hence their subjects and the public sphere – are affected by their emotions (2013, pp. 190–1). She proposes that Martin Bell, a former BBC war correspondent, is “one of the few journalists who came to the realization that journalists needed to be accountable, not only for the truthfulness of their reports, but also as subjects and subjectivities impacting the world around them” (2013, p. 193).

The crude generalising in this claim points to the notion of traditional journalism either as un-cosmopolitan (i.e. directed not towards the Other, but to the ideological imperative of objective truth) or, at best, as waiting to be awoken by citizen journalism to its cosmopolitan potential. Yet Blaagaard’s analysis does not sit comfortably alongside more nuanced accounts of journalism such as John Hartsock’s (2000) or Brian McNair’s (2006, 2010). In his *History of American literary journalism*, Hartsock demonstrates not just that conventional understandings of journalistic objectivity have existed during a mere portion of media’s history, but that there has been a longer tradition of journalists taking a narrative approach to story-telling; and that even after the rise of objectivity in journalism in the late nineteenth century, a separate tradition of a subjective approach to storytelling has existed. In *Journalists in film: heroes and villains*, McNair argues that contemporary journalism’s sense of subjectivity has been developing since the early twentieth century and the emergence of culture’s and science’s challenges to the “objectivity/subjectivity binary” (2010, p. 120):

> The notion of Absolute Truth, of a pure knowledge which could be extracted from the coarse ore of reality, gave way to acceptance of truth as something which could legitimately and in good faith be contested, debated, argued…
over, between sides which might both believe that they were telling the truth, because this was how events and issues looked to them (2010, p.120).

He goes on to discuss the growing recognition that “while striving after objectivity may be a necessary condition of ‘good’ journalism, it is not sufficient to guarantee a (or the most) truthful account of events” (2010, p. 132), and how this understanding has been made available to journalists, journalism students and scholars, and the general public, through cinematic adaptations of notable works by journalists that strenuously and successfully breach the boundary between objectivity and subjectivity. To Blaagaard’s insistence that “engagement and dialogue are now the primary journalistic skills needed” (p. 193), McNair might say “so what’s new?”, instancing as he does many film adaptations of actual cases of a journalist’s close engagement with the situations and the people he or she reports on, and the involvement of the journalist’s subjectivity. (See for example his discussions of Edward Murrow and his colleagues investigating victims of McCarthyism in Goodnight and Good Luck, and Daniel Pearl, the first western journalist publicly beheaded by jihadis, in A Mighty Heart (McNair 2010, pp. 68–9, 90–1).

The problem here is partly of definition. The new cosmopolitanists often suggest that mere “willingness to engage with the Other” is not enough: they add a moral dimension. As Chouliaraki and Blaagaard put it, cosmopolitanism is “an orientation of openness towards distant others that relies on technological mediation so as to raise the moral imperative to act on those others in the name of common humanity” (2014, p. 3, italics added). This suits advocacy journalism better than traditional reporting. It deliberately stretches earlier understandings of cosmopolitanism that were rooted in the “cultural and experiential” (Hannerz 2007, p. 301), and that can still legitimately inform and enrich our understanding of traditional journalism practice and journalistic identity.

**Journalism and historical cosmopolitanism**

As Ulrich Beck, a key scholar of sociological cosmopolitanism, notes, the concept of cosmopolitanism has been the subject of intense debate in social science and the humanities since the year 2000, “moving beyond philosophy and political theory, its conventional home, to social theory and research, and ranging widely across anthropology, geography, cultural studies, literary criticism, legal studies, international relations, and social history” (Beck and Grande 2010, p. 417). The result has been the rise of “new, more or less reflexive and critical cosmopolitanisms” (Beck and Grande 2010, p. 417) that differ from discipline to discipline, but are all based in a foundation of universal rights and tend to encompass both a cosmopolitan outlook and an implicitly political approach, projecting “a sociality of common political engagement” (James 2014, x).

