Performance and Organized Labor in Depression America: Community and Contestation. (Volumes I and II).

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Performance and organized labor in Depression America: Community and contestation. (Volumes I and II)

Fuoss, Kirk Wayne, Ph.D.
The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1993

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PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZED LABOR IN DEPRESSION AMERICA:
COMMUNITY AND CONTESTATION
VOLUME I

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor in Philosophy

in
The Department of Speech Communication

by
Kirk W. Fuoss
B.S., Baylor University, 1983
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This project is dedicated to the pack rats who, by saving everything, make historical research possible.
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship among cultural performance, community, and contestation in two depression-era, organized labor social dramas. The major arguments developed in the study are summarized in the following three contentions. First, performances are inherently contestatory. Second, contestation and community stand in an interdependent rather than oppositional relationship to one another. Third, a dialectical relationship exists between performance and community whereby communities not only produce but are produced by performances.

Chapter one defines key concepts and offers a rationale for the study. Two rationales for exploring the relationship among cultural performances, contestation, and community are advanced. First, despite the increasingly political view of performance adopted by scholars during the past two decades, most performance studies scholarship nevertheless has stopped short of advancing a view of performance as inherently contestatory. Second, while new historicists have popularized the performance-culture dialectic, they have not provided an accompanying framework for describing how performances instantiate contestation and negotiate community.

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Chapter two advances an agonistic framework for analyzing performance. To analyze how cultural performances instantiate contestation, the agonistic framework directs attention to three interrelated realms: the direction of effectivity (whether the performance maintains or subverts status quo relations of power), the mode of effectivity (the strategies through which the directional movement is transacted), and the spheres of contestation (the levels at which the strategies are operationalized, whether textual, spatial, or conceptual). To analyze how performances negotiate community, the agonistic framework directs attention to two interrelated realms: inscribed community (the representations of community inscribed in performances) and enacted community (the relationship among performers, among audience members, and between performers and audience members).

Chapters three and four use the analytical framework proposed in chapter two. Chapter three uses the agonistic framework to investigate the Workers Alliance of America’s 1936 seizure of the New Jersey State Assembly. Chapter four uses the agonistic framework to investigate the 1936-1937 Flint, Michigan, autoworkers’ sitdown strike. Chapter five articulates conclusions and suggests directions for future research.
CHAPTER ONE:
CULTURAL PERFORMANCE, COMMUNITY, AND CONTESTATION

This study investigates the relationship among cultural performance, community, and contestation in two depression-era, organized labor social dramas. Its overarching thesis is that cultural performances, especially during social dramas but during other times as well, instantiate contestation among competing interests and, in so doing, negotiate community. The major arguments to be developed in the course of this study are summarized in the following three contentions.

First, performance is inherently contestatory. In Discourse/Counter-Discourse, Richard Terdiman contends that "engaged with the realities of power, human communities use words not in contemplation, but in competition."\(^1\) Substitute "performance" for "words" in Terdiman's statement, and you have what is perhaps the most fundamental position of this study: Engaged with the realities of power, human communities use performance not in contemplation, but in competition. Conceived in this way, performance refers to an agonistic struggle among competing interests to sustain or subvert social relations. Performance, I contend, represents an

\(^1\) Richard Terdiman, Discourse/Counter-Discourse (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 38.
inherently contestatory practice in which change is averted, is fomented, is represented, and occurs.

Because performances agitating for social change tend to name the social formation(s) they challenge, their status as contestatory practices is usually overt; however, because performances sustaining the status quo tend not to name the alternative social formations that are their Others, their status as contestatory practices is usually covert. Whether overt or covert, contestation remains contestation, and performance—whether hegemonic or resistant—remains inherently contestatory, incessantly engaged in societal formation and reformation.

Second, community and contestation stand in an interdependent rather than oppositional relationship to one another. As Mary Douglas points out in *How Institutions Think*, "Writing about cooperation and solidarity means writing at the same time about rejection and mistrust." The tendency to view community and contestation as oppositional social forces results, I believe, from the idealization of community and the demonization of contestation in much contemporary thought. For many persons, community is thought to involve sharing, similarity, cohesion, and camaraderie, while contestation is thought to involve conflict, difference, divisiveness,

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and enmity. Community is that which is to be sought and
is nostalgically lamented as all too absent from
contemporary life; contestation is that which is to be
avoided and is lamented as all too present in contemporary
life. Far from being oppositional social forces,
community and contestation are, I contend, intimate
bedfellows, with each one incessantly producing and
reproducing the other even as it produces and reproduces
itself. They are, I contend, flipsides of the same social
process, as distinct yet indivisible from one another as
the front and back sides of a sheet of paper.

Third, a dialectical relationship exists between
performance and community whereby communities not only
produce but are produced by performances. Performances
produce communities by externally and internally
articulating them. Performances externally articulate
community by constructing, maintaining, reinforcing, or
renegotiating the boundary between community and Other,
insider and outsider, "us" and "them." Performances
internally articulate community by constructing,
maintaining, reinforcing, or renegotiating the
relationships among a community's members.

Performances transact the internal and external
articulation of community in two ways. First,
performances articulate community by putting into
circulation particular construals of community. Second,
performances articulate community by enacting communal relationships in the very process of gathering persons together for a performance event, engaging those persons either as actors or audience members in the performance event, and dispersing those persons after the performance event has concluded. In short, performance may either represent or enact the internal and external articulation of community, or it may do both simultaneously.

In this study, I attempt to elaborate the above three contentions by exploring the relationship among cultural performance, contestation, and community in two depression-era, organized labor social dramas. The investigation will proceed in the following manner.

In chapter one, I elaborate on the object of investigation and offer a rationale for investigation. While I have already suggested the general nature of the object of investigation, additional precision can be achieved by defining and commenting on key concepts, including cultural performance, community, contestation, depression-era, organized labor, and social drama. The second goal of the opening chapter—justifying the present study—entails providing rationales for: (1) exploring the relationship among cultural performance, community, and contestation; (2) exploring the relationship among

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cultural performance, community, and contestation in social dramas; and (3) exploring the relationship among cultural performance, community, and contestation in depression-era, organized labor social dramas.

In chapter two, I propose an analytical framework designed to examine how cultural performances in social dramas instantiate contestation and negotiate community. To analyze how cultural performances in social dramas instantiate contestation, I suggest that three interrelated realms be investigated: the direction of effectivity (whether the cultural performance maintains or subverts status quo relations of power), the mode of effectivity (the strategies through which the maintenance or subversion is transacted), and the spheres of contestation (the levels at which these strategies are operationalized: whether textual, spatial, or conceptual). To analyze how cultural performances in social dramas negotiate community, I suggest that two interrelated realms be investigated: inscribed community (the representations of community inscribed in the cultural performances themselves) and enacted community (the relationship among performers, among audience members, and between performers and audience members).

Chapters three and four employ the analytical framework proposed in chapter two. In chapter three, I investigate the relationship among cultural performance,
contestation, and community in the Workers' Alliance of America's 1936 seizure of the New Jersey state house. And in chapter four, I investigate the relationship among cultural performances, contestation, and community in the 1936-37 Flint, Michigan, autoworkers' sitdown strike.

All critical-analytical perspectives are partial, foregrounding particular aspects of the object of investigation and occluding others, and the analytical framework I am proposing is no exception. Like every other perspective, it exacts a price, concealing even as it reveals. Assessing the blindnesses and insights of the analytical perspective set forth in chapter two is the principal order of business of the final chapter. After setting forth conclusions to be drawn from this study, I identify difficulties encountered in employing the framework, propose possible means of overcoming or minimizing these difficulties, and suggest directions for future research.

Key Concepts

This study investigates the relationship among cultural performances, community, and contestation in two depression-era, organized labor social dramas. Accordingly, six concepts warrant definition and comment:
cultural performance, community, contestation, depression-era, organized labor, and social drama.

Milton Singer first advanced the concept cultural performance in *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* to describe what he perceived to be "the elementary constituents of a culture," "the ultimate units of observation" of the ethnographer. Singer, recalling how he arrived at the concept while engaged in field work in India, writes:

> I was helped to identify the units of observation not by deliberately looking for them but by noticing the centrality and recurrence of certain types of things I had observed in the experience of Indians themselves. I shall call these things "cultural performances," because they include what we in the West usually call by that name--for example, plays, concerts, and lectures. But they include also prayers, ritual readings and recitations, rites and ceremonies, festivals, and all those things we usually classify under religion and ritual rather than with the cultural and artistic.

Although the term was first employed by Singer, its popularization, at least among performance studies scholars, is attributable in large measure to Victor Turner, who employed the term to distinguish between classes or types of performances. Distinguishing social performances from cultural performances, Turner notes that while social performance includes types ranging from Goffman's "the presentation of self in everyday life" to

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5 Singer 71.
his own (Turner's) social dramas, cultural performance includes genres ranging from aesthetic or staged dramas to ritual, carnival, spectacle, and film.\(^6\) As Turner's distinction suggests, cultural performance names not the entire canon of performance activities as such but instead a particular type of performance phenomena.

Seven characteristics distinguish cultural performances from other types of performance, as well as from non-performance phenomena.\(^7\) First, cultural performances are temporally framed, encompassed within a limited time span possessing a beginning and an end. Second, cultural performances are spatially framed, occurring within a space that is either temporarily or permanently "marked off." Third, cultural performances are programmed, following a more or less structured order of activities. Fourth, cultural performances possess an audience and are communal insofar as they provide persons with an occasion for coming together. Fifth, cultural performances are "heightened occasions," involving "display."\(^8\) Sixth, cultural performances are not merely

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\(^8\) Bauman, "Performance" 46.
reflective but reflexive. "Genres of cultural performance," Turner notes, "are not simple mirrors but magical mirrors of social reality: they exaggerate, invert, re-form, magnify, minimize, dis-color, re-color, even deliberately falsify chronicled events."9 Finally, cultural performances tend to be scheduled events, prepared for and often publicized in advance.

In addition to cultural performance, the concept community also warrants consideration and amplification. Raymond Plant writes that "of all the concepts in terms of which we characterize, organize, and constitute our social and political experience, the concept of community seems to be the most neglected by social and political philosophers."10 This neglect, I contend, results from the disrepute into which the concept has fallen among scholars, which in turn is due to the inability of scholars studying the concept to arrive at anything even approximating definitional consensus. Indeed, over thirty five years ago, one social scientist identified and examined ninety four meanings of community. He concluded that the only thing they all agreed upon was that the


concept involved persons. A more recent essay by Yeo and Yeo attests to the fact that the intervening years have not witnessed the emergence of definitional consensus. They refer to community as "unusually serviceable as a signifier" and as an "essentially contested concept." 

As a result of the variety of definitions afforded community, some scholars contend that the concept can no longer be employed meaningfully. Consider, for example, the following litany of cautionary voices:

Among sociologists who focus their study on community, concepts have attained such a degree of heterogeneity that is difficult to determine whether any one of the resulting definitions [of community], or even any group of definitions, affords an adequate description.

The concept of community has been the concern of sociologists for more than two hundred years, yet a

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12 Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo, "The Uses of 'Community' from Owenism to the Present," New Views of Co-Operation, ed. Stephen Yeo (New York: Routledge, 1989) 230. While I do not believe community represents an essentially contested concept insofar as the competing users of the concept do not agree upon an exemplar (one of the characteristics of an essentially contested concept set forth by W. B. Gallie who coined the term), the concept certainly boasts a variety of competing construals. Gallie posits the existence of essentially contested concepts in his "Essentially Contested Concepts," Philosophy and Historical Understanding (New York: Schocken, 1964) 157-91.

13 Hillery 111.
satisfactory definition of it in sociological terms appears as remote as ever.\textsuperscript{14}

It is doubtful whether the concept 'community' refers to a useful abstraction.\textsuperscript{15}

Community, these scholars contend, means so many different things to so many different people that its use is more likely to result in confusion than clarity. Given the diverse definitions of community, scholars confront three options.

First, scholars may drop the concept from their vocabulary altogether. This option does not so much address the problem of conceptual diversity as avoid it. Moreover, avoidance of the concept, as David Clark points out, is likely to prove short-lived: "If the concept of community is dead, it stubbornly refuses to lie down. . . . As fast as the attempt is made to thrust the concept of community into limbo, it as obstinately emerges again."\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, even if scholars were to drop the concept once and for all, laypersons, no doubt, would continue to employ it.

Second, scholars may opt to add additional definitions, hoping that their particular construal of the


concept will be embraced in a manner that previous ones have not. The likelihood of this seems remote. If the current disdain among many scholars for the concept stems from the multiplicity of meanings attached to the term, generating additional definitions most likely will only exacerbate their dis-ease.

Third, scholars may recognize that different persons use the concept differently and investigate what these differences reveal. This third option involves a fundamental readjustment whereby that which we as scholars have heretofore construed as an obstacle to investigation is reconceptualized not as an obstacle to but as the object of investigation.

