Politics, civic culture and the responsibility of journalists

Kevin Marsh

Prologue

Let me read you something I read just the other day. It’s part of a very perceptive piece of work written by a sixth-form student. Her language investigation for English A Level. It’s about two newspaper articles dealing with the coalition’s treatment of prisoners in Iraq. She writes of these texts:

“The main idea coming from these texts is that they empathise with the prisoners; they both have a biased view that American soldiers are treating Iraqi people poorly. However, they are news reports and news reports are made for the sole purpose of interesting its audience with something they can relate to or sympathise with.”

How did it get to this?

How is that the tribune of the people – the institution that is supposed to play such an important role in explaining people to power and power to people – can be dismissed so absolutely by a young person. And in terms that would have many of us nodding in agreement?

There are many reasons; some grand, some less than grand – and I’ll talk about some of the grand in a moment. But one, undoubtedly, is the daily cynicism of the senior member of the British Fourth Estate, the press. A cynicism and arrogance that excludes not just that sixth-former but more and more of our citizens.

One of the most depressing things I’ve ever read was Piers Morgan’s autobiography – the former editor of the Daily Mirror and the News of the World. In journalism’s tribal hall of fame, Morgan’s portrait is fixed high on a well-lit wall. Some of his fellow journalists treat him with a kind of reverence - in spite of the insider dealing scandal at his Daily Mirror. And the inconvenient publication of fake photos that he was responsible for - and initially defended.

When he writes about his time as Editor of the News of the World, he describes it as:

“… Playing God with people’s lives. I get ultimately to decide every week who lives and who dies by the News of the World sword … the obvious glee with which my newsdesk or features executives rehearse the weekly stories of misery and mayhem created by our revelations slightly unnerves, as well as excites, me.”

I suppose we should be grateful that he was at least “slightly unnerved”.

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1 Former editor of the BBC Today Programme and current Editor-in-Chief, BBC College of Journalism. This paper is the transcript of a talk given by Mr Marsh at the School of Law, St Albans in December 2005.
But this is the central paradox of the trade of journalism. It has a semi-constitutional role in most democracies. As I said a moment ago, explaining power to people and people to power. An implied obligation to citizens.

On the other hand, it’s a trade populated by individuals who – mostly – boast of and romanticise the lack of obligation and responsibility. That paradox is only partly explained by the need for the press to be free – a freedom that many in the press forget they’re exercising on behalf of citizens. Part of that freedom is the freedom to be story tellers. But too many in the press, like Morgan, argue their business is only to tell stories; no more, no less. It’s nothing to do with them if their stories happen to shape the terms of debate for good or ill. They’re watchers not players.

It’s hypocrisy, of course. The press’s self-determined glories are the “scalps” it takes. At the grand end, Watergate; at the mundane end, the Mellors and the Yeo’s of the Major years; Mansdelson, Vaz and Blunkett of the Blair years.

Exposing hypocrisy and wrongdoing is a vital part of making power answerable to people – but the press has got out of the habit of doing that on behalf of citizens. If it sells papers, that’s the only justification the press requires. Which is why newspapers see no contradiction in celebrating success when an explicitly political campaign succeeds – the cannabis laws are changed or speed cameras are limited in their operation.

While at the same time, walking away and denying responsibility when a flawed and unbalanced campaign against MMR harms and damages children. Or when an irresponsible campaign naming paedophiles leads to paediatricians being beaten-up in their own homes.

It’s not just the flawed heroes of the trade, though, like Morgan who perpetuate the inward looking myths of journalism. Some of the trade’s most celebrated practitioners validate them.

John Carroll – the former Editor of the Los Angeles Times and former Chairman of the Pulitzer Prize Board – said it was “the Constitutional right of every citizen, no matter how depraved, to be a journalist.” Walter Lippmann – one of America’s greatest editors – called his trade “the last refuge of the vaguely talented.” And so on.

The net result of this kind of joshing arrogance – jokey at times, but still arrogance - this inward, self-regarding and self-congratulating attitude has been a press that almost no-one trusts any more and newspaper sales that are in long-term decline. One newspaper editor who’s just stood down – Andrew Gowers of the Financial Times – thinks the printed newspaper has a bleak future.

Almost everyone who’s thought about these things has come to the conclusion that the plates are shifting under the three pillars of our democracy – our civic culture, our political culture and our journalism. Many wonder whether the press have realised that – and if they have, are they willing or capable to mend their ways.