Sluga and Horne, from the discipline of history, illuminate how current cosmopolitanism is informed by the conscious rejection of nineteenth century histories which elevated Western European nationalism as a world system and
privileged Western understandings of modernity to the detriment of other regions and peoples (Sluga and Horne 2010, pp. 369–370). We might well agree with Chouliaraki’s view that contemporary news reporting is biased by the historical and cultural perspectives with which it is inscribed; and that Western news discourses perpetuate these perspectives (2008, p. 8). Yet this is not the whole story.

Terhi Rantanen, a historian of media and media studies, argues that “the cosmopolitanization of news preceded its internationalization” in the nineteenth century (2007, p. 846). Her research is interested in the role of cities, as opposed to nations, in global networks: “world cities” being diverse microcosms of commerce and networking, often distinguished by porosity and an atmosphere of tolerance (pp. 846–7, 857). Rantanen demonstrates that even from pre-modern times the forerunners of newspapers were essentially cosmopolitan endeavours, associated as they were with individual cities (p. 848, 857).

She also identifies that many of the printers and publishers of early newspapers were cosmopolitan figures, “moving across Europe in search of new towns in which concessions could be obtained for periodicals” (p. 848). Importantly, she notices a key characteristic of this group: “not necessarily members of the dominant elite” and “often excluded from it because of their race, ideology or religion” (p. 847). As modernity enlarged Europe’s communication circuits, this characteristic endured. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the founders of telegraph news, Havas, Reuter and Wolff, were “cosmopolitans of their time”, “urban, mobile, literate and articulate”. They were also outsiders: Havas was a bankrupt, Reuter and Wolff political activists who fled from Berlin to Paris in 1848 (p. 851), and in Reuter’s case, ultimately to London, where he founded one of the most powerful cable news organisations in the world. Rantanen thus positions her cosmopolitans as what might be termed insider-ish outsiders: connected, but not necessarily of the establishment (indeed, often ‘Other’ themselves in ethnicity, religion or ideology); intellectually sophisticated and with experience of other cultures and thus more likely to challenge the existing order (pp. 846–847).

Her scholarship, which builds on Mitchell Stephens’s A History of News (1988) (published before the new cosmopolitan turn in the humanities), is highly influential for our paper, suggesting as it does the cosmopolitan precedents of contemporary professional journalism and the possibility of continuities. In the remainder of this paper we argue that Western journalism today is partly a product of a cosmopolitan tradition in which key attributes have recurred: cosmopolitan competence; networking and mobility; imagination and improvisation; agency and independence; and the connected observer or insider-ish outsider. We define in turn what we mean by each of these terms, with reference to the scholarship. Our methodology has similarities to both McNair’s and Chouliaraki’s, since we work from particular examples towards understanding the qualities they describe. The weakness of this method is that it can produce faulty generalisation. In this study, we have chosen highly recognisable examples to work from, because we believe their familiarity will assist readers to identify the characteristics of cosmopolitanism that we want to discuss. Readers might justifiably question, however, how journalists like Woodward
and Bernstein can stand for journalists generally. The point here is to theorise cosmopolitanism in journalism as a preliminary to a much more substantial and ambitious research project, in which we will examine a series of less well known journalists and their careers, testing them for the qualities of cosmopolitanism we describe here. Of course, these qualities are themselves contestable and may be revised, expanded or refined as our research continues.

**Journalists’ cosmopolitan competence**

Ulf Hannerz (1990, pp. 238, 241) has observed that just because many of us are able to travel the world and even live abroad, that does not make us all cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitanism is a matter of commitment and of cultural competence, he argues. It involves “a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting”. And it can also reflect what Hannerz calls “a built-up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly with a particular system of meanings and meaningful forms” (1990, p. 239). Hannerz sounds an almost playful note as he exposes the cultural incompetence of tourists and contrasts it with the narcissism of true cosmopolitans (pp. 240–242), or excludes from cosmopolitan status foreign correspondents who travel in packs and think in groups (pp. 244–5). Nevertheless his arguments about readiness and know-how describe many journalists present and past, whether based internationally or in their home town.

