Genre and Identity: Citizenship in the Age of the Internet and the Age of Global Capitalism

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One of the more popular academic slogans of this half century is Wittgenstein's characterization of language-in-use as a form of life. Genre theory takes this slogan seriously. In perceiving an utterance as being of a certain kind or genre, we become caught up in a form of life, joining speakers and hearers, writers and readers, in particular relations of a familiar and intelligible sort. As participants orient towards this communicative social space they take on the mood, attitude, and actional possibilities of that placeóthey go that place to do the kinds of things you do there, think the kinds of thoughts you think there, feel the kind of way you feel there, satisfy what you can satisfy there, be the kind of person you can become there (Bazerman 1997, 1998). It is like going to a dining room, or a dance hall, or a seminar, or church. You know what you are getting yourself into and what range of relations and objects will likely be realized there. You adopt a frame of mind, set your hopes, plan accordingly, and begin acting with that orientation.

You also know that if you hang around a certain place long enough you will become the kind of person who hangs around that kind of place--you know your way around the place, how to act there, what to say there, who fits or misfits, and who is a newcomer. The places you habituate will develop those parts of you that are most related to and oriented towards the activities of that space. As our grandmothers warned, if you hang around the race track long enough, you become one of those race track characters. When you go to army training, you can be all you want to be, but only if what you want to be is those kinds of things you can become in the army. If want you want to be is a piano soloist, you would be better off going to a music conservatory. It is the same with hanging around genres of writing. You want to be a more knowledgeable cook or you want to have more elaborate fantasies about food, then you repeatedly read cookbooks. You want to be a mathematician, you spend more than a few minutes with the math textbooks and you gradually work your way into the professional literature. You want to exercise and develop some political passions and consciousness, you keep up with the magazines of political fact and opinion.

But going to the place is only the first step, for once you are there you have access and encouragement to engage with particular people in particular roles, use particular resources, take part in particular experiences, and activities. When you start writing in those genres you begin thinking in actively productive ways that result in the utterances that belong in that form of life and you take on all the feelings, hopes, uncertainties, and anxieties about becoming a visible presence in that world and participating in the available activities. You develop and become committed to the identity you are carving out within that domain. Further, the particular ranges of feelings, impulses, and stances that you adopt in orienting to that world develop in interaction with the people and activities within that world. In these ways genre shapes intentions, motives, expectations, attention, perception, affect and interpretive frame. It brings to bear in the local moment more generally available ideas, knowledge, institutions, and structures that we recognize as germane to the activity of the genre.

Becoming an Income Tax-Payer

So, once a year in filling out our income tax forms we become tax payers, with all our concomitant (though individually varying) beliefs about the responsibilities of citizenship and honesty and economic interest . We bring our emotions and anxieties about our current financial situation, our financial life of the past year, our willingness to pay money to the government, and our being called to account for our self-interested reporting of our finances. In filling out the form, we are walked through an ontological universe in which we come to represent in locally constrained and legally systematic terms the transactions of the past year and made accountable for accounting them. For those several hours in filling out the forms we act as citizen taxpayers with all that implies, as we collaborate with our accountant and the Internal Revenue Service to produce the communal document that defines our tax obligation and our identity as tax-payers.

We are, however, more than temporarily implicated in the linked systems of taxation and the economy. We fill out tax forms every year, and every week we receive our paycheck with amounts accounted and deducted that will be aggregated on the annual forms. Perhaps daily we save our receipts, make purchase decisions, or organize our income with an eye toward tax consequences. We live our economic life then in a continuing taxpayer relationship to the governmentóa fact that provides no end of irritation to some people. This taxpayer identity also heightens our own awareness of our economic life in a way different than our monthly statements from our bank or broker or credit card company, for the tax system causes us to aggregate and summarize our income in ways that place us within demographic class categories, as reported in the census and the daily press.

Identity Development within Genred Activity Systems

Thus genres and the activity systems they are part of provide the forms of life within which we make our lives (Bazerman 1995). This is as true of our systems of work, creativity, community, leisure, and intimacy as it is of our systems of tax obligationóeach mediated through language forms along with whatever other embodied and material aspects there are to the interactions. Even the biological fundamentals of sex and eating are now surrounded by and enacted through complexes not only of words but of written texts of knowledge, advice, facilitation, commerce. These organized complexes of communications shape our ongoing relationships and identities, and within these complexes we change and develop through our sequences of mediated participation.

Another better studied example of the ways in which we develop and form identities through participation in systems of genres within ordered activity systems is in higher education. The writing in the disciplines literature has provided extensive evidence that educational development occurs and professional identities emerge within systems of genres and activities (Russell 1997a1997b). Berkenkotter, Huckin and Ackerman's 1991 study describes a graduate student struggling in a series of seminar papers over several terms to locate his voice within the professional intertextual forms, within which he gradually develops a professional identity. For him this identity never stabilizes but stays in tension through the period of the study, and long after. Similarly, we see the development of professional identity in Blakeslee's account of a graduate student in physics mentored by a professor through collaboration in writing scientific papers. The issue is made more poignant by the interdisciplinary ambitions of the physicists who see have applications of their work to neurobiology and pharmacology. We see it in Prior's (1999) accounts of graduate students developing their theses and professional identities within evolving fields, constantly remade by their actions and the actions of classmates, professors, and others they engage with. The students reinterpret, hybridize, and improvise upon and within the forms of expression and contribution expected of them, as they move through seminar papers and into dissertations. We see in the undergraduate architecture students' notebooks reported on by Medway (this volume), a self creation and identification of aesthetic commitments and imagination. Attention to the role of specific written genres of inquiry in the development of students' thought, commitments, and identity, has been a major theme in composition pedagogy at least since Theodore Baird's introduction of assignment sequences at Amherst in the nineteen thirties (Varnum 1996). And when students graduate and get to the workplace,

workplace mentors use controlled assignment of work related genres as ways of developing the new worker's professional competence, confidence, and identity (Dias et al 1999).