Of the available options, this last one seems most profitable. Part of its attractiveness lies in its recognition that although community is a concept whose definition has and will continue to engage scholars in debate, concrete human beings acting in specific contexts nevertheless continue to think through and act according to their conception(s) of community. While community proves problematic primarily at the conceptual level for scholars (i.e., what constitutes community), for most persons community is not so much conceptually problematic as operationally contested (i.e., to which of the myriad complementary and competing communities do I belong, what
does it mean to be a member of these communities, and what does this membership entail).

Gillian Rose recognizes in the work of a handful of historians the existence of this third approach to the problem of defining community. Describing the approach of these historians, Rose writes:

The chaos of its [community's] conceptualization and the warmth with which it is upheld as a social ideal are not seen as difficulties which render the concept useless for our attempts to understand society, but as the very reason for its interest. "Community" is a keyword, and struggles over its meaning reveal much about the social, political, economic and cultural power relations of specific times and places.¹⁷

Adopting the approach to community that Rose describes involves reconceptualizing community in such a way that it is viewed primarily as a discursive reality rather than a social reality, a structure of signification rather than a social structure, a mental construct rather than a social construct. Benedict Anderson, an advocate of the above approach, refers to the object of its investigation as an "imagined community."¹⁸


¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1988). Although he does not credit Anderson, Joseph Roach also employs the term "imagined community." In an essay exploring the controversies surrounding performances of Joseph Sobol's *Ghetto* and Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* on two midwestern campuses, Roach writes that the performances raise issues about "the way in which the arts or any collective representations participate in the discovery and creation of cultural identities--those 'imagined communities' that may be as small as the cast
Although such an approach might initially appear vulnerable to charges that it represents a form of subjective idealism divorcing community from material reality, this charge is not difficult to answer. To argue that concrete human beings "think through" the concept community and possess mental images of the communities to which they perceive themselves as belonging in no way denies that these cognitions have material consequences. Louis Althusser, for example, maintains that ideas have a material existence:

The existence of the ideas of his [a subject's] belief is material in that his ideas are material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject.19

Following Althusser's lead, I demonstrate in chapters three and four that subjects transform mental images of community into representations that they circulate and that the circulation of these representations results in real and important material consequences.

In addition to cultural performance and community, the term "contestation" also merits consideration. Contestation occurs as struggle over scarce resources enacted between competing agents or interests attempting for a show or as large as a nation" ("Normal Heartlands," Text and Performance Quarterly 12 [1992]: 377).

simultaneously to realize mutually exclusive goals. Contestation refers to the struggle among individuals or groups endowed with variable amounts of material, cultural, and symbolic capital to pursue their interests and secure their aims. The extent to which an agent has accumulated and, therefore, can spend these three forms of capital in pursuit of his or her aims and interests depends upon that agent's position within a network of differential hierarchic positions. Conceived in this manner, contestation occurs between agents endowed with infinitely variable and constantly fluctuating gradations of power rather than between powerful and powerless agents.

My use of the term "depression-era" is motivated by the desire to set up clear historical boundaries within which the organized labor social dramas to be analyzed must occur and should not be interpreted as an indication that I am engaging in what Michel Foucault refers to as the construction of a "total history." Total histories rest upon two assumptions, neither of which I hold: first, "that between all the events of a well-defined spatio-

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temporal area, between all the phenomenon of which traces have been found it must be possible to establish a system of homogeneous relations" and, second, "that history itself may be articulated into great units--stages or phases--which contain within themselves their own principle of cohesion." 21 The term "depression-era" refers to a diachronically as well as synchronically diverse domain for which no world view offers a sufficient explanation. I use the term "depression-era" merely as a shorthand to denote the temporal span from the stock market crash to the conclusion of the following decade.

I use the term "organized labor" in a slightly different sense than that with which the reader is perhaps familiar. Most persons use the term to refer to workers who, while employed in a particular trade or industry, collectively organize in order to win concessions from and settle grievances with their employers. During the depression era, however, the forces of organized labor included not only those persons employed in private industry and affiliated with either the American Federation of Labor (AFL) or Congress for Industrial Organization (CIO) but also relief workers employed by the federal government and unemployed workers affiliated with the Workers' Alliance of America (WAA). Accordingly, at

least during the depression, the term "organized labor-power" might function more appropriately than "organized labor" to the extent that this decade attempted not only to organize those persons who actually sold their labor but also those who, though unemployed or on relief, had nothing else to sell and, consequently, saw organization as an avenue of empowerment. Although I find the term "organized labor-power" more accurate, I also find it decidedly more awkward, especially when framed by "depression-era" on one side and "social drama" on the other. For this reason, I have retained "organized labor" despite my slightly broader view of the term than is customary.

The final concept to be considered is social drama. According to Turner, who coined the term and is largely responsible for its elaboration, a social drama is an aharmonic episode that is processual in form and reflexive in nature. A social drama, Turner contends, proceeds through four successive phases: "breach," "crisis," "redressive procedures," and "reintegration/permanent schism." A breach is a violation of "regular norm-governed social relations made publicly visible by the infraction of a rule ordinarily held to be binding."\(^{22}\) The crisis stage occurs as people are "induced, seduced, cajoled, nudged, or threatened to take sides by those who

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\(^{22}\) Turner, *Anthropology* 34.
confront one another across the revealed breach."\(^2\)\(^3\) Redressive procedures reflect upon the events leading up to and including the crisis phase and involve measures such as giving informal advice to combatants, juridico-legal arbitration, the performance of public ritual, and overthrowing social structures altogether. In the final phase of a social drama, either the people that instigated the breach are reintegrated into the social fabric or a permanent schism is recognized.

No doubt, important insights concerning each of the above concepts have been left unspoken. The purpose of foregoing section, however, was not to exhaustively rehearse these concepts but rather to introduce their major features in an effort to more clearly establish the focus and parameters of the present study.

Rationale

Justifying the present study entails engaging three increasingly specific questions: Why investigate the relationship among cultural performances, contestation, and community? Why investigate the relationship among cultural performances, contestation, and community in social dramas? And why investigate the relationship among

\(^{23}\) Turner, *Anthropology* 34.
Cultural performances, contestation, and community in depression-era, organized labor social dramas?

Cultural Performance, Community, and Contestation

One reason for investigating the relationship among cultural performances, community, and contestation is that despite the increasingly political view of performance adopted by scholars during the past two decades, most performance studies scholarship nevertheless has stopped short of advancing a view of performance as inherently contestatory. A second reason for investigating the relationship among cultural performance, community, and contestation centers on the absence from contemporary scholarship of an analytical framework for examining and describing the specific ways in which performances participate in sociopolitical contestation and community maintenance and transformation.

That the past two decades have witnessed the emergence of a growing body of scholarship that addresses the political aspects of performance is amply illustrated by a perusal of the content pages of a journal such as Text and Performance Quarterly. Among the many titles suggesting the centrality of political issues within our discipline are: "The Politics of Asking Women’s Questions: Voice and Value in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich," "'This Spectacular Visible Body': Politics and Postmodernism in
Pina Bausch’s Tanztheater," "On Reading, Writing, and Speaking the Politics of (Self-) Re-Presentation," "Teaching Politics: Intellectual Work and Institutional Critique," and "Performing Ideology: From the Margins of Theatrical Discourse."24 These individual essays, to name just a few, clearly indicate not only that we as a discipline have not ignored the political dimensions of performance but, on the contrary, that the politics of performance figures largely among our concerns.

Performance studies scholars write about the politics of performance more frequently than they did twenty years ago. They also conceptualize the politics of performance in a fundamentally different manner. Writing in 1975, Michael Kirby contended that "theater is political if it . . . is intentionally concerned with government, . . . [if it] is intentionally engaged in or consciously takes sides in politics."25 In contrast, when Mary S. Strine writes of "the politics of asking women’s questions," she casts a much broader net, equating the political not only (or even


primarily) with matters related to the State but rather with matters of value and how values function to establish or impede relationships among persons.\(^{26}\)

Although we increasingly have focused on the political aspects of performance, most performance studies scholarship nevertheless has stopped short of embracing a view of performance as inherently contestatory. This "stopping short" is usually attributable to one of the following factors: (1) a lingering formalism, (2) the aestheticization of performance, (3) a unidirectional deployment of the concept "social context," (4) a romanticized view of dialogism, (5) a view of contestation as contained within or represented in performed texts, and (6) a view of contestation as an occasional feature of performance.

**Lingering Formalism:** Performance studies scholars who are self-proclaimed formalists are probably as rare as husbands who are self-proclaimed wife beaters. However, as the number of women seeking aid at family crisis centers indicates, one does not have to be a self-proclaimed wife beater to beat one's wife. Nor does one have to cite Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren to be a formalist. Kay Ellen Capo, writing in 1983, noted that "theorists have tended to see interpretation in formal or subject-centered (phenomenological) rather than

\(^{26}\) Strine, "Politics of Asking" 24-5.
sociopolitical terms."  

Three years later, Kristin Langellier contended that "despite oral interpretation's older and longer tradition joining rhetoric and poetics . . . , the effects of formalism that culminated in the New Criticism are still being felt in performance theory."  

Formalist assumptions and methods continue to make their way into performance studies scholarship. However, because of the widespread disdain for formalism, scholars who continue to employ its methods and assumptions have been forced under cover, and, paradoxically, they frequently veil their formalist bias by examining performance phenomena that are explicitly engaged in the politics of gender, race, or sexual orientation.  

Paul Ferguson's "Perspectives on the Aesthetics of Pina Bausch's Tanztheater," for example, focuses almost exclusively on the formal elements of Bausch's work (e.g., repetition, the presence or absence of accompaniment, the foreground-background relationship between narrative and "pure" movement). At one point in his essay, after describing a dance piece in which the performers move off of the stage and into the house, Ferguson writes, "It is

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easy to understand why such active engagement with the audience would frustrate and annoy critics who prefer that the dancer exist like a fly in amber, preserved behind the protection of an impenetrable fourth wall." While this passage demonstrates Ferguson's willingness to question the dividing line between stage and audience, his persistent focus on the formal dimensions of Bausch's work and his failure to attend to the relationship between Bausch's work, the world it represents, and the world in which it is represented seems to replace the "impenetrable fourth wall" with four impenetrable theatre walls. Ultimately, the stance that Ferguson adopts results in an ironic double bind: while disavowing that the dancer is a fly in amber, he simultaneously reduces Bausch's Tanztheater to just such a state.

While nothing of real value is to be gained by citing other examples of "lingering formalism," a cautionary statement is in order: "close readings" and formalism are not identical, and performance studies scholars, I believe, are well advised to take care not to throw out the baby of close textual analysis with the bath water of formalism.

**Aestheticized Performance:** In addition to a lingering formalism, a second reason for performance studies

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scholars' failure to enthusiastically embrace a view of performance as inherently contestatory centers on the tendency to construe performance in aesthetic rather than sociopolitical terms. Performance studies scholars who construe performance as an aesthetic event include Kristin Langellier, Elizabeth Fine, Ronald Pelias, and James VanOosting.

Langellier and Fine construe particular types of performance events as instances of aesthetic communication. In "Personal Narratives and Performance," Kristin Langellier writes, "My approach is to understand personal narrative as a complex phenomenon of aesthetic communication with significant performance dimensions and audience roles."  

Fine adopts a similar approach to examine the performance of folklore texts, contending that the aesthetic transaction model she proposes "would enable readers to reconstitute the aesthetic qualities of the original performance, perceiving its unique, integral form as an immediate, sensuous, dynamic aesthetic communicative process."  

Unlike Langellier and Fine who construe particular types of performance as instances of aesthetic communication, Langellier and Fine construe particular types of performance events as instances of aesthetic communication. In "Personal Narratives and Performance," Kristin Langellier writes, "My approach is to understand personal narrative as a complex phenomenon of aesthetic communication with significant performance dimensions and audience roles."  

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communication, Pelias and VanOosting construe the entire discipline of performance studies in aesthetic terms. After noting that "performance studies derives from the interpretation of literature and focuses on the performative and aesthetic nature of human discourse," Pelias and VanOosting proceed to fix the parameters of performance studies by asserting that it "takes as its domain the practice of aesthetic communication."33

None of the scholars cited above suggests that performances, as aesthetic communication events, function independent of the historical, cultural, or political field in which they occur. Langellier, for example, explores how gender politics shape the content and form of personal narratives. Fine, likewise, notes that the performance of folklore texts constitute "aesthetic transactions grounded within a particular sociocultural context."34 Similarly, Pelias and VanOosting note that "ever since Plato banished the poet from his ideal Republic, theorists have been interested in the social, ethical, political, and aesthetic effects of artistic discourse upon listeners and readers."35


33 Pelias and VanOosting 220.

34 Fine, Folklore 69.

35 Pelias and VanOosting 220.
My contention is not that a view of performance as aesthetic communication necessarily forecloses on the possibility of exploring performance as contestatory practice. Rather, I contend that a view of performance as aesthetic communication functions in a manner similar to what Kenneth Burke called a "terministic screen"--that is, the definition of performance as aesthetic communication tends to channel inquiry along certain lines while simultaneously diverting inquiry along other lines.36 Certainly, there is nothing inherently wrong about viewing performance as an aesthetic phenomenon. Nor is there anything particularly new about it. For at least the past two thousand years, most persons have viewed performance primarily in aesthetic terms with the result that, for the most part, the political and contestatory functions of performance either have been ignored altogether or viewed as secondary.