Alan Moorehead (1910–1983), a Melbourne reporter who took himself off to Europe in 1936 and subsequently built a brilliant international career as a war correspondent and author, is a good example. Moorehead described arriving in Toulon in southern France at the age of 26 and discovering in its exoticism what he called, in a highly significant turn of phrase, “the missing thing”, i.e. the wide world as constituted in reality, rather than in the antipodean imagination (McCamish 2016, p. 9). The young Australian, using his Australian contacts in London to become a stringer for the *Daily Express*, soon realised that he lacked “a single coherent idea of what I was to do next” (McCamish 2016, p. 16):

> Somehow, I thought, I must discover the technique of the high-powered correspondent. He would not stand here, in the midday heat, with his hands in his pockets staring at a statue of Kemal Ataturk. He would be dining at embassies, telephoning Cabinet ministers, sending off long political cables, perhaps interviewing Kemal Ataturk himself. But how did one begin? … How did you penetrate that magic world? (McCamish, 2016, p. 16)

In a recent biography, Thornton McCamish describes how Moorehead did this. The journalist was based at Gibraltar, stable itself, but with the Spanish Civil War raging next door. Moorehead quickly focused his efforts on making sense of the shipping in and around the port. He noted shipping movements and warships’ tonnage and guns. He cultivated a list of paid sources: “hotel porters, ‘men at the look-out stations’, and dock workers who would telephone” with information (McCamish
2016, p. 32). He arranged a permit to allow him to enter the northern end of the harbour, where freighters arriving from Spanish ports often proved a source of news. When the German heavy cruiser *Deutschland*, which had been legally patrolling, was attacked by Spanish republican planes, and limped unannounced into port for repairs with 31 dead men aboard, Moorehead was on hand to record the event (McCamish 2016, p. 39). By then versed in naval matters, he was equipped to ‘read’ the damage to the cruiser and the demeanour of the crew on deck. His story and photos made front pages around the world. Years later he remembered the expressions of the British watching on: “their first real vision of war, of the power and the harm of high explosive” (McCamish 2016, p. 39).

Moorehead’s readiness and his know-how are clearly demonstrated in this vignette, which also reveals other cosmopolitan attributes. We see the arc of Moorehead’s mobility: from Melbourne, to Gibraltar, via France and London. McCamish’s portrait also provides insight into the methodical way Moorehead, arriving with few contacts, used his networks to place himself in a job near the action, and once there, to build up new networks of sources.

The hard grind of building networks is also seen in Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein’s Watergate investigation for the *Washington Post*, a case now so celebrated that the unglamorous nature of the reporting bears reiteration. It concerned a break in at the Democratic Party’s National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Hotel complex in Washington. The ‘burglars’ carried equipment to copy documents and plant electronic listening devices. Woodward and Bernstein led the way in revealing the break in as part of a long running campaign of political dirty tricks that was covered up by the then US President, Richard Nixon (Ricketson 2014, pp. 40–61). Both men were then young general reporters, not established political correspondents with thick contact books. Woodward had only entered journalism two years before and had been at the Post a year. The central element of their method was their dogged pursuit of the news, gathering facts phone call by phone call, and getting out of the office to visit officials from the Committee for the Re-election of the President (CRP) at their homes in the evening. The pair quickly developed their own contacts among the middle and lower echelons of the Nixon administration (Halberstam 1979, pp. 628–31). Through Woodward, they developed perhaps the most famous (and infamous) anonymous source in journalism history, an insider they named Deep Throat, eventually revealed as the then deputy director of the FBI, Mark Felt.