In another kind of example, my own recent study (Bazerman 1999) examines how Thomas Edison developed his own career as a public inventor and industrialist by sequentially producing--along with his electrical and other inventions--texts and other statements for various genres and activity systems. To gain support and acceptance for his emergent technologies he, with the help of agents and employees, must file patent applications in the historically emerged forms of the patenting system, must defend these patents through the genres of the courts, must build alliances with financiers, must become a good interviewee to gain the support of the press, must build a professional name by writing for the industrial and technical press. Through his success in all these genres Edison builds his complex identity as the man who could make technological change and industrial growth happen, thereby becoming the great American folk hero for almost a century. These accomplishments and celebrity were for the most part accomplished within the ordinary genres of his timeóhe just coordinated them all extraordinarily well. It was the inventions that were extraordinarily noteworthy and that is the part of his work which is most remembered.

The Transformation of the Public Rhetorical Field

All these examples demonstrate the interplay between the existing social worlds writers recognize and orient toward, and the individualized presences and contributions each writer makes through participation in the shared discursive space of the genres. Identities and forms of life get built within the evolving social spaces identified by recognizable communicative acts. In each of these examples, each person through genred communication learns more of his or her personal possibilities, develops communicative skills, and learns more of the world he or she is communicating with. They learn to participate successfully and make individual contributions within the relevant discursive spaces. In a few of the cases we may say that the activity systems were significantly altered by their participation. Edison's ability to collaborate in the construction of celebrity brought technology more to the heroic center of cultural representation, thereby creating new ideals for youths, new models for industrial growth, and new motifs for consumerism (Wachhurst XXX). Edison on occasion even saw new possibilities for existing communicative forms, thereby changing the typified understanding and activities mediated by that form. He saw in the individual inventor's notebook a means for coordinating the work of the several workers in his industrial laboratory at Menlo Park. As a young newsboy he understood the nexus of telegraphy, newspapers and railroad by telegraphing the headlines of the evening paper to be posted at the train stations, so he could sell papers during the two minute train stops. He understood how the forms of representation surrounding gas lighting could be mobilized to make intelligible an entirely new technology of central power.

But the next example suggests an even greater transformative potential. As people develop understanding of the communicative world their literate practices may change to fit their deepened vision of what writing accomplishes and how. These changed practices may then influence others to perceive and act in the communicative world in new ways. Adam Smith, began his career as a university lecturer of rhetoric at a time when new ideas of psychology and egalitarianism were bringing traditional forms of authority, hierarchy, and social trust into question. Continuing in the available genres of mid eighteenth century Scottish-British intellectual life, he worked through issues of knowledge, social order, communication, and his own role as a philosophic innovator (Bazerman 1993). He thereby reconfigured his perception of the communicative landscape, and saw new potentials for social relations and action through transformation of the available communicative forms.

Building on his understanding of persuasion and interpersonal understanding achieved through communictive acts, in the later part of his career, he focused on issues of social order by considering political economy along

with personal and social self-regulation. In particular, he came to a novel understanding of the genre of political economy, in which gave great persuasive force to his final contribution of *An Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations*. In advancing his scheme for improving political economy, he eventually got others to see this scheme embedded a mechanism for fundamental communication in the public sphere to produce social order.

Even more, the terms of the scheme proposed became so accepted as a kind of natural science that the book came to be seen as one of the founding documents of the new science of economics. This after-the-fact reframing of the genre of the book leads to an entirely different reading of the textóthe reading modern economists give it, as making certain propositions about economic theory. In this modern reading, descriptive passages become reformulated in mathematical terms as newly discovered laws of the marketplace, although Smith never once uses an equation.

Although Smith recognizes that much if not most of life occurs outside the marketplace, and that people act idiosyncratically and irrationally, yet he convinces people to think of themselves and act as homo economicus, so we can communicate through the common currency of the marketplace. The marketplace creates the basis of an egalitarian, though reduced, democratic social order that admits diversity of desire and interest (though all that desire is channeled into economic desire for its satisfaction). There are limits and problems to his economic game (many of which Smith himself recognizes), but his text has been so forceful, that it becomes hard for economics to question those assumptions and the economic reasoning that flows from them (despite regular critiques from Karl Marx through Deirdre McCloskey). Even more it has become hard for government officials, politicians, journalists, and ordinary people in their everyday lives to resist marketplace economics as the most compelling mechanism for establishing value. The success of the marketplace is now widely seen as what makes all other aspects of life possible, and therefore subsidiary.