Context Is (Not Necessarily) Everything: In the late 1970s when new criticism loosened its hold on our discipline, a growing number of performance studies scholars began to focus on the role of context in the performance event. While this shift opened up exciting avenues of investigation and, in many ways, laid the foundation for the view of performance I argue for in this

study, a recognition of context as an important factor in the performance event and an agonistic view of performance as inherently contestatory are not identical.

That context is not necessarily everything has been argued persuasively by Langellier. In "From Text to Social Context," she notes that "though considering social context promises vitality to oral interpretation, its meanings are so vague and varied as to be theoretically vacuous." In order to salvage the concept, she identifies five research foci that center on context: (1) social context as place of performance, (2) social context as the conditions for performance, (3) social context and uses of performance, (4) social process and the ethics of performance, and (5) social process and the politics of performance.

For the purposes of the present study, Langellier's most important insight centers on the distinction between research that focuses on performance in a social context and research that focuses on performance as a social process. While the former construes performance largely as reactive, as occurring within an already-constituted context, the latter construes performance as proactive, as constituting a social context.

37 Langellier, "From Text to Social Context" 60.
38 Langellier, "From Text to Social Context" 60.
Two essays illustrate the difference between reactive and proactive views of the performance-social context relationship. In "A New Look at Performance," Elizabeth Fine and Jean Haskell Speer offer an essentially reactive view of the relationship between performance and social context. They write:

While in interpretation we are cognizant that the text on the page is not the same as the text in performance, we traditionally have examined the performed text as an aesthetic construct resulting from a matching of performer (particularly the body of the performer) to text. As we increasingly are aware, we need to consider as well the sociocultural factors that condition the emergent aesthetic event.\(^3\)

As this passage indicates, for Fine and Speer, sociocultural factors shape the performance event, and that which "emerges" is an aesthetic event rather than a transformed social context. In contrast, Strine's "Art, Activism, and the Performance (Con)Text" offers an essentially proactive view of the relationship between performance and social context:

As described in the production account, it would be difficult to separate the cultural impact and meaning of the actual theatrical production from the extraordinary social drama in which it was embedded. Clearly, then, for both Ghetto and The Normal Heart, interpenetrating artistic and social factors

were mutually implicated in the formation of an inclusive performance (con)text.\textsuperscript{40}

Unlike the unidirectional (social context shapes performance) approach evident in Fine and Speer’s essay, Strine adopts a more fully dialectical view, noting that Ghetto and The Normal Heart were both shaped by and shaped the social dramas in which they occurred.

While the focus on context that characterizes much performance scholarship during the past two decades moves our discipline in the direction of a contestatory view of performance, a focus on context and a focus on contestation are not identical. Context-centered research may take one of two forms depending on whether the scholar views performance as primarily reactive or proactive, and only the latter type approximates the agonistic view of performance as inherently contestatory that I argue for in this study.

Romanticized Dialogism: Romanticized dialogism is a fourth factor that has impeded our discipline’s full acceptance of performance as inherently contestatory. Romanticized dialogism refers to the tendency to substitute a prescriptive view of how performance ought to function in an ideal world for a descriptive view of how performance actually functions in this world. This

\textsuperscript{40} Mary S. Strine, "Art, Activism, and the Performance (Con)Text," \textit{Text and Performance Quarterly} 12 (1992): 392.
tendency is perhaps most pronounced in the work of Dwight Conquergood.

In "Between Meaning and Experience," Dwight Conquergood professes a "commitment to 'dialogue,'" noting that such a commitment valorizes diversity, difference, and pluralism and "insists on keeping alive the interanimating tension between Self and Other."41 Similarly, in "Performance and Dialogical Understanding," Conquergood contends that "the performer plays neither the role of Self or Other; instead of an I or a You, the performer is essentially, at all times, playing a We."42 In "Communication as Performance," he writes that "responsible interpreters perform literature, according to Bacon, not to display self or satisfy ego-needs, but to transcend the imprisoning limits of self, to burst forth from the bonds of narcissism, by developing a 'sense of the other.'"43 And in "Performing as a Moral Act," he contrasts the ideal, dialogical performance stance to four "sinful" performance stances: the skeptic's cop-out, the


curator's exhibitionism, the custodian's rip-off, and the enthusiast's infatuation.\textsuperscript{44}

As the above passages indicate, Conquergood's use of "dialogism" amounts to a prescriptive and essentially peaceful inflection of a term that for Bakhtin was descriptive and essentially conflictual. While performance may be employed to further humanist goals, such as enhanced understanding of the relationship between one's own and other cultures, performance need not inevitably do so. Indeed, as Steven Mullaney's \textit{The Place of the Stage} indicates, many performance practices aim not so much at increasing a culture's understanding of and respect for the Other as at rehearsing and ultimately consuming that Other.\textsuperscript{45} Dialogical performance, as described by Conquergood, may very well function as an ideal toward which we ought to aspire, but it does not, I contend, describe the role of performance in the world in which we actually live.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} Dwight Conquergood, "Performing as a Moral Act," \textit{Literature in Performance} 5.2 (1985): 5-11.

\textsuperscript{45} Steven Mullaney, \textit{The Place of the Stage} (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988). See especially his discussion of Henri II's royal entry in Rouen (64-9). Of this event, Mullaney writes: "The ethnographic attention and knowledge displayed at Rouen was genuine, amazingly thorough, and richly detailed; the object, however, was not to understand Brazilian culture but to perform it, in a paradoxically self-consuming fashion" (69).

\textsuperscript{46} Moreover, in Conquergood's view, a performer's refusal to submit to an always presumably respectable Other represents a moral breach. Each of the four moral
Containing Contestation: Textual containment of conflict—that is, viewing texts as mimetic representations of conflict—names one way that performance studies scholars attenuate the role of contestation. Far from being a recent phenomenon, this particular method of attenuating contestation dates at least as far back as Aristotle's Poetics. According to Aristotle's theory of tragedy, the dramatist imitates the conflict between the protagonist's hamartia (tragic flaw) and the social ethos or social norms of the world in which the protagonist lives. The tragic hero's demise results from the conflict between the antisocial and the social, the hamartia and the social ethos, the individual and the polis/chorus. As Augusto Boal points out in Theatre of the Oppressed, Aristotle's focus on the imitation of conflict within the text masks the conflict enacted by the text itself: "Aristotle constructs the first extremely powerful poetic-political system for intimidation of the spectator, for the elimination of the 'bad' or illegal tendencies of the audience." 47

breaches he identifies in "Performance as a Moral Act" belongs to the performing Self rather than the performed Other. Does the Other ever "sin," and if so, when one performs the less-than-ideal Other, ought the performer to adopt the ideal, dialogical performance stance?

The textual containment of contestation evident in Aristotle's theory of tragedy has not disappeared during the intervening two thousand years. However, a growing number of scholars are attempting to distinguish between approaches (such as Aristotle's) that focus on contestation in texts and approaches (such as Boal's) that focus on texts as contestatory. This study attempts to advance the latter approach because when scholars focus exclusively or predominantly on the presence of conflict within a performance text, they tend to view the performance as containing or representing arguments rather than arguing.

**Occasional Contestation:** The tendency among many performance scholars to view contestation as an occasional rather than essential feature of performance also diminishes the scope and importance of contestation. That scholars frequently conceptualize contestation as an occasional feature of performance is evidenced in typologies that distinguish "performance as sociopolitical

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48 See, for example, John Fiske's discussion of the differences between MacCabe's and MacArthur's approaches to the British television show *Days of Hope*. According to Fiske, while MacArthur's approach focuses on the political conflict represented in the television text, MacCabe's approach focuses on the politics of representing political conflict (*Television Culture* [New York: Routledge, 1987] 24-27). See also Catherine Belsey's distinction between declarative, imperative, and interrogative texts. While declarative and imperative texts imitate and internally resolve ideological conflict, interrogative texts refuse to resolve the ideological conflict they introduce (*Critical Practice* [London: Methuen, 1980]).
action, "performance as argument," and "performance as a site of social commentary/political action" as particular categories of performance.\textsuperscript{49} Using such labels to describe a particular class of performances implies that while some performances engage in contestation in order to shape sociopolitical realities, others do not.

Performance studies scholars tend to view as instances of contestation only those performances that overtly challenge the status quo or are explicitly directed toward the realization of a particular rhetorical goal. Thus, according to this view, "trigger-scripting" performances\textsuperscript{50} and Karen Finley's performance of \textit{We Keep


\textsuperscript{50} Kristin Valentine coined the expression "trigger scripting" to refer to the use of carefully selected texts to elicit a particular response from a specific target audience ("Interpretation Trigger Scripting," \textit{Readers
Our Victims Ready involve contestation, but a readers theatre production of T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" and a solo performance of Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" do not.

The status quo—whether in sociopolitical matters, the literary canon, or the discipline of performance studies—does not passively maintain itself; rather, the status quo is actively maintained by social agents whose interests are served by the current distribution of power. These agents, moreover, actively maintain the status quo against other agents whose interests are not as well served. Performances that explicitly or implicitly maintain status quo relations of power are no less contestatory than performances that explicitly or implicitly aim at overturning status quo relations of power. As Langellier noted some years ago, "Not only can oral interpretation participate in the social world, it cannot avoid social ramifications."\(^{51}\)


\(^{51}\) Langellier, "From Text to Social Context" 69.
To review, one reason for investigating the relationship among cultural performance, community, and contestation is that despite the increasingly political view of performance adopted by scholars during the past two decades, most performance studies scholarship nevertheless has stopped short of advancing a view of performance as inherently contestatory. This stopping short usually results from one or more of the six factors just discussed: (1) a lingering formalism, (2) the aestheticization of performance, (3) a unidirectional deployment of the concept "social context," (4) a romanticized view of dialogism, (5) a view of contestation as contained within or represented in performed texts, and (6) a view of contestation as an occasional feature of performance.

A second reason for investigating the relationship among cultural performance, community, and contestation centers on the absence from contemporary scholarship of an analytical framework for examining and describing the specific ways in which performances participate in sociopolitical contestation and community maintenance and transformation. Since the rise of new historicism, performance and literary scholars increasingly have come to invoke a product-producer or culture-performance dialectic in which performance is viewed as simultaneously
a product of the culture out of which it emerged and a
producer of the very culture in which it participates.

Two essays illustrate the growing tendency to invoke
a product-producer dialectic. In "Shaping Fantasies:
Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture,"
Louis Montrose concludes that "A Midsummer Night's Dream
is, then, in a double sense a creation of Elizabethan
culture: for it also creates the culture by which it is
created, shapes the fantasies by which it is shaped,
begets that by which it is begotten."52 Similarly, in
"The Theatre of the Mob: Apocalyptic Melodrama and
Preindustrial Riots in Antebellum New York," McConachie
contends:

Rather than passively mirroring social reality,
theatrical performances--especially immensely popular
ones--may help to legitimate certain forms of social
interaction which, in turn, may have their own impact
on initiating, reinforcing, and altering theatrical
events. Given the ongoing seesaw of tension and
interpenetration between actions on the stage and in
the streets, the question of causation becomes a
chicken-egg problem.53

Critics such as Montrose and McConachie deny the
exclusively documentary function of texts and

52 Louis Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies," Representing
the English Renaissance, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley:

53 Bruce A. McConachie, "The Theatre of the Mob,"
Theatre for Working-Class Audiences in the United States,
1830-1980, ed. Bruce A. McConachie and Daniel Friedman
(Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985) 17.
performances, arguing instead that texts and performances fulfill both reflective and reflexive functions.

The product-producer/culture-performance dialectic is valuable in underscoring the mutual action of culture and performance on one another; however, because the dialectic applies to all performances, its value for discriminating among diverse performance phenomena is negligible. Moreover, while new historicists have popularized the performance-culture dialectic, they have not provided an accompanying analytical framework for particularizing the performance contestation entailed by this dialectic. On the contrary, new historicists remain decidedly taciturn with regard to the methods employed to arrive at their conclusions. My purpose for introducing the culture-performance dialectic is to provide an analytical framework capable of particularizing the performance contestation entailed by this dialectic.

Performance, Contestation, and Community in Social Dramas

My decision to focus specifically on social dramas is motivated by three factors. First, contestation names the essentially defining feature of social dramas. Second, the existence and shape of community is precisely that which is at issue in social dramas. And, third, cultural performances stand in a particularly intimate relationship
with social dramas, particularly the third phase of the social drama—redressive action.