Any journalist involved in such challenging reporting knows the importance of a sense of agency. As the case of Woodward and Bernstein demonstrates, journalistic agency springs almost completely from the journalist’s imagination. Others may offer encouragement and collaboration; to succeed, an individual journalist has to imagine himself or herself as an effective actor in the world. More than just visualising success, this involves the process that Kwame Anthony Appiah, in an oft-cited observation, describes as “imaginative engagement” (Papastergiadis 2012, p. 9). Imagination plays a central role in journalists’ attempts to get at the truth, and begins with trying to understand one’s subjects. Peter Dahlgren relates the example
of the late Ryszard Kapuscinski’s memoir *Travels With Herodotus*, which depicts the young Kapuscinski as an inexperienced foreign correspondent, consciously attempting “to encounter the other in an open, respectful and self-reflexive manner, to try to get a handle on the language being used, to understand the world through the other’s frames of perception, and thereby to better understand the contours and limits of his own horizons” (2013, p. 161). Dahlgren underscores “the dimension of human agency” and the role of individual responsibility in media reporting (2013, p. 166).

A compelling recent example of this is the British journalist Nick Davies, who played a key role in breaking the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal. Matters came to a head when Davies and his colleague Amelia Hill reported in 2011 that an investigator associated with the *News of the World* had hacked the phone of abducted schoolgirl Milly Dowler after she went missing. A series of investigations by Davies and others revealed how numerous citizens, both in the UK and elsewhere, had been preyed on by tabloid journalists and private investigators. Davies’ agency in this investigation sprang in part from his individual agency: his ability to differentiate himself from the institutions of media for which and among which he worked. He also stresses the role of imagination in agency:

> You train your imagination, pushing it like you’d push a muscle until it’s stronger than other people’s, until it becomes almost freakishly powerful. And over and over again, you point it at your problem and you guess, with great energy and vivid mental pictures: what could the truth possibly be; where could I possibly find the evidence; who could know; why would they talk; what’s next; what’s missing; how do I finish this jigsaw puzzle in the dark? (2014, p. 8).

There is a strong element of *improvisation* in the engagement Davies describes. He gives a striking example of his sense of this in his description of James Murdoch’s evidence to a parliamentary inquiry into phone hacking in 2011. Unimpressed by Murdoch’s stonewalling replies, Davies quietly pulled his phone out of his pocket and sent a text across the room to Labour MP Tom Watson, a member of the inquiry: “Did James know about email for Neville [Thurbeck, chief reporter for *News of the World*]? If not, why settle Taylor case? If so, why not tell police?” (Davies 2014, p. 365). Watson duly asked the questions.

Agency, imagination and improvisation are all essential aspects of the journalist as a dynamic, self-directed actor facing the world, facing the Other. They also imply a high level of independent thought and action. *Independence*, of all the qualities described so far, is most clearly connected to a journalist’s subjectivity and his or her ability to breach normative ideas of journalists’ separation from sources and subjects. If Davies exemplifies this quality in the anecdote of his text message to Watson, then the Australian photographer Frank Hurley (1885–1962) personified it. As official photographer with the First AIF, Hurley was appalled by the carnage he witnessed on the battlefields of France and Belgium. Already experienced in composite photography, he used his own subjectivity to depict a cataclysmic scene.
He “ran great risks to film exploding shells” (Pike 1983) and merged various plates to produce panoramic visual accounts of the shattered battlefields. The journalist and official war historian Charles Bean clashed with him over the acceptability of merging negatives and Hurley resigned. His techniques still stir controversy along the objectivity/subjectivity fault line: were the composite images propaganda, or journalism raised to the status of art through Hurley’s vision and skill? Certainly, touring exhibitions of his war photography helped those on the home front understand the war’s gross destruction and the impact on the survivors (Dixon 2013, p. 50–1).

Such shows of independence speak to the tension always present in journalism between an individual journalist’s subjectivity, the media outlet they work for, and their professional codes. This difference is flattened out in new cosmopolitanist accounts that insist on the hegemony of objectivity in traditional journalism. Indeed, such accounts must overlook one of traditional journalism’s defining attributes, the journalist as insider-ish outsider or connected observer. As Rantanen makes clear in her study, world cities had many worlds inside them (pp. 847, 857) and cosmopolitan journalists and editors moved comfortably between these worlds, often remaining critical of the dominant order. This trope of the cosmopolitan journalist and the city still functions today, as journalists engage deeply with subcultures different from their own, be it different ethnic communities, youth gangs or retirement communities.