About six weeks ago, there were riots in a part of Birmingham; Lozells.
The press found it mystifying. So did politicians. The Times commentator, Alice Miles wrote this:

“Odd that so few people have anything to say about the rioting in Birmingham at the weekend. So far removed is Lozells Road from Westminster and Fleet Street that the political classes have fallen silent. We have no cultural references with which to shape pat conclusions from what happened (is still happening) in Birmingham.”

Something went very badly wrong in Lozells – but press and politics didn’t know what it was.

Why? It’s their job to know. But they didn’t.

Why not?

Because that distance from Fleet Street to Lozells isn’t just a physical one. Because an arrogant and exclusive press has lost the ability to listen to the conversation of citizens. Which is a major part of the journalism we need.

Lozell’s is an extreme example; but an illustration nonetheless of how the plates have shifted under our civic culture, political culture and journalism. Civic culture is robust in Lozells – too robust by some measure. There’s no shortage of civic conversation; talk on the street and in the shops and cafes about what’s wrong, what needs putting right.

Listen, and you’ll hear it. Connect it well to our system of representative politics – a connection journalism is there to assist and facilitate – and the likelihood is that differences will be resolved without violence. That’s how our system works. Or is supposed to work. As Lozell’s shows at the extreme end, it isn’t working. And as that sixth form student, Piers Morgan and Alice Miles show - the failure of the press is a very important part in it not working.

The plates are shifting. There’s more or less unanimous agreement about that. There’s much less agreement on why. How. And what it means for all of us – as citizens and for people like me actively working in one of those pillars.

It’s important to be clear about what we mean by political life and culture, and civic life and culture – and the way journalism works with both. They’re not interchangeable – though the political system has often made it seem that way. Our political culture took its current shape in the ninety years or so between the Great Reform Bill of 1832 and the extension of votes to women in 1918.

All the features of our current political culture and political institutions formed then; mass-membership parties … annual conferences … links with trades unions, conservative associations, the church, employer associations. General and local elections in which everyone over the age of majority was entitled to vote – and the campaigns that went with them.

Those elections and campaigns were – still are – one of the formal links between our political and our civic cultures. The moment at which the civic conversation – the conversations
between citizens – was weighed and measured to derive some approximation of the will of the majority. But of course that civic conversation was going on all the time; individuals talked to each other … or joined in groups such as the trade unions or golf clubs to chew through formally and informally how they wanted the world around them to change. What they thought those to whom they’d trusted power over them were getting wrong.

The 2-way link between citizens and representative politics was the press. Newspapers – that was all there was then – watched what the powerful did and reported it back to citizens; and it aggregated the arguments citizens were having around what the powerful were up to. The press was free, partial and partisan – and in every sense, ephemeral.

Anyone was free to set up a newspaper. Many did. An unseen hand ensured that newspapers came and went as the public appetite for them and for their views shifted. Both political and newspaper affiliations were class-based and tribal.

Civil society divided along similar lines – your friends lived near you, you worked with them and drank in the same clubs and pubs. Read the same papers. The press was part of the political conveyor belt that delivered citizen’s votes and voters to the big, national parties. It’s this model that the plates have shifted under – the problem for the press is that in large measure, it remains stuck in it.

Partly because this political model isn’t working very well, there’s a lot of gloom – almost all of it, I think, unnecessary – about the health of our civic culture. Writers on the left argue that the public sphere has been destroyed first by a systematic and calculated assault from the liberal right, then by the crude forces of global capital.

Those on the right argue that our society is atomising; the individual is at the core of changing society driving out collective activities. They even argue that we just don’t have the citizens we used to – the Second World War generation saw the peak of civic engagement. Since then, it’s been downhill.

I think it’s much more complicated – and much more positive than that.

Many, though, make the mistake of looking at what is happening to our political culture (the way we behave towards the institutions of representative politics) and assume that means our civic culture (the way we behave as citizens) can be read in the same way.

And the data on our political culture is striking. Election turnout, for example; in long term decline; 59% in 2001. The apparent rise to 61% in 2005 was masked by a massive increase in proxy and postal voting. The proportion that actually got off its backside and went out to vote was closer to 46% or 47%.