Interestingly, from the point of view of genre, the heart of Smith's proposal is that we locate all of our impulse as public people into the marketplace, where exchange is through the typifications of economic value. Adopting the associationist psychology of his contemporary and friend David Hume, Smith sees an incommensurable variety of human desire and perception, arising from the individuality of sensation, experience, and associations. By channelling all our desires and impulse into the economic terms of the marketplace, however, he argues, we can meet and negotiate a social order through our setting of prices for those things that would satisfy desire, no matter how idiosyncratic. Further, we become committed to operating in the market to gain means to pursue those desires. Thus we can meet over money, no matter what we want the money for. Moreover, once in this marketplace, we can typify each other's motives and actions as those of rational self-interested actorsóthe notorious homo economicus. This greatly simplifies the problem of sympathetic understanding of the other and reflexively our own understanding of how others might see us and the decorum for acting in this realm. The trading genres of the marketplace and its primary symbol draw us into a narrowed phenomenological world, with limited motive, affect, ideology, role, expressive intent, expressive means, and so on.

The market does provide a compelling form of life, making it hard to maintain motives outside the market, for all outside the market is in a private realm not reinforced by the great social mechanism of the economy. National boundaries and sentiments, communal loyalties, international strife, familial and tribal loyalty, religion, art, philosophy, landscape, natural resources, other speciesóall eventually become dependent upon and weaker than the economy, and are under pressure to conform to the dictates of the economy. Or at least that appears to be the case at the end of the second millennium. In some instances we can clearly applaud the resultsófor example, war, although at one time thought to be beneficial to some industries and national economic interests, now is seen as clearly destructive of economic resources and disruptive of an orderly environment for doing business. On the other hand, it becomes increasingly difficult to assert policy initiatives that have uncertain or even demonstrably negative economic impacts. Thus welfare is measured more by the effects on the economy

than by the value of public compassion. Only when compassion serves economic development is it likely to be enacted.

Typifications and the Construction of the Life World

Usual characterizations of the marketplace suggest that all information necessary for rational decision making becomes expressed in the markets, so that homo economicus truly does not need to know anything but economics. The phenomenological philosopher Alfred Schutz, trained in Vienna Circle economics, however, noted that for two business people to negotiate a deal they need to be able to judge each other's intent, character, reliability and interests, which are not evident simply in the numbers of the marketplace. He concluded what we needed to understand was how people understood, constructed, and operated within the life worlds which they shared with the people around them. This led Schutz to consider the typifications by which we structure the life world. He argued that the ideal types that Max Weber deployed as analytical sociological tools were invoked practically in daily life. We all attribute structure and orderliness to the life world, through our deployment of typifications which we more or less share with those around us. Like Smith, Schutz recognized the need for orderliness for humans to operate. Like Smith, he saw this orderliness as a psychological phenomenon, but he also saw that orderliness as socially shared. Schutz's individually projected but socially shared typifications forming the orderliness of daily life stand behind numerous forms of contemporary sociology, including social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann), ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, Heritage), conversational analysis (Sachs), and structurationism (Giddens, Bourdieu).

As we understand the behaviors of others through typifications, we also develop the terms by which to observe and direct our own behavior and participation, for we believe we are acting in that same typical world as others. Pragmatists such as John Dewey and George Herbert Mead argued that the need to gain some sense of how others will perceive us and our actions, so that we can regulate and direct our actions, motivates our sense of ourselves. We build that sense of self and identity from our perception of how others are perceiving us. These insights became the core of symbolic interactionist sociology; through the theories of reference groups and roles, they also became central to Merton's structural-functional sociology (Merton 1968). At a more micro level these insights have much to do with Goffman's forms of self-presentation which are attuned both to the ways in which the projected self would be perceived within circumstances, and to the ways in which behavior projects or negotiates the footing or frames by which that behavior is to be interpreted (Goffman 1980).

The Forming of Citizens

Because citizen participation has long been associated with rhetoric, the forming of citizens is a particularly interesting case of identity formation to examine in relation to discursive practice. If, however, identity formation is, as I have argued here, tied to the particular and changing forms of discourse, we may want to question whether the long-standing association of citizenship participation with classical rhetoric is adequate to current discursive conditions. The divergence of political discourse from classical rhetorical ideals has led to a common belief that public discourse and the quality of citizenship are declining, presenting a threat to democracy and the strength of the polity. The increasing prominence in this century of radio, then television, and now the internet has given added edge to this sense of deterioration of political discourse and citizen deliberation.

Another commonly discussed factor in the perceived decline in the quality of citizen participation, is the increasing role of money in the political process, exacerbated by the cost of television advertising which has become a central medium of political communication. As the artificial persons of corporations have increasingly exercised economic power in politics, marketplace interests have become a dominating discourse of government and political commitments. This partnership of the marketplace and politics is in keeping with

Smith's proposal for using economic communication as the key public vehicle for negotiating a public social order that then protects individualized and individual realms of privacy. Within such an econo-centric concept of citizenship , it is hardly surprising that our role as taxpayers should take such a central role in our identity as citizens.

Economically based political participation, when combined with media-dominated forums of political communication, may work against wise and democratic decision making that takes into account the values, interests, and best life for all. Current processes of political participation and discourse may serve the interests of only a few and may ignore the complexity and richness of life. From the perspective of genre theory, current political arrangements may limit the possibility of citizenship as a humanly satisfying domain of identity and growth.

The remainder of this essay sketches out some, but only some, of the history of the genres of citizenship and political participation, their relation to various activity systems and media, and the kinds of participation and citizenship afforded by each. This essay does not pretend to offer a comprehensive analysis of the generic sites for citizen participation, but only to suggest how we might start to look at these issues from the point of view of genre theory. After looking at some of the more obvious landmarks in the shaping of the political discourse, the essay looks at the genres of political activity that are emerging on the web. I do this particularly because a new medium offers opportunities for creating new channels and configurations of communication, because the genres of political life on the internet are now in current flux, and because a number of people have placed much hope on the internet as providing a new channel for democratic participation (see, for example, Bonchek).