Contestation names the essentially defining feature of social dramas and is present in at least three of the social drama's four phases. Turner underscores the central role of competition in social dramas, noting that social dramas involve competition for scarce ends using scarce means. In *From Ritual to Theatre*, Turner writes:

Social dramas are in large measure political processes, that is, they involve competition for scarce ends—power, dignity, prestige, honor, purity—by particular means and by the utilization of resources that are also scarce—goods, territory, money, men, and women.54

Of the four phases of the social drama, only the final one—reintegration/recognition of a permanent schism—may be free from contestation, and even here, freedom from contestation is only possible when the social drama successfully redresses the issues over which the conflicting parties disagree.

A second rationale for investigating the relationship among cultural performances, contestation, and community specifically in social dramas is that the existence and shape of the community is precisely that which is at issue in social dramas. According to Turner, social dramas "take place among those members of a given group for whom

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it is a 'star-group,'" a group about which the individual feels a high level of intensity. While this would seem to indicate that social dramas occur within a community rather than between communities, the issue becomes complicated to the extent that in the crisis phase of a social drama the initial star-group is divided into competing factions with each faction often becoming a star-group about which individual members feel a high degree of personal investment.

For example, I am currently teaching in a department of speech and theatre, and most of the time, the department itself functions as a star-group. Occasionally, however, an issue arises about which department members vehemently disagree. These issues usually revolve around the differing goals and processes involved in directing dramatic and nondramatic texts. At such points, the department that had been a star-group divides along disciplinary lines, and two new star-groups are formed: faculty who adapt and direct nondramatic texts ("the speech side") and faculty who direct dramatic texts ("the theatre side"). As this example illustrates, whether social dramas are transacted within a star-group or between star-groups, within a community or between communities is difficult to answer precisely because the social drama represents a liminal phase, a betwixt-and-

55 Turner, Anthropology 46.
between stage, during which the continued existence and shape of the community in question is indeterminate.

A third reason for focusing specifically on social dramas is the particularly intimate relationship that exists between social dramas and cultural performances. In *Process, Performance, and Pilgrimage*, Turner contends that the social drama functions "as the empirical unit of social process from which has been derived, and is constantly being derived, the various genres of cultural performance." In *From Ritual to Theatre*, Turner describes this relationship with greater specificity, noting that "breach, crisis, and reintegrative or divisive outcomes provide the content of such later genres [of cultural performance], redressive procedures their form." Thus, according to Turner, the relationship between cultural performances and social dramas is more fundamental than mere overlap (i.e., the frequent presence of cultural performances in social dramas). According to Turner, cultural performances are both formally and substantively related to social dramas even when the cultural performances do not transpire within the spatiotemporal confines of a social drama.

One way of conceptualizing this relationship is to view the performance of everyday life (Goffman’s

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56 Turner, *Process* 86.

57 Turner, *From Ritual* 78.
presentation of self) as theatre, the social drama as meta-theatre, and cultural performance as meta-meta-theatre. While social dramas reflect on and react to role-playing and status maintenance in quotidian life, cultural performances imitate, incorporate, reflect on, and react to social dramas. The linearity of this relationship disappears as soon as the potential of both social dramas and cultural performances to transform the enactment of roles in everyday life is recognized. Both the meta-theatrical social drama and the meta-meta-theatrical cultural performance derive from, occur within, feed back into, and transform the performance of everyday life.

Performance and Organized Labor in Depression America

The decision to focus specifically on depression-era, organized labor social dramas is justified by three factors. First, the depression-era represents a significant decade both in labor history and performance history. Second, despite the significance of the decade in performance and labor history, scholarship addressing the interface of performance and organized labor remains relatively sparse. Third, much of the available scholarship that does address this interface suffers interpretive, methodological, or theoretical shortcomings.
That the 1930s represent a significant decade in the history of organized labor is evidenced in the dramatic increase in union membership, the shift from the trade union structure of the AFL to the industrial union structure of the CIO, the divisive political battles surrounding labor legislation, and the astonishing number of strikes waged during the decade. While in 1930, there were just over three million union members, by 1939 the ranks of organized labor had swelled to over eight million. And in the years between 1932 and 1938, these workers carried out 13,836 strikes, engaging in 4,740 strikes in 1937 alone. Given these numbers, it is understandable why the decade has been referred to as "the most explosive period of working-class militancy in American history." The decade of the 1930s was also significant in performance history. That the 1930s represent a significant decade in performance history is evidenced in the proliferation of workers' theatre groups designed specifically to respond to the aesthetic and political needs of working-class audiences, as well as the federal


59 Green, "Working Class Militancy" 2.

60 Green, "Working Class Militancy" 1.
government's subsidizing of theatre workers as part of the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Theatre Project (FTP). Commenting on the number of persons involved in workers' theatre, Daniel Friedman notes that "at its height, the [workers' theatre] movement involved hundreds of troupes and tens of thousands of workers who wrote, directed, performed, and attended their own theatrical productions." Consideration of the number of persons who witnessed workers' theatre productions only heightens the significance of the movement. One New York workers' theatre group--the Shock Troupe--appeared before approximately a quarter of a million persons between 1930 and 1934. Commenting on thirties theatre in general, Annette Rubinstein contends that the depression decade in the United States represents "the only time since Elizabethan England when an English-speaking stage found itself the center of a national culture." Similarly, Karen Malpede Taylor asserts that "the Depression affected
the US theatre more deeply than any other event ever has.  

Despite the significance of the depression-era both in performance and labor history, scholarship addressing the interface of performance and organized labor during this decade remains relatively sparse. A number of difficulties discourage research into the interface of performance and organized labor in depression America. First, the object of investigation traverses numerous fields of study and specialization, and, consequently, relevant information appears in diverse bodies of research. Seldom, however, is the cultural performance-organized labor interface treated explicitly as the primary object of investigation. References to the interface of cultural performance and organized labor appear in labor history and theatre history, and within theatre history, references can be found in scholarship addressing a diverse array of theatre traditions (e.g., political theatre, people's theatre, workers' theatre, popular theatre, radical popular theatre, and theatre for working-class audiences), as well as in scholarship addressing diverse dramatic genres (e.g., agitprops, living newspapers, and social dramas). Although extant scholarship often alludes to the cultural performance-

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organized labor complex, seldom is this complex taken as the primary object of investigation.

A second difficulty discouraging research into the interface of cultural performance and organized labor is the sparsity of primary performance traces for many of the relevant performances. Rather than fully articulated scripts, many of the performances relied heavily upon improvisation, and, consequently, the fullest articulation of a script is an outline of scenes. Even those texts that most closely approximate what we think of as traditional scripted drama (dialogue, stage directions, etc.) frequently were never published. When they were published, moreover, their circulation was usually small, and they were quickly out of print. For example, copies of Workers Theatre Magazine, the major publisher of agitprop scripts, are decidedly difficult to locate. That so many performance scripts were never published can be explained partially in terms of an analysis of who controlled the major means of production in the publishing industry and the criteria they employed to determine merit. We also ought to keep in mind, however, that many of the texts that were never published were not intended for publication. They were written in response to a particular situation, and when that situation passed, so too did the need for that particular response. Annette Rubinstein notes, "These were all highly topical and, with
the possible exception of *Waiting for Lefty*, . . . they could be presented only as period pieces today."\(^{65}\)

Similarly, Caspar Nannes writes that "political plays are essentially aimed at a contemporary audience that instantly recognized the characters, situations, issues, or philosophies upon which the story is built. This immediacy may be the major reason for the ephemeral quality of most political dramas."\(^{66}\)

The difficulty locating primary performance traces involves not only scripts but other types of records as well (e.g., reviews, production records, director's notes). While many reviews of stationary, full-length productions exist, because the productions reviewed are full-length and stationary and because they focus almost exclusively on metropolitan areas, these reviews tell only a portion of the story. Less prevalent are contemporary reviews and descriptions of mobile guerilla theatre as practiced by such groups as the Shock Troupe and Prolet-Buehne, as well as reviews of the even more homespun performances of original living newspapers and other types of dramas written and performed by workers themselves. Although few in number, some collections of primary documents (scripts, director's notes, performers' memoirs,

\(^{65}\) Rubinstein 307.

etc.) exist, and given the limited distribution of primary source material, these anthologies prove especially important and useful.\textsuperscript{67}

Given the sparsity of primary sources detailing the interface of cultural performance and organized labor, it is not surprising that secondary sources are likewise scarce. A number of explanations for this relative inattention exist. One reason for the relative inattention is that until recently an evaluative rather than analytic conception of culture dominated, and the performance practices focused on in this study did not fulfill the criteria of value imposed by the dominant evaluative conception of culture—notably, timelessness, universality, psychological realism.\textsuperscript{68}


\textsuperscript{68} According to Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, "There are at least two ways of using the word 'culture'. The analytic one is used in the social sciences and especially anthropology; it seeks to describe the whole system of significations by which a society or a section of it understands itself and its relations with the world."
A second reason for the relative inattention given the theatre of the 1930s centers on the turn away from radical causes that set in at the end of the decade. According to Donald Pizer, by the close of the decade many artists and critics were disillusioned with the politics they had embraced.

During the 1940s and 1950s, an entire generation of critics found themselves questioning the ideals and values they had held during the 1930s. Men of the caliber of Lionel Trilling, Edmund Wilson, Phillip Rahv, and Malcolm Cowley discovered that Marxism in its various forms was not a pure road toward revolutionary progress and human brotherhood but a tool of political oppression and literary conformity at home. But they, and others, had believed, and there is no bitterness like that of an apostate.  

The tendency of artists and critics to divorce their present selves from their more radical past selves may be due in part to ideological conversion resulting from reactions against Stalinism, but this process of conversion, in many cases, was aided by institutional coercion as practiced by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

The evaluative use has been more common when we are thinking about ‘the arts’ and ‘literature’: to be ‘cultured’ is to be the possessor of superior values and a refined sensibility, both of which are manifested through a positive and fulfilling engagement with ‘good’ literature, art, music, and so on” (Foreword, Political Shakespeare [Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985] vii).

During the 1938 HUAC hearings, the Living Newspaper Division of the Federal Theatre Project was represented as a subversive cell led by communist sympathizers if not by outright communists, and the negative attention garnered by this event initiated a chilling effect that was later exacerbated by the HUAC hearings of the Cold War era. David Peck describes the Cold War investigation of the arts as "the creation of an atmosphere of fear and suspicion that affected American culture to its very foundations, to the very books people read and wrote."\textsuperscript{70} In such an atmosphere, Peck contends, "it was far better to be waiting for the absurd Godot than for the political Lefty."\textsuperscript{71} The HUAC investigation of the arts affected not only what books were read but also how those books that were read were evaluated. The fallout of HUAC, Peck contends, has made its "way into the critical judgements formed during that period [the 1940s and 1950s] on the art and literature of the 1930s, and our path to understanding Odets' plays is littered with red placards warning us of the 'Marxist,' 'Revolutionary,' and 'Communist' nature of his work."\textsuperscript{72}


\textsuperscript{71} Peck 136.

\textsuperscript{72} Peck 138.
During the 1960s and 1970s, the attention given the interface of performance and organized labor increased dramatically, due at least in part to the reassertion of explicitly political theatre addressing such issues as the war in Vietnam, civil rights, and women's liberation. Advances in the quantity of attention afforded the performance-organized labor interface, however, did not necessarily translate into advances in the quality of attention. Much of the existing scholarship addressing the interface of performance and organized labor in depression America suffers from one or more of the following shortcomings: (1) the simplifying and distorting categorization of depression-era cultural phenomena as instances either of escape from socioeconomic circumstances or engagement in political matters; (2) a global rather than local focus that tends to generalize about textual genres, types of performances, and theatrical institutions rather than focus on the performance, by particular persons, of particular texts/actions for particular audiences in particular situations; (3) a contextual slippage that results in the conflation of cultural performances in organized labor contexts and cultural performances of organized labor episodes and issues; and (4) a focus too exclusively centered on the genre of aesthetic or staged drama rather
on the multiple genres of cultural performances (e.g., film, parades, pickets, concerts).

**Escape/Engagement**: Cultural historians frequently contend that Americans, in the midst of the greatest economic depression in their history, either were unable or chose not to confront the reality of their plight, opting instead (and whenever possible) to escape into dreamland. Thus, Richard Pells writes that "throughout the 1930s a number of commentators charged that the typical radio program and motion picture served largely as an instrument of pacification for people too tired to think or read or act."\(^7\) Stephen Baskerville and Ralph Willett echo Pells, contending that "the terms 'evasiveness' and 'escapism' have been used frequently, and quite properly, in descriptions of popular culture in this period."\(^8\) Looking back on the thirties, historians describe a multiplicity of cultural phenomena as instances of escape.