Voter registration – the least proactive civic act a citizen can carry out other than being born. Four million of us haven’t registered. In inner London, 25% of adults haven’t; in those inner London seats, as few as 30% of adults made it out of doors to polling stations. The consequence is government that is democratic in name only. Nationally, 75% of us didn’t endorse Labour’s 2005 manifesto. By this measure, we have the least legitimate government since 1832.
The two big parties are multi-million pound enterprises; big London HQs, big permanent staffs. But almost no-one is actively involved in them any more. Just half a million of us – about 1% of the adult population – are paid-up members of either of the two parties that can expect to govern us in our life-times.

If representative politics is your trade, this is worrying stuff. It has to be tackled if representative government is to retain legitimacy – incidentally, that’s not the given it once was. But these things aren’t a problem with our civic culture – the way we behave towards each other as citizens. They’re a symptom of a much more elusive disconnection between our civic and political lives – and a failure of the connecting agent, journalism.

The data about our civic life are as strikingly positive as those about our political life are negative. More people are involved in voluntary work now than were in 1944. The Women’s Institute has 220,000 members. More than the Labour Party, more than voted in the Tory leadership election. It opened 30 new branches last year.

In some communities, churches have record attendances and record involvement in community work. Campaign and lobby groups are growing month by month – especially joint leisure/lobby groups like the RSPB or the RSPCA or international groups like Amnesty or the WWF. Ad hoc, direct action groups – springing up all over. Parents tackling the poor quality of school food or admissions policy; housing action groups; local anti-crime groups.

More and more citizens are shouting about what they think and what they want; radio phone-ins, writing to the papers, to councillors and the BBC; they’re blogging, arguing on message-boards and – especially in the past year – making their own campaigning websites. And millions demonstrated for and against the foxhunting ban; and against the Iraq war.

Our civic culture is as strong as it’s ever been – but increasingly, citizens see little or no connection between that and the thing called politics. That’s something that goes on in Westminster and in the press. The fault is partly with politicians – but the biggest culpability lies with the press. They are more culpable because we citizens had every right to expect better of it. And it could have delivered better.

At the heart of any society is trust – particularly a democratic society where we give power to fellow citizens to act on our behalf.

Our civic culture is by any measure a very trusting one: polls show that more than half of us routinely trust the word of strangers. We trust public employees to drive us to work on trains and buses without killing us. We trust our fellow citizens on eBay.

But we hardly trust at all our political representatives; and we hardly trust at all those who, traditionally, have looked out for our interests with the powerful. The press. Whatever we expected of politicians, we expected more of our champions.

There are regular polls on this – in all of them the result is more or less the same. At best, one in six of us trust either MPs or newspaper journalists; trust in the redtops is in single figures.
It hasn’t happened by accident.

The political Editor of the Spectator, Peter Oborne, published a book this year – “The Rise of Political Lying” – in which he set out how those around Tony Blair in 1994 set out to reconstruct what counted as truth in our political culture. Oborne concedes they were right to conclude that Tony Blair would never become Prime Minister unless they constructed a new narrative for the centre-left and controlled the press, in some measure.

And as he also sets out, Alastair Campbell, Peter Mandelson and Phillip Gould were largely successful.

At a price. The price was exacted because some parts of the press actively colluded, voters and readers (citizens) felt manipulated. Saw that they were excluded. They became fluent in a new language of politics; ‘on-message”; the tyranny of pagers; good news doubly announced; bad news buried.

The language of “spin”. And of course, voters, citizens and readers realised this could not have worked –even for a time – without the compliance of some newspaper journalists and some newspapers.

The press should have been the citizen’s ally in this; testing the truth of those double-announcements; rejecting those planted stories and refusing to do deals with Downing Street. But it wasn’t. It was in on it – and readers, voters and non-voters knew they were in on it.

Not just in the way you might have expected a healthy, partisan press to have acted as cheerleader or accuser; this was different – the press wasn’t just delivering opinion and argument. It seemed at times to be delivering a truth invented for it in No 10. And while ordinary citizens had rumbled the press, knew the game was up, the press itself continued to behave as it always had – believing itself immune to criticism; wearing its lack of obligation to the citizen as a badge of pride.