My examples will largely come from the United States. I will consider only limited data, unsystematically gathered, from only one limited vantage point. The picture, no doubt would look different to others in different political, geographic, and jurisdictional positions. Moreover, the picture would look radically different in other countries, where the internet is developing very different presences in political lifeówhether the Netherlands, or Brazil, or China, or the Balkans. I only aspire to develop a way of looking at and reflecting on the changing forms of communication within political life, to set the stage for more methodical examination of developments and issues.

Forms of Citizenship within Classical Rhetoric

Rhetoric, as we tend to think of it, was born in politics and citizen participationóin the agora of the Greek polis, and then the senate and courts of Rome. As such rhetoric is deeply associated with the forms of justice, republicanism, democracy, and representation born there, and which then served as models, ideals, and fantasies of the states rebelling against monarchism, absolutism, and colonialism since the eighteenth century. The architectural and statuary fantasies of the American and French republics remind us that there was more at stake here than forms of governanceóthere were ideals of citizenship and ways at life imagined and brought into being. The communicative model of politics and citizenship grew out of the situation and practices in the agoraóan eloquent defense of one's interests and honor before other citizens who sit in judgment and in the face of accusers, a persuasive appeal to carry a deliberation of leaders forward to a new level of wisdom, a ritual communion rehearsing and heightening community values to bind citizens in a common orientation toward some impending threat or challenge. These were the genres of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric as performed in person within identifiable locales of public high stakes platform oratory, around which the institutions of the state developed and were structured.

Insofar as our ways of talking about political discourse are based on the terms and models of classical rhetoric, we keep assuming our forms, forums, and ideals of citizenship remain continuous with those of the classic

world, and that the noblest civic identity we can achieve is to be cast in Cicero's robes, to be enshrined on the steps of the local neoclassic state courthouse. There is a long tradition of criticizing American political discourse for failing to meet that standard in one way or another and for our failure to produce our great orators to lead us through peril and disharmony to greater wisdom. But this model of citizenship has been under question, in part because of the democratic impulses that were in tension with the notions of elite leadership enacted through powerful, eloquent oratory. As Richard Cmiel points out in *Democratic Eloquence* eloquence has long been a troublesome category in American rhetoric. Perhaps even more baffling for the forging of modern rhetoric and citizenship has been the changing character of government and the changing media of public discourse (Bazerman forthcoming). As government grew it became less a matter of direct leadership and more a matter of management and administration of extensive operations. The use of writing increased as part of this more extended administration, with changes in technology going hand in hand with more wider uses of written communicationóthe printing press, the rotary press, cheap paper, the filing cabinet, the typewriter, the computer and the electronic network. Thus the founding, incendiary utterance of American history the *Declaration of Independence*--although often recited--takes the form of a written document to be seen by representatives of the British government, to inspire people throughout the colonies to rebellion, to provide a legal justification for action, and to create a written record of intent and justification for all who come after to judge. Tom Paine was a pamphleteer, and the drafting of the Constitution and arguments in its favor was the most prominent rhetorical work of the early years of the republic. Scribbling lawyers became the ideal of citizen, though statues still cast them in Roman robes, albeit often with a quill in hand. As the nineteenth century brought urbanization, commercial growth, telegraphy, and the rotary press, newspapers and journals became an important site for political and public discourse. Speeches were still delivered in legislatures and courts and city squares, but these now were increasingly part of a complex mix of files and records and journalism and commentary.

Literacy and the Transformation of the Life of Citizenship

Literacy and literate genres, even in the ancient world, began transforming and extending forms of political life (Goody 1986). Written codes of law added a solemnity and consequentiality to legislative considerations as they were not just arguing a single instance but producing a consistent and enduring set of regulations for daily life. Written law and court records turned judicial discourse toward textual interpretation, comparison of current matters to prior texts, and the production of an inspectable court record to justify decisions.

The regularity of law meant citizenship became defined increasingly in terms of commitment to and obedience towards abstract rules--law abidingness, responsibilities, rights, and privileges--instead of personal commitment to individual personally familiar leaders. Decision making and power moved from public forums to clerics, bureaucrats, and scribes who controlled the written records of an increasingly organized, regularized, extended and distant state, which knew its citizens through organized record-keeping. The forums of public participation became associated with the record of their previous judgments, laws, and rulings. Records created an intertextual context for each new instance of judgment and decision making.

Printing provided a public medium to criticize the state and to advocate alternative programs. Polemics and manifestos could be distributed in various degrees of secrecy, especially as printing technology became less expensive and widely available (Eisenstein, 1983). Governments concerned themselves with identifying subversive material and controlling its circulation, resulting in regulation of printing, including copyright (Rose, 1993). Availability of alternative views and the organization of heterodox opinion through circulation of texts served the needs of the new literate commercial classes which was aggregating economic power outside the state. Print culture fed the associated desires for commercial and political information through pamphlets, journals, and newspapers, as the reforms and revolutions of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries unfolded.