Depression-era Americans are frequently portrayed as slipping into a cinematic nether world detached from reality. In *The Angry Decade*, Leo Gurko recalls that "the movies tended to avoid the depression as a theme,

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\(^7\) Richard Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1984) 266.

particularly depression in America, no doubt partly out of the theory that people do not attend the movies to be reminded of the harsh facts of life."\textsuperscript{75} Similarly, in Big Bad Wolves, Joan Mellen contends that "during the 1930s, eighty-five million people went to the movies every week, but what they saw had as little relation to their lives as the polyanna books they read."\textsuperscript{76} Perhaps the most vivid statement of the cinema-as-escape thesis, however, is that offered by Louise Tanner in "The Celluloid Safety Valve," an essay that begins, "When my father was out of a job during the Depression he would often go to the movies and sit through the feature three times."\textsuperscript{77} Tanner later returns to the figure of her unemployed father, intimating that "Father, sitting there in the dark, forgot his own plight as he watched the gods and goddesses of the screen sweeping up and down marble staircases into dining rooms with a footman behind every chair."\textsuperscript{78}

The cinema is not the only depression-era cultural practice whose popularity has been explained in terms of

\textsuperscript{75} Leo Gurko, \textit{The Angry Decade} (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1947) 241.

\textsuperscript{76} Joan Mellen, \textit{Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film} (New York: Pantheon, 1977) 96.


\textsuperscript{78} Tanner 85.
its ability to satisfy the widespread desire for escape. Other prominent 1930s cultural practices frequently categorized as escapist include historical novels, radio soap operas, and Broadway shows. John Weisman employs the category of escape to characterize American theater in general and thirties theater specifically:

Our American theater has always been white-oriented and escapist in nature. Even in the thirties—those times of social ferment often thrown in our faces by today's theatrical liberals... the theater was chiefly a means of emotional escape. There was indeed political action and some didacticism that called for change, but the call kept itself well within the already defined boundaries of American society.\(^79\)

In *Stage Left*, Jay Williams eschews the blanket generalization that all thirties theater was essentially escapist, but he does retain the category of escape, aligning it with the Broadway theatre. "Those who could still afford the price of a ticket," he writes, "not surprisingly wanted romance, nostalgia, amusement that would carry them out of the grim present."\(^80\)

The flipside of this reading of certain cultural practices as forms of escape is the reading of other cultural practices as forms of engagement. Among the cultural practices most frequently explained as forms of political engagement are proletarian novels, workers'


the theatre, and the productions of the Living Newspaper Unit of the Federal Theatre Project.

Numerous critics explain the proletarian novels of the 1930s as the result of political engagement by literary authors. In "The Thirties in Retrospect," Irving Howe emphasizes the negative role of engagement for authors as he recalls "the whole sad story of the leftward-moving writers in the thirties--the yielding to a total ideology and an authoritarian party machine; the discarding of literary autonomy in behalf of crudely political aims."81 Leslie Fiedler echoes Howe's sentiments, contending that engagement with leftist party politics forced writers "to distort values and betray the myths which informed their authentic work in pursuit of shifting critical acclaim."82

While dismissals of proletarian novels as propagandistic are plentiful, no less plentiful are explanations of theatrical ventures as politically motivated. Thus, Burns Mantle writes of 1931, "if propaganda drama is your dish, here you will find it piping hot."83 Similarly, Grenville Vernon wastes no


83 Quoted in Williams, Stage Left 61.
time sniffing out political contamination in *Injunction Granted*:

*Injunction Granted*, which purports to show the growth of the labor union movement and its continual stultification by the courts, is quite the dullest offering yet, besides being out and out propaganda of the Left. The Living Newspaper has apparently been taken over by a small group of New York Radicals as their personal property, and they are having a truly glorious time spending honest money to further their peculiar social and political ideas.84

He concludes that "as propaganda it has no place in the taxpayers' theatre, and as art it has no place in the theatre at all."85 A *Seattle Times* reviewer writes of *Power*, "That Old Debbil, the Power Trust, is the villain and the TVA is the hero in as fine a piece of overdone propaganda as ever trod the boards. . . . The play has the subtlety of the sledgehammer and the restraint of a groundswell."86

The tendency of historians to categorize cultural practices of the 1930s as instances of either escape or engagement renders both concepts less problematic than they are and, consequently, distorts the complexity of the cultural activities being explored.87 While cultural

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85 Vernon 407.


87 For a deconstruction of the escape-engagement binary in two depression-era cultural phenomena, see Appendix A.
practices such as workers' theatre productions were obviously guided by a political program, practitioners of the medium knew that whether the political program was purchased depended in large measure upon whether the theatrical program was entertaining. Recognizing the intermingling of political engagement and theatrical entertainment, Rauh and Hartman wrote in 1931 that "this work which the Workers' Theatre carried on through many years is developing along with the whole revolutionary movement and promises to become a strong instrument of propaganda and at the same time a means of recreation to the working class." One year later, John Bonn--director of Prolet-Beuhne, a New York based agitprop theatrical organization--continued to assert the interdependence of entertainment and political education:

It is not enough to bring our message to the masses. It is necessary that the masses accept our message. Our product must be such that the workers will like them. We have to consider the expectations of the audience. And a theatre audience expects in the first place entertainment. A production with the best political content is worthless if this content is not presented in a form which is interesting for a workers' audience. . . . Both elements--propaganda and entertainment--must be interwoven in a workers' theatre performance.


This refusal by workers' theatre practitioners to see their medium strictly as a form of political engagement is also evident in the judging criteria employed at a competition among agitprop performance groups. These criteria included not only "best political content," "clarity of political content," and "importance of subject" but also "smoothness of performance," "technical execution of players," and "entertainment value." The judges' forms underscored the relationship between entertainment and persuasion; in parentheses, beside the category marked "Entertainment Value," was the single word "Effectiveness." 90

More surprising than the intermingling of political engagement and engaging entertainment in workers theatre productions is the emphasis placed on entertainment in actual labor struggles. An essay in the Brookwood Review, a publication of the Brookwood Labor College, reported that "with complete unanimity our worker audiences agree that a labor movement which moves must have its drama and its working songs. It must appeal to the heart as well as the head; to the emotions as well as the intellect." 91


Similarly, labor organizer Rose Pesotta writes, "In any long, drawn-out strike, entertainment is vital, to keep the strikers from becoming discouraged or bored."92

Pesotta's position is corroborated by John Steuben, a strike strategist:

A good entertainment committee, whose duty is to take care of some of the social needs of the strikers, can go a long way in maintaining high morale and can lend life to a strike. . . . An entertainment committee could even venture to organize amateur dramatic groups; plenty of talent can be found in the ranks of the strikers. An entertainment or social committee that is truly enterprising can become as essential a part of the strike machinery as a relief committee.93

William Weinstone concurs with Steuben's assessment, including among the reasons for the workers' victory in the Flint, Michigan, auto strike the fact that they employed labor theatre as a medium of agitation and education.94

Performances--regardless of the context of their occurrence--are never pure escape nor pure engagement but, instead, always partake of both aspects. Richard Schechner, using related terms, contends that "no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment."95

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92 Rose Pesotta, Bread Upon the Waters (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1944) 211.


95 Schechner 120.
Schechner employs the metaphor of a braid to describe the relationship between efficacy and entertainment in the historical evolution of theatre, noting that at a given moment one or the other of the simultaneously present strands dominates but that over time its dominance diminishes and the other strand takes the upper position. In making this argument, Schechner implies that a performance may be more or less efficacious, more or less goal-directed. What seems to happen in Schechner's braid is that when performance has an explicit goal (whether conservative as in Medieval mystery and miracle plays or subversive as in guerilla street theatre of the 1960s) the efficacy strand is viewed as the dominant one. While a performance may be more or less successful in realizing a particular goal and more or less explicit about the goal toward which it is directed, performances are not more or less goal-directed. All performances are equally goal-directed, though the direction, nature, and overtness of goals vary considerably across performances.\textsuperscript{96}

George Szantos's \textit{Theatre and Propaganda} underscores this point, emphasizing that all theatre is essentially propaganda theatre, essentially politically engaged theatre. Performances that explicitly or implicitly perpetuate the status quo are engaged in the realization

\textsuperscript{96} For an extended discussion of the efficacy-entertainment issue, see Schechner 120-24.
of a particular political agenda just as performances that explicitly or implicitly challenge the status quo are engaged in the realization of another political agenda. Drawing on the work of Jacques Ellul, Szantos distinguishes between integration propaganda and agitation propaganda and, subsequently, between the theatre of integration and the theatre of agitation. Integration propaganda seeks to perpetuate the hegemonic submission of its audience to the status quo by convincing them either that things are as they should be or that things are as they will always be and that attempts at change are futile at best and fatal at worst. Agitation propaganda, on the contrary, seeks to overturn the status quo by convincing its audience that things are not as they should be and that, if audience members are willing to engage in direct action, things do not have to remain as they are. Szantos contends that the majority of theatrical productions exemplify the theatre of integration and that although these productions are inherently propagandistic, their status as propaganda is rendered invisible to exactly the degree that they effectively inculcate their integrative messages in the minds of their audiences. Agitational theatre, on the other hand, represents a minority of performance productions, and because these productions openly attempt to provoke their audiences to actions opposing the integrative mainstream, they are frequently
subject to the charge of being "nothing more than mere propaganda." While the political engagement of agitational theatrical productions may be more obvious than that of integrational productions, both are equally engaged.

**Macroscopic vs. Microscopic Focus:** A second shortcoming of extant scholarship addressing the interface of cultural performance and organized labor in depression America centers on the tendency of this scholarship to pursue a global focus. Rather than employing a microscopic lens to examine particular performances of particular texts for particular audiences in particular contexts, the majority of scholarship exploring the relationship between organized labor and performance during the 1930s employs a macroscopic lens, focusing either on a textual genre, a genre of performance, or a theatrical institution.

Numerous critics of thirties theatre employ a genre-centered approach, focussing on a particular class of dramatic texts rather than on an individual text or performance. The genres that bear most directly on the interface of performance and organized labor in depression

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97 George Szantos, *Theatre and Propaganda* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1978). For a discussion of the difference between agitation and integration propaganda, see Szantos' second chapter. For an application of these categories to theatrical phenomena, see his third chapter.
America are agitprops, social dramas, and living newspapers. Douglas McDermott's analysis of agitprops exemplifies the tendency to pursue a macroscopic, genre-centered focus. According to McDermott, agitprops "arise at times of social unrest when rational dialogue no longer seems profitable or possible." McDermott identifies four stylistic and substantive features that characterize the genre. First, the dramas represent oppressed workers who initially are either ignorant of their oppression, docile with regard to their oppressors, or both. Second, the drama charts the course of the workers' growing militancy, with the drama often concluding with a scene in which the workers unite and literally chase the oppressors from the stage, exhorting the audience to do the same.


thing in their lives. Third, the drama is essentially episodic, with each episode usually followed by didactic commentary addressed directly to audience members. Finally, the plays' language usually alternates between "the rhetoric of the slogan" and attempts at "idiomatically representational speech."\textsuperscript{101}

The macroscopic focus that characterizes scholarship exploring dramatic genres is equally apparent in scholarship exploring genres of performance or theatre traditions. Depression-era performance genres relevant to organized labor include: popular theatre,\textsuperscript{102} radical popular theatre,\textsuperscript{103} theatre for working-class audiences,\textsuperscript{104} and workers' theatre. Because the last of these performance genres bears most directly on the interface of performance and labor in depression America, I focus on it in the review that follows, demonstrating

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{101}] McDermott, "Workers Laboratory Theatre" 128-29.
\item[\textsuperscript{103}] Eugene van Erven, Radical People's Theatre (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988) 173-80.
\item[\textsuperscript{104}] Bruce A. McConachie and Daniel Friedman, introduction, Theatre for Working-Class Audiences in the United States, 1830-1980 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985) 3-14.
\end{itemize}
how scholars of workers theatre frequently sacrifice the particular in pursuit of the general.

Several scholars have explored the workers' theatre movement in the United States during the decade of the 1930s, and taken collectively, their explorations reveal two principle avenues of research: periodization and contextualization. Scholars following the line of research referred to as periodization divide the workers' theatre movement in this country during the 1930s into distinct phases. Those following the line of research referred to as contextualization compare the workers' theatre movement in this country during the 1930s to similar movements occurring simultaneously in other countries, to other theatrical phenomena occurring simultaneously in this country, or to similar movements occurring in this country at other times.

Douglas McDermott and Stuart Cosgrove pursue the line of research I refer to as periodization, dividing the workers' theatre movement in this country during the depression into three distinct phases.\(^{105}\) Phase one begins in 1926 with the founding of the Workers' Drama League in New York City and witnesses the nation-wide proliferation of independent workers' theatre organizations. In 1929, the Workers' Dramatic Council of

New York, comprised of twelve local workers' theatre organizations, was established, and in 1931, 200 issues of a mimeographed journal appropriately entitled *Workers' Theatre* began circulation. Throughout phase one, workers' theatre productions were limited to short agitprop scripts, and the performances were notably mobile, with the organizations going to their prospective target audience rather than waiting for the audience to come to them.