In 2002, Professor Onora O’Neil – principal of Newnham College, Cambridge – was the BBC Reith Lecturer. In her lectures she articulated what many citizens felt. That they were swimming in a sea of information and disinformation – feeling uneasily that they were being manipulated at every turn. They needed to know who they could trust. But they couldn’t turn to the press – their supposed champion – because the press itself was un-accountable. Answerable only to owners and to an inward looking, self-referential ethic that saw external criticism as impudence.

She went on:

“All the if we build a public culture – and above all a media culture – in which we can rely on others not to deceive us – will we be able to judge whom and what we can reasonably trust.”

If the press wants to be part of building that public and media culture of trust, it will have to think very hard about two of its core principles that have become distorted. Adversariality and independence. The British press is adversarial – like our legal and parliamentary systems.
Intelligent journalists – John Lloyd among them – argue strongly that an adversarial press is a good thing, citing John Stuart Mill in support. The proposition in On Liberty - that truth and mental freedom are nurtured by the clash of debate.

Mill, of course, intended something Socratic, carried out by intellectuals. And that in the clash of ideas, the better prevails over the worse. I don’t think anyone would describe the British press as Socratic. It is the only press in the world where “intellectual” is used as an insult. What we see instead is adversariality as a destructive negativity. It’s not necessary in the press to win an argument. Just ensure the other guy loses. Instead of Socratic dialogue, we have a self-destructive race to the bottom.

As for independence – well, independent is the one thing the British press is not. Ordinary readers can never know why Murdoch’s papers have this on their front pages, Rothermere’s something else. Whether it serves the interests of journalism and the public – or those of its owner.

At the same time, many journalists – in their tribal culture and customs – have taken to an interpretation of “independence” that means unaccountable, opaque and immune from correction. Transparency, accountability, susceptibility to criticism are important factors in trust. But before all of that comes the expectation that the press will try to tell the truth – or at the very least as much of the truth as it can establish

But too much of the press doesn’t aspire to do that.

You might remember a story in the New Statesman at the end of September. It was a story I happen to know a bit about. Its editor, John Kampfner wrote that the BBC Chairman, Michael Grade, had wanted to sack John Humphrys to please ministers. It isn’t true. But it’s the sort of story that, true or not, will always be believed by some readers. A few journalists – notably my predecessor at Today – joined in. He wrote in The Times- and without any new information to add:

“I suspect that Grade did quite fancy sacking Humphrys, much as John Kampfner, the New Statesman editor, had alleged in his magazine. I think he is largely right.”

“Largely right” is the telling phrase. It isn’t right at all – and my predecessor knew it. But for him, for John Kampfner and for too many in the press it’s enough to be “largely right”. So long as the copy is good and – again to quote my predecessor – the story has caused trouble and “got up someone’s nose.”

In summer 2004, MORI asked 30 British editors what they thought was the most important part of their job. Just five said it was delivering an accurate product - maintaining standards and integrity. Being more than “largely right”.

Twenty one said it was fighting off the competition. That sixth form student was right.
You can see more of this mindset by comparing three journalist codes; the British Press Complaints Commission, the American Society of Professional Journalists and the BBC Editorial guidelines.

The last of these – the BBC’s Editorial Guidelines – are binding and form part of the contract of employment of every BBC journalist. It has 21 short chapters dealing with truth and accuracy which it calls: “... a core editorial value and fundamental to our reputation."

It promises that BBC journalists will gather material from first hand sources; check and cross check facts, validate documents and corroborate claims made by third parties on BBC programmes. And it guarantees the right of reply to anyone accused of “wrong doing, iniquity or incompetence.”

The American Society of Professional Journalists expresses something similar. It’s not a binding code – but is one to which many American journalists aspire. It has sixteen separate propositions under the title “Seek Truth and report it."

“Journalists should test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.”

The journalist “always question a sources motives ...”, makes certain “headlines don’t mislead ...”, diligently seeks out “subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond ...”

The British press is signed up to a code on truth and accuracy that doesn’t have 21 binding paragraphs like the BBC nor 16 detailed propositions like the American code. The PCC code has just four short statements – one of which is an injunction to newspapers to print the outcomes of defamation actions they have lost.

Accuracy is not a “core editorial value” nor is there any requirement to test “the accuracy of information”, the PCC code simply advises the British press to “take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information.” And it only advises the correction of “significant” inaccuracies.