The American academic and journalist Barbara Ehrenreich threw herself into such a project when in the late 1990s she decided to live as an itinerant waitress. Ehrenreich was then in her mid-fifties, like many of the other workers she encountered. She soon found that covering rent on a wage of $7 an hour plus tips was difficult in the extreme and ended up renting a cabin in a backyard, 45 minutes from her job at a family restaurant. As she recorded, her colleagues had even fewer options:

Gail is sharing a room in a well-known downtown flophouse for $250 a week. Her roommate, a male friend, has begun hitting on her, driving her nuts, but the rent would be impossible alone.

Marianne, who is a breakfast server, and her boyfriend are paying $170 a week for a one-person trailer.

Tina, another server, and her husband are paying $60 a night for a room in the Days Inn. This is because they have no car and the Days Inn is in walking distance of the Hearthside. When Marianne is tossed out of her trailer for subletting (which is against trailer park rules), she leaves her boyfriend and moves in with Tina and her husband.

Joan, who had fooled me with her numerous and tasteful outfits (hostesses wear their own clothes), lives in a van parked behind a shopping center at
night and showers in Tina’s motel room. The clothes are from thrift shops. (Ehrenreich 2001, p. 26)

Through six jobs over several months, Ehrenreich documented in painstaking detail how unskilled wages were below the level needed to live on. Her book *Nickel and dimed: on (not) getting by in America*, became a New York Times bestseller.

David Simon, famous for the television drama *The Wire*, drew directly on his experience as a crime reporter for *The Baltimore Sun* to create the hit series’ sense of authenticity (Lanahan 2008, pp. 22–31). “For four years I had written city murders in a cramped, two-dimensional way – filling the back columns of the metro section with the kind of journalism that reduces all human tragedy, especially those with black or brown victims, to bland, bite-sized morsels,” Simon explained (2006, p. 627).

He extended his beat reporting by persuading the Baltimore city homicide unit to allow him to work with them as a participant-observer for a year, in 1988, so as to write a book-length work of narrative non-fiction, *Homicide: a year on the killing streets*. While he retained an affection for police he was under no illusions about their flaws, and grew to better understand the strictures they worked within as well as the criminals they encountered. In 1993 he took a year’s leave of absence from the newspaper to immerse himself in the lives of people controlling one drug corner in Baltimore. Working with a former homicide detective, Ed Burns, he produced another book-length work of journalism, *The Corner*, which, like its predecessor, was made into a television series.

As Ehrenreich’s and Simon’s cases show, book-length journalism often becomes an obvious choice for journalists who immerse themselves in a subculture in order to report. Freed from the constraints of a parent publication, they can write as they wish and say what they want, as they move deeper than a three-thousand-word feature allows into the lived experiences of Others.

**Conclusion**

This article has identified a discontinuity in understanding of cosmopolitan traditions in Western journalism. It adopts Rantanen’s (and by extension Stephens’) arguments that news was cosmopolitan before it was international, and argues that journalism is inflected with this cosmopolitan legacy. Rather than holding itself away from the world in the sort of uncomfortable objective posture depicted in recent writing about networked and citizen journalism, pre-internet journalism can proudly claim its own cosmopolitan traditions. As Brian McNair (2010, p. 13) has argued, tens of thousands of students enter journalism programs in the West each year and these numbers surely reflect a wide appreciation of journalism and its meaning in society, not merely its negative aspects. Supporting this, Hanusch et al.’s survey of Australian journalism students identifies that the strongest motivations for young people to study journalism are to meet different people and do interesting and varied work. Recognition of journalism’s cosmopolitan qualities, including its networking and mobility, imagination and improvisation, connected observer status, cosmopolitan
competence, and its independence and agency, matters to the future of journalism and to the careers the young people in Hanusch’s study will be able to forge. In the much emptier newsrooms they will inhabit, it will be important and helpful for them to hold in mind journalism’s long cosmopolitan turn.

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