Newspapers, written ballots, literate practices of expanding commerce, and calls for informed citizenry were associated with the expansion of schooling beyond the training of clerics, bureaucrats, and to a lesser extent the aristocracy. Newspapers were particularly associated with the expanding educated urban commercial classes in Britain and the U.S. in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with the rise of political parties. Newspapers became forums for people to imagine themselves into wider political arenas and more distant events than they might daily have contact with. Newspapers also provided opportunities for people to identify themselves as partisans and members of communities. (Habermas, 1989). In the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century the formation of an independent press also became associated with investigative journalism, public accountability, and the development of professional journalistic standards (Schudson, 1995). The press developed a somewhat independent perspective, to some extent outside government, party, or particular economic interest (although always within limits and to be viewed with some skepticism) from which to viewgovernment and political processes. By reading the newspapers (or multiple newspapers and journals of opinions), citizens could become observers and evaluators of public officials and political actors, entering into a continuing, although often vicarious, relationship with government and politics.

Political Culture and Citizen Activity

News then supported a political culture of critique, celebrity, spectator rooting, and competition. Citizens could also enter into marginal amateur production of political opinion through letters to the editor, but the production of news, critique, and opinion fell increasingly into the hands of professional journalists. Professional journalism, nonetheless, provided the information that supported local civic activity, activist group participation, and individual and group communication with legislators. Community and activist group newsletters and other communications came to rely on the news, as did citizen participations in campaigning and elections. Thus newspapers became a major forum which mediated political participation of ordinary citizens. The intertextual record of the news (as remembered by individuals and as a research file in libraries and newspaper archives) became the context for further news items.

The political culture informed by the news also was played out in social gatherings where people exchanged opinions as a kind of identity play (Billig, 1988) as well as exchange of thought. This political culture was given further, if somewhat restrictive and ritualizing shape, through surveys by which public opinion was expressed and aggregated. In the form of polls, public opinion itself became news and influenced the actions of politicians, who kept closer and closer tabs on the moods of the voters. Radio and television talk shows gave individuals an expanded opportunity to turn private exchange into public assertion and group affiliation.

In this evolving climate of public opinion, political parties developed their own internal cultures and media of communication and participation, in part enacted through traditional patronage and ward politics but in part enacted through other forms of more conceptualized partisan commitment, involving speeches, humor, demonizing characterizations of opposition, newsletters, serious program papers, and forms of public hoopla and celebration. These activities in turn become re-presented on the general news media, over which partisan groups attempted to exert control through media events, spin-doctoring, sound bites, and other means of shaping political messages. Michael Schudson in *the Good Citizen* (1999) identifies three forms of citizenship and political culture in the history of the United States, characterized by the form of ballot. In the early years of the nation voting was carried out in local meetings by public displays of support for the local elite. In the mid-nineteenth century the color of the ballot you deposited in the ballot box publicly identified you as a supporter of a party, through which benefits were distributed. Only in the late nineteenth-century was the secret ballot introduced, allowing the voter to make choices selectively and privately, putting the burden on the citizen to be informed and thoughtful in judgment, making judgments apart from immediate reward for displays of solidarity.

In the U.S. voluntary political associations have had a rich history, particularly since nineteenth century industrialization and urbanization. Economic groups such as unions and chambers of commerce have regularly engaged in lobbying, raising policy issues, and otherwise advancing their interests. Progressive groups have for over a century sought public support and supportive legislation for their reforms, and since the 1950's activist groups on the right and left have pressed policy objectives concerning nuclear testing and disarmament, opposition to the Vietnam war and other military actions, environmentalism, women's and minority rights, abortion rights and right to life, gun rights and gun control, consumer protection, campaign reform, and many other causes. These groups have had their own internal systems and genres of communication along with forms of public advocacy, forms of creating and distributing information, and forms of communication with the government. Activism within such organizations has provided a major site for the development of individuals as citizens.

The characterizations I have just provided are broad and sweeping, missing details, ignoring counter-trends and missing other equally striking phenomena. Nonetheless, these sweeping characterizations are enough to suggest how complex and varied U.S. political culture is, mediated through many genres of face to face, print, radio, and television communication. New forms of electronic communication enter into this already rich field, with the potential of changing the total ecology of political communication--displacing some earlier modes, supplementing and transforming others, and putting all the existing components in new relation.

Politics on the World Wide Web

The web became a clearly recognized political presence as early as the 1994 election, with candidates creating web sites to set out their positions and elicit support. In the 1996 elections parties and candidates had extensive and elaborate web sites (Seib, 1995) as well as many private, independent, commentary, journalistic, and humor sites. Since then the web has played an increasing role in politics and journalism, as was dramatically demonstrated by the web's rapid, sensational circulation of rumor and accusation during the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal and impeachment proceedings of 1998-9.

Quite visibly, the web has provided fertile soil for many politically related sites that provide forums and contexts for specific forms of participation. Major news and political commentary organizations have established their own sites re-presenting material presented in other media--many newspapers (the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and the *Washington Post*, just to name a few of the more prominent) political magazines (such as the *Congressional Quarterly*, the *American Prospect*, the *Washington Weekly*, *Tikkun*), public and private television and radio news shows (NPR *All Things Considered*, PBS *Evening Newshour*, MSNBC, and CNN). Some are exclusively devoted to political news, such as CNN's ALLPOLITICS. Further, new electronic-only journals have appeared (such as *Slate* and *HotWired*), and newspaper sites are becoming increasingly independent of their print counterpart.