Phase two covers the years from 1932 to 1935 and corresponds to the lifespan of the League of Workers' Theatres, a national organization designed to coordinate the efforts of local organizations. This period marks the greatest proliferation of workers' theatre groups but also marks the beginning of the end, for it was during this time that the mobile production of short agitprop scripts began to give way to the stationary production of full-length plays relying on social realism.

Phase three begins in 1935 when the League of Workers' Theatres becomes the New Theatre League, a name change in keeping with the Communist party's tactical shift from a "proletkult" to a "popular front" strategy. While the "proletkult" strategy was geared toward fostering an indigenous workers' culture that opposed the bourgeois culture, the "popular front" strategy was geared
less toward opposing bourgeois culture than with joining bourgeois culture in opposing the rise of fascism.

In addition to research that divides the history of the workers' theatre movement into distinct phases, other research contextualizes this movement through comparison with other performance phenomena. Daniel Friedman, for example, contextualizes American workers' theatre during the depression by comparing it to American workers' theatre during the preceding decade.\textsuperscript{106} Cosgrove contextualizes American workers' theatre during the depression by comparing it to British workers' theatre of the same period.\textsuperscript{107} And McDermott contextualizes American workers' theatre during the depression by positioning it on a continuum marked by four nodal points: "commercial theatre," "the theatre of social significance," "explicitly political theatre," and "participatory theatre." Workers' theatre during the 1930s, McDermott contends, centered primarily around the nodal point identified as "explicitly political theatre."\textsuperscript{108}

The macroscopic focus that characterizes scholarship addressing textual and performance genres also

\begin{footnotes}
\item[106] Friedman, "A Brief Description" 111-20.
\item[107] Cosgrove, "From Shock Troupe to Group Theatre" 259-64.
\item[108] McDermott, "Workers Laboratory Theatre" 121-22.
\end{footnotes}
characterizes scholarship addressing particular depression-era, theatrical institutions: the Federal Theatre Project, the Workers’ Laboratory Theatre, the Shock Troupe, Prolet Buehne, the Theatre Union, the Group Theatre, the New Theatre League, ARTEF, the American Labor Colleges, and theatre schools established specifically to promulgate workers’ theatre practices. Obviously, given the size of this list, plus the fact that this list is only partial, a comprehensive review of scholarship addressing all relevant institutions remains beyond the parameters of the present study. For this reason, I have selected for review two pieces of scholarship that exemplify this particular approach.

Richard Altenbaugh examines workers’ theatre as taught and practiced at the Brookwood Labor College, which opened in Katonah, New York, in 1921, and Commonwealth College, which opened in Louisiana in 1923 but subsequently moved to Arkansas in 1925. Both schools functioned as training grounds for labor organizers, with Brookwood targeting organizers of urban industrial workers and Commonwealth targeting organizers of rural farm workers. Altenbaugh’s essay focuses on the plays performed by the two colleges and the actions these plays urged their audiences to take.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Altenbaugh 197-210.
Cosgrove examines workers' theatre as practiced by Prolet Buehne, a German-speaking agitprop organization headed by John Bonn. After summarizing the action of three of the Prolet Buehne's most popular plays—Tempo, Tempo, Scottsboro, and Vote Communist—Cosgrove compares Bonn's borrowing of conventions from vaudeville to Mayakovsky's borrowing from the circus and Piscator's borrowing from the cabaret.¹¹⁰

Research focusing on textual genres, performance genres, and theatrical institutions provides important insights concerning the interface of cultural performances and organized labor in depression America. Scholarship identifying the characteristic features of textual or performance genres and scholarship exploring the history, goals, and repertoire of theatrical institutions offer readers a sense of "the big picture." When the object of investigation has largely been ignored, as has the cultural performance-organized labor interface during the depression, establishing the big picture is an indispensable first step. However, once the broad outlines have been sketched, macroscopic examination needs to give way to microscopic examination. Up to this point, the vast majority of research into the relationship

between performance and organized labor during the 1930s has been concerned with the general rather than the particular, and as a result, the nature and function of specific performances by specific performers for specific audiences in specific contexts have largely gone unexplored.

Performance in/Performance of: A third shortcoming evident in scholarship exploring the interface of cultural performance and organized labor in depression America is a contextual slippage that results in the conflation of cultural performances in organized labor contexts and cultural performances of organized labor episodes and issues. To illustrate this contextual slippage, I will employ two essays, Stuart Cosgrove’s analysis of the relationship between living newspapers and strikes and Paul Sporn’s analysis of dramas that emerged directly in the wake of the sitdown strikes in Michigan in 1936-37.

In "The Living Newspaper: Strikes, Strategies, and Solidarity," Cosgrove considers how an awareness of the need to collectively organize "not only made its way onto the stage, but also percolated through the consciousness of the acting profession." After examining key strikes and demonstrations, Cosgrove reviews four theatrical representations: Triple A Plowed Under, Injunction Granted, The Cradle Will Rock, and The Strike

111 Cosgrove, "Living Newspapers" 211.
Marches On. All but the first of these address the subject of organized labor. Injunction Granted, a product of the Living Newspaper Unit of the Federal Theatre Project, historically charts labor’s attempt to organize and the courts’ attempts to thwart that organization. The Cradle Will Rock, Mark Blitzstein’s labor opera, represents a fictional strike against Mr. Mister’s steel corporation in Steeltown, USA (based on an actual strike against Bethlehem Steel in Pittsburgh). Finally, The Strike Marches On, written by Josephine Herbst, Mary Heaton Vorse, and Dorothea Kraus and directed by Joe Losey, commemorated at the conclusion of the Flint, Michigan, autoworkers’ strike the workers’ victory in that battle. Paul Sporn’s "Working-Class Theatre on the Auto Picket Line" also deals with the performance-strike relationship. Each of the plays summarized by Sporn—The Strike Marches On, Sit Down, F.O.B. Detroit, Hoodwinked, and Million Dollar Baby—emerged directly in the wake of Michigan auto workers’ 1936-37 challenge to manufacturers. Given that two of the five plays (F.O.B. Detroit and Million Dollar Babies) were never produced and that none were published, Sporn’s decision to adopt a drama-centered approach focusing on textual summary rather

than performance description or analysis is understandable.

Both Cosgrove and Sporn are guilty of a contextual slippage in which organized labor activities in performance and performance in organized labor activities are conflated. That the categories organized labor activities in performance and performance in organized labor activities are not identical is amply illustrated by Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*. Blitzstein's play depicts a strike in a steel town and is, therefore, an example of an organized labor activity in performance; however, because the original New York City production of the play by the Living Newspaper Unit of the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) did not itself occur within the immediacy of an organized labor context, it does not constitute an example of performance in an organized labor activity.

While the FTP production of *The Cradle Will Rock* illustrates that the categories of organized labor activities in performance and performance in organized labor activities are not identical, the Flint sit-down strikers' production of *The Strike Marches On* illustrates that the two categories sometimes overlap. After all, this play not only represents the 1937 Flint sit-down strike but also was performed within the immediate context of that very strike. Although performances that both
represent organized labor episodes and occur within organized labor contexts blur the distinction between performances in strikes and strikes in performances, the distinction between these categories nevertheless exists, and to erase or suppress this distinction is to treat separate dimensions of the performance-strike relationship as though they were one.

Cosgrove and Sporn, along with the majority of other scholars reviewed in this chapter, exhibit not only a tendency to conflate performance in organized labor activity and organized labor activity in performance. They also exhibit a decided tendency to focus primarily upon the latter. Thus, all but one of the texts Cosgrove and Sporn explore involve the representation of strikes, but only one of the texts, *The Strike Marches On*, is explored in terms of its performance within a strike context.

**Theatre vs. Cultural Performance:** While theatrical representations of organized labor activities and theatrical representation in organized labor activities function as important dimensions of the cultural performance-organized labor interface, representations of these types are but a part of the story. As was noted in the opening section of this chapter, "cultural performance" names a category that includes not only staged dramas but also a variety of other phenomena such
as parades, spectacles, films, sporting events, concerts, and lectures.

To contend that no scholars have recognized or commented on the role, in organized labor contexts, of cultural performances other than aesthetic or staged dramas would be misleading. Several scholars have commented on the generally performative, spectacular, and theatrical aspects of strikes. In the opening section of "The Living Newspaper: Strikes, Strategies, and Solidarity," Cosgrove contends that "the theatre of the Depression was the theatre of direct industrial action," that throughout the decade it became "increasingly difficult to determine the blurred boundaries between the drama of direct action and the stages of the political theatre," and that "in recognition of the 'spectacular' nature of their action, organised workers began to implement a series of political strategies such as sit-down strikes, sleep-ins, and lie-down demonstrations." Similarly, in "Working-Class Theatre on the Auto Picket Line," Sporn espouses similar arguments, noting that the "implicitly subversive method of strike action coupled with the inventive community spirit called forth by the drive [to organize workers] were resources of colorful spectacle and dramatic significance." Sporn concludes  

113 Cosgrove, "The Living Newspaper" 238-39.

114 Sporn 167.
"that strikes are, in a certain respect, theatre, and that theatre is necessary to the life of strikes."115 Raphael Samuel corroborates the view of Sporn and Cosgrove. He writes:

Theatricality is, if anything, even more apparent, albeit more impromptu, in the mobilization of popular politics, carnivalesque at one moment, melodramatic at another, but always larger than life. . . . A political demonstration is necessarily an act of street theatre, albeit one with a multitudinous cast, and a rhythm and tempo of its own.116

Despite these references, when it comes to analyzing the interface of performance and organized labor, none of the above scholars explicitly and systematically explores strikes as themselves inherently theatrical, spectacular, and performative. Nor do these scholars explore nondramatic genres of cultural performance in organized labor activities. Instead, each literally marginalizes the relationship between nondramatic cultural performances and organized labor, with Cosgrove introducing and apparently forgetting the subject in the opening two paragraphs of his essay, with Sporn introducing the subject in the final three paragraphs of his essay, and with Samuel broaching the subject in the introduction to a collection of essays and documents, none of which mentions the subject again.

115 Sporn 168.

In the foregoing paragraphs I argued that although some performance scholars have commented on the theatrical nature of cultural performances such as parades, pickets, rallies, and protest demonstrations, recognition and rigorous inquiry are not identical. My concern, however, is not merely that extant scholarship has failed to systematically explore the spectacular nature of non-theatrical cultural performances. Coupled with this concern is another—namely, that while performance scholars have begun to recognize the spectacular nature of non-theatrical cultural performances, we generally have not recognized that the persons who participate in such events either as actors or spectators frequently recognize this as well. In chapters three and four of this study, I explore this type of participant awareness in cultural performances occurring in two depression-era organized labor social dramas.

In conclusion, to argue that a protest demonstration represents a type of performance and to argue that the persons staging and witnessing a protest demonstration recognize that they are engaged in a form of performance are distinct though related claims. While performance scholars have begun to explore the implications of the former claim, the implications of the latter claim have largely gone unnoticed. In advancing knowledge claims in the name of performance studies scholarship, it is
important that we not rob the performers and audiences who constitute our object of investigation of knowledge claims that are rightfully their own. To do so represents a form of intellectual colonialism.

This chapter has attempted: to clarify key concepts employed in this study; to establish the significance of exploring the relationship among cultural performances, contestation, and community; to justify exploring this relationship as it is played out in two depression-era, organized labor social dramas; and to point out a few of the interpretive, methodological, and theoretical shortcomings evident in extant scholarship examining the interface of cultural performances and organized labor in depression America. In the following chapter, I propose an analytical framework designed to overcome these shortcomings, an analytical framework designed to examine how cultural performances in social dramas instantiate contestation and negotiate community.
CHAPTER TWO:
AN AGONISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON PERFORMANCE

This chapter advances a critical framework for analyzing the relationship among cultural performances, community, and contestation. I refer to this critical framework as agonistic because it is designed specifically to fix the investigator’s attention on the performance complex or some part of it as a site of struggle and solidarity.

The performance complex consists of primary, secondary, and tertiary practices surrounding cultural performances. Primary practices include performance practices themselves; secondary practices include those practices by which persons make sense of, evaluate, and talk about performances; and tertiary practices include those practices by which the very concept performance is constructed and maintained.

Adopting the agonistic perspective foregrounds questions such as: How do primary, secondary, and tertiary practices operating in and around a performance or group of performances maintain or subvert existing social

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relations? Whom do the primary, secondary, and tertiary practices serve? How do they serve them? How do primary, secondary, and tertiary practices engage in communal identity politics—that is, how do these practices enact and argue for particular construals of categories such as "us" and "them," "insider" and "outsider," "ally" and "opposition," "community" and "other"? What distinguishes the agonistic perspective is not so much the direction in which it moves our understanding of performance but the explicitness with which and the degree to which it focuses our attention on performance as inherently political, as necessarily a site of contestation wherein communities with different and often competing interests vie with one another.