It’s the least the British press could agree on – and a very long way from a code, or even the articulation of an aspiration, that could produce the mindset of a trusted press. It’s the code of a press which aspires to be no more than “largely right”. Not the press anyone needs.

Over the past decade, we have managed to produce a press that doesn’t, can’t or won’t accept the responsibilities it has in our system of democracy – even the first responsibility that it should try to tell the truth. It’s a press that – for the most part – rejects the idea of a journalism that citizens need. Preferring instead to honour an internal code that excludes the citizen except at the point of sale.

Too few newspaper journalists believe that they have any civic obligation. Power, yes. Obligation, no.
But whether they like it or not – and this is the experience of the press in America – the plates
are shifting and newspapers must respond or die. For our democracy to work, citizens,
politicians and journalists have to listen to, understand and trust each other.

And journalists need to know how to make those trusted connections between citizens and
power. As far as the press is concerned – their recent history convinces no-one that they do.

Conclusions

How then are the plates shifted – and what does this mean for the journalism we need?

The first and most obvious thing is that the press can’t go on fulfilling as well as it does all
the conditions of Kipling’s “prerogative of the harlot”. Power without responsibility. It can’t
go on feeling only “slightly unnerved” at playing God. And causing misery and mayhem to
innocent and guilty alike.

Present and future citizens – whether in Lozells or Lowestoft – need trusted guides and
trusted links between themselves and power. The press can’t do that without first recognising
that it has a responsibility for the public going well. That doesn’t mean we don’t need a, a
partisan, plural press; lippy, gutsy, holding the powerful to account. The press needs to be all
these things; but it needs to be truthful first. It is not – its readers know it’s not.

That’s why they don’t trust it – why they reject it. If I seem tough on the press, then it’s for
good reason. Lack of trust isn’t a necessary condition of journalism. Broadcasters – not just
the BBC – are amongst the most trusted people in Britain. Up there with teachers, judges and
lawyers. Around the 70% mark.

There are very good reasons for this – and one of them is not that broadcasting editors and
reporters are just better at their jobs. The main reason is that broadcasting is by law and nature
accountable and transparent – a form of what Professor O’Neil calls “assessable
communication.”

All UK based broadcasting is legally obliged to be impartial, fair and balanced. It’s
inevitable, therefore, that there is a clear division between fact and comment; reporting and
opinion. It’s also required to be accurate and provide redress when it is not. The nature of
broadcasting guarantees assessability. You might not like John Humphrys’ tone in an
interview; you might think Nick Clarke has got the wrong end of the stick or that Paxman is
too clever by half.

Listeners and viewers decide. They hear the full interview or news conference in context –
was the key quote fairly extracted? Does its context change its meaning? Is the interviewer
being fair? On the 24 hour channels – BBC, ITN or SKY – you watch an evolving truth; you
share with the broadcasters the uncertainties of arriving at a working account of a story.

Assessable communication. Citizens value this more than anything else.

We saw that when Lord Hutton inquired into the death of Dr David Kelly. The Hutton inquiry
and report were unique in British public life – all the evidence was there, almost
instantaneously, for all of us to read, form a view on, argue about in the pub – and millions did.

No-one had to rely on accounts in the press – though when they read those accounts, particularly in The Times and The Sun, and compared them to the Hutton website, they saw all the faults of the press on display. The Times, in particular, on its news pages – not its comment pages, its news pages – served for a time as little more than a conduit for Alastair Campbell’s take on the inquiry. It was because the raw, unmediated evidence of the inquiry were on display, verbatim, for everyone to assess for themselves that – when Lord Hutton delivered a report that some called a whitewash – trust in the BBC went up and trust in the Government went down.

I wonder whether the press can achieve assessable communication.

Some American papers now put the raw material of their articles online. It’s clumsy – and in the end may be no more than a gesture. Much more important is a change of culture – and the press will get nowhere without the self-awareness to understand that pride in your trade and independence doesn’t mean insisting you’re infallible, your judgements are beyond question and your power is there to be used arbitrarily – even if it is, from time to time, slightly unnerving.

Press culture won’t be changed through regulation or law. But there is an alternative. Those of us interested in a healthy civic and political culture and in healthy journalism can – and probably should – make life as uncomfortable as possible for those who aren’t.

We can put the expectation of truthfulness back at the heart of our public and media culture. Comment. Argue. Be partisan – all of that. But be truthful first. How many of us in the chattering classes say that as explicitly as we should?