Many of these sites are linked with each other and with other reputable sources of political and governmental information, giving some shape to a recognizable universe of legitimated professional public political information and commentary. This makes "What Washington is talking about" more public and accessible and virtually concrete--no longer requiring citizens to be at the right cocktail parties, to listen to many interview shows, and to keep up subscriptions to multiple journals. One can in a fairly short time, by hopping around the net, have some access to the political buzz. However, while all these sites provide news and commentary for various publics to contemplate, and this news and commentary may provide the basis for later actions, these electronic journals afford no immediate active form of participation except letter writing in response--typically, an email response form is attached to each web site.

The more technologically adept can elevate themselves from consumer to producer of political chat by setting up an amateur political home page, and there are many such pursuing political commentary and humor. Pages are built in fan support of political heroes and attack of political enemies, as well as of parties and programs. Individuals assert their identity, share their vision and aggregate resources for like minded people. Humor is usually pointed, against political enemies. The activities on such pages are clearly derivative of, on one side the public media culture of partisan political celebrity and on the other of local community political argument. It is not surprising that the talk show hosts, themselves mediating between national news and local discussion, become web celebrities at the center of fascination and discussion--heroes of political talk on the net. On June 17 of 1997, a search on Excite reveal 998,146 matches on the name Rush Limbaugh, 898,241 on the name Ollie North, 172,574 on the name Pat Buchanan, and 12,339 on Geraldine Ferraro. While this clearly indicates the political direction of this phenomenon, it suggest that even a Democratic newcomer gets some attention. This amateur commentary is outspoken and aggressive, expressing both strongly positive and strongly negative comments, as symbolized by the Punch Rush Limbaugh Home Page, where each click bloodies Limbaugh's image further (http://www.indirect.com/www/beetle87/rush/index.html).

Like the talk shows, the amateur web political pages give non-politicians and non-journalists access to a media stage on which to perform political and journalistic activities, elevating their local talk into a public performance and an identity that extends out beyond one's geographically immediate group--and it allows one to affiliate with geographically separated people of common interests. By participating in talk shows and creating web sites one can imagine oneself as politically engaged, without too much monitoring of the concrete consequences, if there are any, of that participation. The locale of such talk is clearly outside more official political talk, outside the beltway so to speak, but it is clearly contextually and intertextually related to the public circulation of news and commentary.

One of the consequences of the multiplicity of amateur political sites, many of which are hot-linked to each other and to the more official sites (some amateur pages consist only of index pages of annotated links), is that producers and consumers can readily an rapidly immerse themselves in critical, independent, and partisan information and commentary. We might call this an intensification and greater availability of the long-standing culture of political talk. The intensification, however, seems to bring about a qualitative change, as people can produce more extended turns for more extended audience. The amateur political talk sometimes aggregates within more organized sites of controversialism, often around minor political parties, cult followings, and activist groups--sometimes mediated through the identity of a celebrity talk figure. For examples, the Rush Limbaugh Featured Site (http://www2.southwind.net/~vic/rush/rush.html) contains links to the Berkeley College Republicans, Newt Gingrich sites, the Republican National Convention ë96 site, the Massachusetts Republican Party, and other conservative groups

Organized political argument and activism also aggregates around a variety of movements, interests and organizations, with more or less programmatic coherence, such as libertarianism, objectivism, reproductive rights, right-to-life, gay, lesbian and transgender rights, ethnic rights, and many varieties of environmentalism. The activities afforded by these sites are complex and multiple and I will not begin to examine them here, but will note that the sites are often affiliated with non-cyber political organizations. The pages of political organizations in turn typically present information, platforms, candidate biographies and positions, speeches, news, resources, and links to candidate pages and affiliated organizations. The web provide a forum in which voluntary associations to create a presence, a meeting place for like minded people who wish to affiliate, an archive of resources for the affiliated, a mechanism for sharing organizational information, and space for asserting positions and interests. Among the political groups are several representing the Direct Democracy movement, which sees the internet as the vehicle by which direct citizen deliberation can replace representative government.

Many national, state, and local government sites present the accomplishments of the agency and the incumbent administration, along with agency relevant information, query access, forms, and form filing opportunities. Individual office holders have their pages affording a variety of activities and providing a variety of governmental, political, and constituent service information. Legislative caucuses and other political groups of office holders also have their sites. Finally, public service independent organizations provide non-partisan information on office holders, candidates, and elections, such as project Vote Smart.

Thus the political landscape on the Web is becoming increasingly complex, and is starting to take on its own novel character, transforming prior forms of political activity. Political culture is finding far more public forums and is being more easily spread. By establishing a page and links one can create a political identity by becoming immersed in an array of opinions, associated with networks of like minded people, and subsumed in a public political culture. A physically isolated person, even without affiliation with political groups or some institution that harbors political activity (like a university campus), can form a public political presence and establish an identity within a political group.

Political Party Web Sites

The traditional means of political participation has been through the official party organizations. In the United States all major and virtually all minor parties have official web sites, plus there are additional web sites for official caucuses and sub groups as well as for unofficial factions, observers, and activists. On December 2, 1999, for example, the Yahoo index of U.S. political sites listed 225 sites affiliated with the Republican Party, 167 sites affiliated with the Democratic Party, 63 with the Libertarian Party, 50 with the Reform Party, 22 with the Green Party, eight for the Constitution Party, seven for the Socialist Party USA, five for the Communist Party USA, five for the Natural Law Party, and fewer for each of a variety of parties including the Puritan Party and the Pansexual Peace party.