Although my immediate purpose for proposing this framework is to deploy it to analyze the role of cultural performances in two depression-era, organized labor social dramas, scholars may also employ the framework to analyze the role of cultural performances in other settings. In the first half of this chapter, I propose a framework for analyzing how cultural performances instantiate contestation, and in the latter portion of this chapter, I propose a framework for analyzing how cultural performances negotiate community. Together, these frameworks constitute an agonistic perspective on performance.
Analyzing the role of contestation in cultural performance involves considering three dimensions of contestation: the direction of effectivity (whether the cultural performance maintains or subverts status quo values and relations of power), the modes of effectivity (the strategies through which the maintenance or subversion is transacted), and the spheres of contestation (the levels at which these strategies are operationalized, whether textual, spatial, or conceptual).

A number of assumptions are implicit in the framework I am proposing. First, and perhaps most importantly, I assume that cultural performances make things happen that would not have happened in that way, to that extent, in that place, at that time, or among those persons had the cultural performances not occurred. Second, I assume that cultural performances are directional, that they move the social formation in which they occur and of which they are a part in one of two directions: either they move the social formation toward a further entrenchment of status quo values and relations of power, or they move the social formation toward a loosening of status quo values and a redistribution of status quo relations of power. Third, I assume that the directional movement occurs as a result of strategies that human agents operationalize and, further,
that these strategies are operationalized either within the cultural performances themselves, in the gathering and dispersal that frames the cultural performance,\textsuperscript{2} or in ancillary activities related to the cultural performance, such as talking about a performance prior to or after its occurrence.

Transforming the above three propositions from the status of unfounded assumptions to the status of warranted claims based on concrete examples is my primary objective in chapters three and four. My primary objective in this section, however, is to sketch out a critical framework capable of enabling this transformation.

Direction of Effectivity

Analyzing the first dimension of contestation involves discerning whether the direction of effectivity of the cultural performance is ideological or resistant or both. Commenting on the variety of construals of ideology currently circulating, Raymond Boudon notes:

The impression given by the literature on ideology and the explanation of the ideological phenomena is very likely to be one of great confusion. Definitions differ enormously between writers, and explanations of the phenomenon are based on a wide variety of principles. Overall, the impression is that the same word is used to describe a multitude of phenomena rather than a single one, that theories of ideology are at odds on something they define differently, and that the large corpus which they

constitute seems therefore like a dialogue of the deaf.³

Raymond Williams corroborates Boudon’s opinion at the even more limited level of specifically Marxist conceptions of ideology. He contends, "There can be no question of establishing, except in polemics, a single correct 'Marxist' definition of ideology."⁴

One way to begin differentiating among competing construals of ideology is to distinguish between neutral and critical construals of the concept. When construed neutrally as a system of beliefs and assumptions possessed by an individual or group, ideology functions as a universal condition with no outside, no other. While another may possess an ideology different from one’s own (e.g., feminist, bourgeois, colonialist, Marxist), no one is outside ideology. When ideology is construed neutrally, all performances are ideological—that is, all performances are ideological to the extent that they bear traces of the assumptions and beliefs out of which they are engendered. Persons responsible for the performance may or may not be cognizant of the assumptions and beliefs that inform and shape their activities; however, whether


they are aware of them or not, the assumptions and beliefs nevertheless exist.

When construed critically rather than neutrally, ideology is conceived as the negative counterpart of a more ideal Other. Hence, according to these construals, there does exist an outside to ideology, and performance may or may not be ideological. Whether a given performance is ideological depends on which of the competing critical construals of ideology the researcher employs.\(^5\)

The critical construal of ideology I employ in this study is set forth by John Thompson in *Ideology and Modern Culture*. After rehearsing the major dimensions of ideology as set forth by Thompson, I will explain why I chose this particular construal of the concept. According to Thompson,

> **Ideology involves the ways in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical—what I shall call relations of dominance. Ideology, broadly speaking, is meaning in the service of power.**\(^6\)

Ideology, according to Thompson, involves a culture’s production, circulation, and reception of symbolic forms

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\(^5\) For a historical review of the major construals of ideology, see Appendix B.

that either establish or perpetuate relations of dominance.

Thompson defines "symbolic forms," the media of ideology's operation, as "actions and utterances, images and texts . . . produced by subjects and recognized by them and others as meaningful constructs."7 Thompson's linking of ideology and signification corresponds to similar linkings by other theorists. Stuart Hall, for example, writes in "Signification, Representation, Ideology" that "language and behavior are the media, so to speak, of the material registration of ideology, the modality of its functioning. These rituals and practices always occur in social sites, linked with social apparatuses."8 Later in the same essay Hall links ideology and signification even more overtly in what may be the shortest definition of ideology in print: "Ideologies are systems of representation materialized in practices."9 Like Thompson and Hall, Graeme Turner also links ideology to symbolic forms, contending that ideology is essentially "the politics of signification, . . . the

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7 Thompson 59.
9 Hall 104.
ways in which the social practice of making meaning is controlled and determined."¹⁰

According to Thompson, while all ideology involves symbolic forms, not all symbolic forms are ideological. Symbolic phenomena are not ideological as such, but are ideological only "in so far as they serve, in particular sociohistorical circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of dominance."¹¹ Domination exists when power relations are "systematically asymmetrical," and power relations can be said to be systematically asymmetrical "when particular individuals or groups of individuals are endowed with power in a durable way which excludes, and to some significant degree remains inaccessible to, other individuals or groups of individuals."¹² Conceived in this manner, domination occurs along multiple axes including (among others) class, gender, race, and sexual orientation.

My reasons for choosing to employ Thompson’s conception of ideology from among the many competing conceptions of ideology are four in number. First, Thompson’s construal of ideology avoids criteria such as truth/falsity, illusion/ reality, and imaginary/real that


¹¹ Thompson 56.

¹² Thompson 151.
render competing construals of ideology problematic.\textsuperscript{13} Employing a view of ideology that depends on criteria such as truth/falsity, illusion/reality, and imaginary/real makes determining whether a given phenomenon is ideological difficult in the extreme. As Hall has noted, "The notion that our heads are full of false ideas which can, however, be totally dispersed when we throw ourselves open to 'the real' as a moment of absolute authentication, is probably the most ideological conception of all."\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, to the extent that, according to construals employing the veracity criterion, persons under the sway of ideology mistakenly perceive the illusory as the real, there can never be any certainty that those persons pointing the accusing finger at ideology are not themselves the actual dupes of ideology.

\textsuperscript{13} Among the critical construals of ideology employing criteria such as truth/falsity, reality/illusion, and real/imaginary are those set forth by Marx and Engels and Althusser. Marx and Engels view ideology as false consciousness, describing it metaphorically as "phantoms formed in the human brain," "sublimates of . . . material life-process," and an inverted image in which "men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura" (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, \textit{The German Ideology} [New York: International Publishers, 1939] 14.) According to Marx and Engels, the primary operations of ideology are distortion, deformation, and inversion of material reality. Althusser, likewise, employs criteria related to veracity when he defines ideology as "a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" ("Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus," \textit{Lenin and Philosophy}, trans. Ben Brewster [New York: Monthly Review, 1977] 162).

\textsuperscript{14} Hall 105.
Second, Thompson's construal resists the tendency to universalize ideology. During the past three decades, beginning particularly with feminists' popularization of the slogan "the personal is political," the signifier "ideology" has become increasingly corpulent. Like the blob of horror film fame, "ideology" seems to have incorporated everything with which it has come in contact. For example, in some construals of ideology, the signified of "ideology" appears to encompass every other signifier. No longer a signifier subsumed within a language, "ideology" has come to subsume language. This ostensible enriching of the signified of "ideology" actually impoverishes the signifier--or, at the very least diminishes the usefulness of the concept. If everything is ideological, then the signifier marks no space of difference, no category exclusion; if everything is ideological, then to say that a thing is ideological is to say nothing of particularizing value about that thing. The absolutely full signifier is absolutely empty.

\[15\] The symbolic theory of ideology proffered by Clifford Geertz exemplifies this tendency. Geertz views ideology as "systems of interacting symbols, as patterns of interworking meaning" ("Ideology as Cultural System," The Interpretation of Culture [New York: Basic Books, 1973] 212). Ideology, he contends, concerns that which is socially constructed rather than naturally given, and "what is socially determined is not the nature of conception but the vehicles of conception" (212), the symbol systems employed within a particular culture.
Third, Thompson's construal of ideology balances structure (determinism) and agency (free will) in such a way that the powerful structuring effect of ideology is recognized without denying the potential efficacy of human agency. This is particularly important as a corrective to views of ideology (such as that set forth by Louis Althusser) that construe subjects who are entirely subjected, agents lacking agency. Henry Giroux contends:

Althusser has developed a notion of power that appears to eliminate human agency. The notion that human beings are neither homogeneously constituted subjects nor passive role bearers is lost in Althusser's analysis. . . . Instead, in Althusser's reductionist schema human beings are relegated to static role-bearers, carriers of pre-defined meaning, agents of hegemonic ideologies inscribed in their psyche like irremovable scars.16

Alex Callinicos echoes Giroux's evaluation of Althusser, contending that "for Althusser, history is 'a process without a subject or goals.' Change occurs as a result of the accumulation of structural contradictions. Human beings' role within this process is merely to act as 'bearers' of the structures in conflict."17 Thompson's construal of ideology does not deny the power of ideology—indeed, it affirms it—but it does so by tying ideology

16 Henry Giroux, Theory and Resistance in Education (Boston: Bergin and Garvey, 1983) 82-83.

to dominance and thus making it a part of the picture rather than the total and totalizing picture.

Ideology, as defined by Thompson, involves the use of symbolic forms to establish and sustain relations of dominance, and implicit in this view of ideology is the notion that dominance is always more or less tenuous, more or less vulnerable to disturbance, more or less (but never) total. After all, a thing needs to be sustained only when there is some counterforce working against the force that is seeking to perpetuate itself.

Thompson's perception of ideology as strong but never total is echoed by a variety of critical theorists. Ross Chambers, for example, contends that "there are no hegemonies so absolute or systems of control so strict that they are not vulnerable to disturbance."\(^{18}\) Similarly, Patrick Brantlinger argues that "because it [hegemony] is complex, multiple, contradictory, hegemony always carries within it the seeds of resistance and rebellion."\(^{19}\) In place of the "structural determination" of a totalizing view of ideology, Hall inserts "structural tendencies" and "linkages":

Structures exhibit tendencies--lines of force, openings and closures which constrain, shape, channel and, in that sense, "determine." But they cannot


determine in the harder sense of fix absolutely, guarantee. People are not irrevocably and indelibly inscribed with the ideas that they ought to think; the politics that they ought to have or not, as it were, already imprinted in their sociological genes. The question is not the unfolding of a some inevitable law but rather the linkages which, although they can be made, need not necessarily be.\textsuperscript{20}

Similarly, Richard Terdiman, after suggesting that "no dominant discourse is ever fully protected from contestation,"\textsuperscript{21} goes on to posit the equivalent of Newton’s Third Law in the discursive realm: "For every dominant discourse, a contrary and transgressive counter-discourse."\textsuperscript{22} This latter principle may be re-written in terms that speak directly to Thompson’s construal of ideology: For every ideology, contrary and transgressive acts of resistance and opposition.

Although resistance and opposition initially appear synonymous, they actually denote different though not always distinguishable practices. Resistance attempts to respond to dominance by overcoming it, by dominating or dethroning the dominating force. It challenges the dominant system or individual and attempts to overturn that system. In this respect, it repeats the method of dominance that it supposedly purports to transcend, merely

\begin{footnotes}
\item[20] Hall 96.
\item[22] Terdiman 65.
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reversing the power relations previously in place. Opposition, however, does not attempt to overcome the dominant structures—indeed, does not even overtly challenge the dominant structure—but instead "consists of making use of dominant structures for 'other' purposes and in 'other' interests." Oppositional practices covertly subvert dominance through tactical procedures that attempt to make domination livable, bearable. Resistant practices, on the other hand, overtly contest dominance through strategic procedures aimed at reversing or overcoming relations of domination.

A few examples will clarify this distinction. When the large lecture seating arrangement of a classroom is utilized to facilitate cheating on an examination, students are in the tactical realm of opposition; however, when high school seniors, nearing graduation day, organize and carry out a "skip day" on which they refuse to show up for classes, they are in the strategic realm of resistance. When a professor inflates travel expenses for a trip to a convention for which the university is to reimburse him/her, that professor is engaged in opposition; however, when a cadre of professors decide in midsemester to stop teaching until their salaries are increased, they are engaged in resistance.