Newspaper editors have to put truth-telling first – and the PCC has to articulate that as an aspiration … so that ordinary readers and ordinary citizens can assess whether their newspaper lives up to that aspiration. We need to generate, tolerate and celebrate criticism of our trade. Every newspaper should have an independent readers’ editor – part of the informal contract with readers guaranteeing correction and rights of reply – and not just for the most catastrophic and damaging howlers.

We need to establish and encourage ventures like FactCheck.org – I’m planning to set up a Today fact-check site early next year whose job it will be to take our lead from listeners and establish the facts behind assertions made on our programme. We need more academic review of journalism. Where is the British Pew, the British Poynter, the British ‘Pressthink’? Where are the British equivalents of the Columbia and American Journalism reviews? Where is the British journal of media ethics?

And the academic world has another duty, too; every undergraduate and postgraduate journalism course – whether vocational or not – should have a compulsory, substantial ethics module. Establishing that public culture that assumes truthfulness and trustworthiness is the minimum citizens require from journalism as civic culture changes.
But we need to go further.

James Carey, CBS Professor of International Journalism at Columbia University, wondered how long we could tolerate:

“a journalism that justifies itself in the public’s name but in which the public plays no role, except as an audience.”

I wonder how easy it will be for a distant, inward looking, arrogant, infallible, complicit press to re-establish itself in the 21st century civic conversation and re-make the way it links that with power. That 21st century conversation is taking place all around us; face to face, in phone-ins, through community groups and - growing at a breathtaking rate - over the internet.

In America – and increasingly here – the internet is undermining traditional, “big” journalism; the press and the TV networks. In America – as here – the reaction of the press was initially contempt; what do they know? Who gave the bloggers permission? They missed the fact that all that was happening was that the old civic conversations were now taking place in new ways – locally and globally. And that the possibility of free publication gave volume to those conversations, in much the way that the political framework of the 19th and 20th centuries gave volume to the civic conversations of that era.

Now, technology is offering volume to the civic conversations of our era; conversations that are helping citizens create new networks – networks that are useful to them. Networks that can increasingly be harnessed to change the world around them or campaign, argue, lobby to that end.

Most of the press is catching on to this shifting plate late in the day; much of it reluctantly.

Broadcasters, however, see it differently. And a brief glance at what’s happening now with broadcasters demonstrates how they – not the press – are supporting the journalism we, as citizens, need. It’s not just the internet. Ultra-local TV stations, for instance. TV stations giving volume to communities spread over just a few streets, complementing community radio stations. ITV has rolled its first trials out – the BBC has plans to do the same shortly.

In September and October on Today we gave volume to a Citizens’ Jury. We convened a group of citizens – representative of the community – who call witnesses, take evidence and debate their way to a set of recommendations.

Quite an old idea, as it happens; they started life as Planungszelle in Germany in the early 1970s, arriving in the UK in the mid-1990s. They’ve been the province – to date – of think-tanks and small citizenship organisations. At the end of October, Today gave volume to an experiment in open budgeting in a North West London. A local community was invited to an open meeting to debate local budget priorities.

These were small scale experiments – but they reflect something that’s struggling into life across the country. Empowered Citizen Action. Something that, for the press, is marginal and rather quirky. There are problems. Even though the Government – through its ‘Together We Can’ initiative – is showing signs that it wants to link our deliberations as citizens with power.
But for broadcasters – though it’s early days – this looks and feels like a way that journalism can once again find ways of acting for citizens in dealing with power.

Enabling and supporting conversations; injecting trustworthy information into citizens networks; listening back to the arguments on a big and small scale; turning up the dial on them; perhaps even supporting them to change the world around them with ‘how-to’ kits. It’s a long way from the one-to-many model that much of journalism – the press especially – is used to and comfortable with.

The old world of the press – the world in which as James Carey says the press “justifies itself in the public’s name but in which the public plays no role, except as an audience” - looks irrelevant.

But to get from irrelevance to relevance once again, the press would have to dump a lot of its excluding cultural and tribal baggage. As well as telling the truth.

But it’s the journalism the new citizenship needs. It’s the journalism we need.

And I wonder if we had it, whether Alice Miles would have been able to reflect on the silence of the political classes and conclude that we haven’t the cultural references to know what to say to and about our fellow citizens?