The official web sites of the Democratic and Republican Parties are in many ways similar. Both are deeply embedded in the culture of the journalism. The Democratic National Committee site (http:// www.democrats.org/), when I first analyzed it in June 1997 created an impression of breaking news, with a publicity photo of President Clinton signing legislation at the top right and on the top left a bold title Democratic Party Online with the day's date just below, suggesting the daily updating of news. Just below was a ticker tape banner announcing the latest news bulletins, followed by a hot-button table of contents with the first item being "DNC News."

The news, as might be expected was partisan. "The Daily News from DNC," on June 10, 1997 for example, included the headlines: "Unemployment Drops Again While Wages Continue to Rise," "Republicans Force President to Veto Disaster Relief--It's 1995-1996 all over again," "Barbour Sold Business Deals in China to Foreign Contributor," "Gingrich Admits Fundraising Hearings Targeted at President, Vice-president; Wacko GOP Investigator Reportedly Stalks Witnesses." Each of these headlines is followed by a few sentence elaboration, emulating the lead paragraph of a news story, followed by a citation to a professional news organization (where possible hot-linked to the full story at the news agency's home site) or by reference (and hot-link) to a DNC news release which elaborates the story and provides references to the independent press. There is also an archive of previous stories going back to the initiation of this newspage feature on March 26, 1997.

The reference to the independent press (and as often as possible to right-leaning news sources) is important to maintain credibility for the reported news, even as it has a partisan edge and implications, because the larger part of the rhetorical struggle seems to be over trustworthiness and credibility--which party and which individuals can be relied on to deliver and who is misleading the American public. The approximately dozen

stories on any day are divided into tales of Clinton's and Congressional Democrats' accomplishments and Republican leaders' embarrassments. In the middle is usually placed a quotation of the day, again highlighting a democratic accomplishment or a republican betrayal. The news as reported here is really a trafficking in celebrity, credit, and thus potential support. A "What's Hot" page also consists of representations of high-road activities and accomplishments of the Democratic office holders, and low-road attacks on the deviousness of the opposition party. To draw the visitors more fully into a realm of partisan representation of the news, the web site offers direct email subscription to the latest news postings.

As of December 1999, the front page of the site had been reformatted to follow the new look adopted by major news web sites such as cnn.com. These sites no longer imitate the front page of newspaper, but rather in a simpler format list the lead headlines with short summaries, hot-linked to the full story. Accordingly, the DNC site homepage lists headlines and story leads. It also has a link to a similarly organized Newsroom page. The look of the newly-evolved web newspaper has replaced the look of the print newspaper.

By the middle of 1997 the Republican National Committee had set up a similar site (http://www.RNC.org/). As of June 1998, it had many similar feature to the DNC site including news and a news subscription service, party information and platform, announcement of party training and events, and membership sign-up. The Republican site was also pervaded by accounts of the misdeeds of the leaders of the other party, not only on the news page but on an "Interactive Clinton Calendar" that put scandals on a time line, a set of links devoted to "The Selling of America's House," and a "Clinton/Gore/DNC Chinagate Chart." In December 1999, the front-page of the Republican National Committee Web site was reformatted to have the look of a cyber-magazine, with graphics that parodied nineteen-fifties television to frame headlines of Clinton-Gore misdeeds and a black and white image of Clinton and Gore looking like television hucksters, which hot-linked to a "GOPtv video clip of the week." The Newsroom again leads the list of contents hotlinks on the left side, and on the right side are links to featured items, such as "The World According to Gore" and an archive of past news articles entitled "In Case You Missed It." At the bottom of the page is another flashy graphic built around a comic image of Gore calling attention to the feature, "Democrats Exposed-- What Democrats Don't Want you to know." The linked page provides journalistic style factual corrections of Democratic ads.

This partisan retelling of the news, traced back to independent journalistic sources relies on news media already heavily engaged in reporting political warfare, partisan events and leaks created for the media, and pre-spun news releases. The parties struggle over appearances of credibility and trustworthiness in this world of partisan representation. The DNC and RNC pages, embedded within this partisan struggle for control of news impressions, place their readers in the role of consumers of political opinion.

Beyond inviting viewers to engage in the culture of partisan news, both the RNC and DNC sites have from the beginning offered other resources and activities, which have been growing in focus and extent. Both have from their beginning provided means for joining the parties, volunteering for campaigns, finding out about internship positions, subscribing to an email news service, and giving money. However, there has been increasing amount of practical information for activists, such as announcements of seminars and meetings, call for volunteers, and organizational plans. This information is placed on lower levels of the site hierarchy so it will not be so visible to the casual viewer, but clearly the web sites are doing more than filling cyberspace with partisan journalistic accounts to exercise spectator passions. The sites are supporting, as well, non-cyber activities by providing organizational information and means for connecting people to events, activities, and campaigns. Also there has been increasing use of the pages for fund raising. In the original versions of the DNC site, for example, the only request for money was the membership fee for joining the party. Now, however, on both Democratic and Republican web sites and immediate links there are numerous opportunities and importunities to give money to the parties and to individual candidates.

Politics and Sociality in the Cyber-Age

Nonetheless, at this moment, the major party web sites predominantly draw upon our culture of news, now spun and pre-spun into a partisan frame of celebrity heroism and villainy. The emotions of political culture are muted from their most virulent forms of political entertainment and are given a small degree of institutional seriousness, but the joy of partisanship is hardly hidden. These emotions are evoked through representations of the celebrity actors, but site visitors are also encouraged to actively participate in this moral drama by signing up on one side and making nose-thumbing gestures at the other. Underneath this morality drama there are entry ways into more substantive information and participation, but all these are framed within the spun news celebrity game which presumably motivates the deeper knowledgableness and activity.

Of course there is no reason to think that the currently rapidly evolving political web genres will stabilize in their current form. The increasing support for major party activists points towards the development of a cadre of citizens engaged in party politics beyond spectatorism fed by professional media productions. Also promising are the alternate organizations and loose networks that form around particular issues such as environmentalism, abortion issues, or global trade policy. Particularly interesting is the use of the internet to organize support for or resistance to major international treaty meetings on such issues as trade policy, environmentalism, and world poverty. These forms of engaged citizen participation, both on the internet and in the streets (yet organized over the internet), make policy meetings that might otherwise be little noticed into high profile public events, opening up to international public scrutiny the policy issues being decided.

Of course, politics may be viewed as a specialized area of professional developmentóso that some people become professional politicians (or professional radical activists) just as some people become doctors and others become journalists and others become musicians, engaged within activity systems enacted through a mix of spoken, written, and electronic communicative genres. In such limited professional domains, the range, mix, organization and interaction of the genres affect how well the system works with what kinds of results. The mix of genres and their location within the activity system also shape the possibilities for recruitment and development of future professionals. Thus the available genres for political participation have consequences for the workings of government, how attractive politics is as a career, and how competent in what ways our politicians become. However, politics is much more than that.

First the consequences of politics and government bear on all spheres of what we now consider private lifeóthat is all those other areas of personal expression, development, relations, and activity that we consider matters of personal choice. So if one wants to have a clean and pleasant environment within which to live, or to have one's children educated, or to be able to commute to work on well-paved roads, or to read an open and diverse press, one is dependent on having favorable governmental policies. To further such interests one needs to be able to bring those interests into the public sphere through politics. Insofar as the polity is reduced to issues of economics and the marketplace, and insofar as the most important actors on the political stage are coincident with those that have the most economic power, non-market values will have a hard time getting voice within the political discussion, for that discussion will be in genres not amenable to the expression of non-economic values and interests. This problem is exacerbated if the most powerful economic actors are the artificial persons of corporations which have by definition no private lives and exist only for their economic advantage. Even Bill Gates or John Paul Getty have private values that have the potential of influencing their actions in the public sphere, but Microsoft and Getty Oil do not. As the power of the marketplace and corporations increase nationally and globally, non-economic interests and the interests of weaker economic actors have decreased access and power within political forums.

Second, and even more relevant to the issue of personal development and citizenship, is the way our current configuration of private and public produces barriers to our sense of common concern with our neighbors at every level of political organization from the village through the globe. If all the things that are important to us, except the getting and spending of the common currency in the marketplace and the public maintenance of that

marketplace, then all else is, as Smith suggested, in the private sphere. This, as Smith and contemporary libertarians have noticed, has great beneficial potential in carving out large domains of private freedoms and self-elected forms of development. However, insofar as these remain in the private sphere and find no expression in those activity systems shared with all the people we live among, rather than just selected sub communities, then our values and interests and forms of personal development have little to do with the common life. With little shared public life, we feel little attachment to those we live among and have little opportunity to pursue the pleasures of community responsibility. So if we wish for public amenities for the appreciation of nature or for a less violent public culture or for protection of human rights, we not only will find them hard to pursue in the public sphere unless we can frame them as economic issues, we also cannot forge a public link with our neighbors to make these values part of our common life. We become, as Tocqueville warned, locked into the prisons of our privacy.

It may be that this fading or narrowing of the commonweal and citizenship to the narrow bounds of homo economicus may be our best bet for a peaceful and free world. Indeed, economically-based rational actor theory has gained popularity in departments of political science. And it may well be that attempts to bring other values into politics constantly threatens the freedom, expression, and identity of others. The intrusion of the church, as an alternative site of person forming non-economic values, into the public sphere has been continuingly tension-provoking and rights-threateningóand thus the Constitution of the United States wisely puts a divide between church and state, despite the continuing desire of some citizens to define the national, state, and local community by private religious values.

The questions of what a citizen is and ought to be is something that is worked out through the creativity of individual and multiple actors working through the communicative possibilities of their time, seeking the most satisfactory forms of life available to them. Rhetoricians, rather than advocating for ideals of citizenship rooted in idealized historical models, may be more effective in keeping open the possibilities of citizenship by noting the current opportunities for civic participation, the consequences of those forms of participations, and the protean shape of the several and evolving public spheres. In this way we can support the development of people as citizens and politicians participating through the current genres and becoming adept at the current forms of political life. In this way we can also understand, interpret, and advise citizens on the meanings and force of various political utterances along with helping individuals and groups frame their own utterances to greatest effect within the genres and activity systems relevant to their concerns. Finally, in this way we may be able to make local suggestions about expanding communicative possibilities. Noting the changes facilitated by the internet and the social creativity released by the new medium facilitates rhetoric's responsiveness to changing politics, but the forces of change affecting citizenship are deeper and more baffling than would be suggested by attending just to technological transformations. To advance the causes of citizenship we need to keep a cool eye on the changing forms of life by which the polity continuingly speaks and inscribes itself into existence and by which individuals talk and write themselves into citizens.

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