23 Chambers xiii.
While the above examples clearly fall into either resistant or oppositional practices, many practices are not so clear cut, and Chambers admits that "there is a very large gray area straddling the categories of resistance and opposition." For purposes of this study, it is sufficient that we recognize an oppositional-resistant counterforce, and it is not ultimately necessary to distinguish resistant performance from oppositional performance.

To summarize discussion of the direction of effectivity, when ideology is construed neutrally as a system of assumptions and beliefs possessed by an individual or a group, then all performances are ideological. However, when ideology is construed critically, a particular performance may or may not function ideologically depending on the particular critical construal of ideology that is employed. Employing Thompson's critical construal of ideology makes it possible to distinguish between two directions of effectivity for performance practices. Performances possessing an ideological direction of effectivity attempt to perpetuate patterns of domination, while performances possessing a resistant direction of effectivity attempt to subvert or challenge existing patterns of domination.

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24 Chambers 12.
The pigeon-holing tendency implicit in these categories is mitigated by the recognition of multiple axes of domination (e.g., class, race, gender, and sexual orientation). Once multiple axes of domination are accounted for, a performance may be ideological along one axis yet resistant along another. A performance, likewise, may be ambivalent along any single axis, being neither clearly resistant nor ideological.

Modes of Effectivity and Spheres of Contestation

Unlike the direction of effectivity that addresses the question "where are we going?" the mode of effectivity addresses the question "how do we get there?" Analysis of the mode of effectivity involves specification of the strategies through which the directional movement is transacted. Richard Terdiman underscores the importance of studying the mode of resistance, noting that

it is critical to provide as precise an account as can be derived . . . of its [the counter-discourse's] mode of relation, its specific tactic of opposition to the adversary which it projected for itself. Such accounts constitute a map. For in their opposition to the dominant, counter-discourses function to survey its limits and its internal weaknesses.

While Terdiman argues specifically for the significance of studying the mode of effectivity of resistance, studying the mode of effectivity of ideology is no less important.

25 Terdiman 68.
Analysis of spheres of contestation involves specification of the levels at which the contestation occurs. At least three spheres exist: textual, spatial, and conceptual. In what follows, I combine discussion of spheres of contestation and modes of effectivity, first, by specifying the nature of each sphere and, second, by offering sample modes or strategies for each sphere.

Before proceeding with this agenda, however, a few caveats are in order. First, analysis of the direction of effectivity, the mode of effectivity, and the spheres of contestation are not chronological but overlapping moments of analysis. Second, the modes included at each sphere are merely examples. I make no pretense of comprehensiveness. Indeed, I doubt that constructing a comprehensive catalogue of potential strategies is possible. Rather, I offer these particular strategies as a sampling of the types of strategies that can come into play at the various levels. Third, the individual modes are neither inherently ideological nor inherently resistant. Most strategies may be employed either to sustain relations of domination or to subvert them, and the classification of a particular mode as an instantiation of ideology or resistance depends not on the mode per se but rather on the use(s) to which the mode is put. Fourth, the modes are not perfectly discrete, and modal hybrids (combinations of at least two modes) are
frequently encountered. Fifth, the spheres of contestation, though conceptually discrete, are interrelated at the level of practice, with what happens at one level impacting upon the other levels as well.

**Textual Sphere:** Of the three spheres of contestation, the one most frequently focused on in existing scholarship is the textual sphere. The textual sphere of contestation refers to the struggle among competing symbolic practices—discursive and otherwise—at both the intratextual and intertextual levels. Intratextual contestation refers to the contestation of symbolic practices within a performance and is roughly equivalent to what Bakhtin calls "internal dialogism," the struggle among the various discourses incorporated within a single text to overpower, discredit, and displace one another. Intertextual contestation refers to the way an individual performance (with its particular intratextual configuration) competes with other performances and other types of texts (with their particular intratextual configurations) for prominence in the symbolic marketplace. Possible modes of effectivity at the textual sphere include: legitimation,

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dissimulation, identification, dissociation, appropriation, reification, and de-naturalization.

Legitimation names a strategy whereby relations of power are represented as just and worthy of support. In *Economy and Society*, Max Weber identifies three grounds on which claims to legitimacy may be based: legal grounds, traditional grounds, and charismatic grounds. Legal grounds justify relations of power on the basis of an appeal to enacted laws: "it is this way because this is the way the law says it should be." Traditional grounds justify relations of power on the basis of an appeal to the longevity of the relation: "it is this way because this is the way it has always been or the way it has been for a long time." Charismatic grounds justify relations of power on the basis of an appeal to the exceptional character of an individual: "I should submit to person x because he/she is a benevolent and morally upright individual." While legitimacy is most frequently employed to operationalize an ideological direction of effectivity, it may also be employed to operationalize a resistant direction of effectivity. For example, when labor performances justify collective action by pointing to Section 7a of the National Recovery Act that made

collective bargaining a right of employees, they are engaging in legitimation based on rational grounds.

Dissimulation names a mode of effectivity whereby relations of power are sustained or subverted by being dissembled or presented under an altered appearance. Thompson identifies three varieties of dissimulation: displacement, euphemization, and tropes. Displacement occurs when "a term customarily used to refer to one object or individual is used to refer to another, and thereby the positive or negative connotations of the term are transferred to the other object or individual."\(^{28}\) Euphemization occurs when "actions, institutions, or social relations are described or re-described in terms which elicit a positive valuation."\(^{29}\) The final variety of dissimulation discussed by Thompson centers on the use of tropes, the deployment of symbolic forms in a figurative manner, as in metonymy, synechdoche, metaphor, and synaesthesia. Like legitimation, the varieties of dissimulation described above may be employed to operationalize either an ideological or resistant direction of effectivity. For example, pageants staged during the early decades of the twentieth century by immigrants going through the process of naturalization frequently employed the metaphor of America as a melting

\(^{28}\) Thompson 62.

\(^{29}\) Thompson 62.
pot, thereby operationalizing an ideological direction of effectivity. On the other hand, the metaphor of America as a seriously ill patient dangerously near death that was employed in the popular 1930s agitprop skit "The Big Stiff" operationalized a resistant direction of effectivity.

Identification names a mode of effectivity whereby individuals are made to seem consubstantial with one another or are drawn into a collective identity vis-a-vis the presentation of shared attributes. The propaganda plays produced by the Nazis during World War II, for example, employed the strategy of identification in an ideological manner to unite Aryans into a cohesive unit. John Howard Lawson's Marching Song, Albert Bein's Let Freedom Ring, and Robert Sklar's Stevedore, on the other hand, employ identification in a resistant manner, suggesting that black and white laborers share common

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31 "The Big Stiff," Workers Theater 1.9 (1931): 12-16.

interests and that segregated unions serve the interests of the bosses rather than the interests of the workers.

Dissociation frequently operates as the complement to identification. While identification works by pointing out commonalities shared by individuals or groups, dissociation works by pointing out differences that separate individuals or groups. While dissociation frequently involves the expurgation or victimage of the Other, the ultimate effect of this particular mode is often to heighten the cohesiveness of those opposing the evil Other. Dissociation was frequently employed to realize an ideological direction of effectivity in *Treasury Star Parade* productions, a popular radio show supported by the Treasury Department to encourage the purchasing of war bonds during World War II. Fred MacDonald, in a study of government propaganda on commercial radio, quotes from a segment entitled "A Lesson in Japanese" in which Frederic March, the broadcast’s narrator, employed dissociation:

> Have you ever watched a well-trained monkey at a zoo? Have you seen how carefully he imitates his trainer? The monkey goes through so many human movements so well that he actually seems to be human. But under his fur, he’s still a savage little beast. Now, consider, the imitative, little Japanese, who for seventy-five years has built himself up into something so closely resembling a
civilized human being that he actually believes he's just that.\textsuperscript{33}

This passage, in addition to demonstrating ideological dissociation, also demonstrates the possible hybridization of modes to the extent that the dissociation is carried out through a metaphor, one of the forms of dissimulation.

Appropriation names a mode of effectivity whereby that which originated with another individual or group is taken over for one's own uses. This taking over may involve retaining the original in an untransmuted form (recitation), or it may involve creative transformation of the original (parody). These two forms of appropriation closely correspond to the two tendencies for dealing with "the problem of reported speech" identified by V. N. Volosinov. According to Volosinov, while one tendency strives "to maintain its [the reported speech's] integrity and authenticity,"\textsuperscript{34} the other "devises means for infiltrating reported speech with authorial retort and commentary in deft and subtle ways."\textsuperscript{35} The former


\textsuperscript{35} Volosinov 120.
tendency approximates re-citation, and the latter tendency approximates parody.

In re-citation, the original is maintained but it is also (and more importantly) contained. The other that is quoted is positioned within a more encompassing context that either draws energy and support from the original or that neutralizes, comments on, or deflates the original. An example of re-citation in the service of a resistant direction of effectivity is the inclusion in Marc Blitzstein’s labor opera The Cradle Will Rock of passages from a National Guard handbook discussing how to deal with civil disturbances.

In the second form of appropriation—parody—the author/performer intentionally misquotes the original in such a manner that the original is recognized by audiences, but recognized precisely as having been transgressed. That which is parodied, moreover, may be either the stylistic or substantive features of the original or both. Labor songs sung to the tune of popular hits of the day but with new lyrics directly addressing labor situations represent examples of parody in the service of a resistant direction of effectivity.

Reification names a mode of effectivity whereby that which is historically contingent and culturally constructed is presented as though it were part and parcel of the natural order of things. Unlike the preceding
modes, this particular strategy seems to be aligned exclusively with an ideological direction of effectivity. Thus, for example, in the film *Where the Boys Are*, Tuggles (played by Paula Prentiss) at one point states: "Women like me weren’t made to get an education. We were made to have babies. I want to be a walking, talking baby factory--with union wages, of course." In this manner, the differing importance attached to the education of males and females that is the product of a particular cultural and sexual politics, is portrayed instead as the product of physiological differences between the sexes.

Although reification functions predominantly in the service of an ideological direction of effectivity, it does have a predominantly resistant counter-mode. This counter-mode, denaturalization, functions by unmasking that which has been presented as naturally given, revealing it instead as historically contingent and culturally constructed. For example, when a gay character in *The Normal Heart* catalogues famous and infamous homosexuals throughout history, he denaturalizes heterosexuality by presenting it as culturally mandated but historically contingent.

*The Spatial Sphere*: The spatial sphere of contestation focuses on the politics of space. David Harvey, a postmodern geographer, contends that space "gets treated as a fact of nature, ‘naturalized ’ through the
assignment of common sense everyday meaning.\textsuperscript{36} Similarly, in "The Eye of Power," Foucault describes this common sense approach to space as one in which "space stands on the side of the understanding, the analytical, the conceptual, the dead, the fixed, the inert."\textsuperscript{37} The flipside of this devaluation of space, Foucault avers, is a valorization of time: "I remember ten years or so ago discussing these problems of the politics of space and being told that it was reactionary to go on so much about space, and that time and the 'project' were what life and progress are about."\textsuperscript{38}

That space is not merely a container in which human action transpires but instead simultaneously a product and producer of action has become the rallying cry of a growing number of theorists who focus on the politics of place, the ideology of space. Edward Soja, for example, warns that "we must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed in the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies

\textsuperscript{36} David Harvey, \textit{The Condition of Postmodernity} (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 203.


\textsuperscript{38} Foucault, "Eye" 150.
become filled with politics and ideology." Similarly, Henri Lefebvre contends that "space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies."  

Analysis of the spatial sphere of performance contestation involves analysis of the politics of theatre spaces. Marvin Carlson argues that audiences construct meanings for performances not only on the basis of the physical and vocal behaviors enacted in the relatively circumscribed space of the stage but also on the basis of the spatial dynamics that surround the stage. He writes:

In every historical period and in every culture the physical matrices of the theatrical event--where it takes place within the community, what sort of structure houses it, and how that structure is organized and decorated--all contribute in important ways to the cultural processing of the event and must be taken into consideration by anyone seeking to gain an understanding of its dynamic.

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41 The term "theatre" is used to denote the site of performance, not a permanent or semi-permanent structure erected intentionally for the presentation of performances.

While Carlson focuses on the semiotic function of performance places, Richard Schechner's and Sally Harrison-Pepper's analyses focus more directly on the political dimensions of performance spaces. In *Performance Theory*, Schechner contends that theatres are created by "writing on" a space, and this insight is echoed in Harrison-Pepper's analysis of street performers' transformation of city space into performance place: "Like a palimpsest, an ancient parchment repeatedly erased and written upon over the centuries, . . . the square [Washington Square, a site popular with street performers] has thus become a kind of 'laminated space,' with multiple meanings and activities layered upon it." I include Harrison-Pepper here because her focus on marginalized and often outlawed street performers underscores the contestatory nature of "writing on" space to an extent that Schechner's example of primitive hunting bands does not. In advanced capitalist society, the space that is written on by performers has (more often than not) already been written on, and the author of the earlier writing is not always excited by the prospect of having his or her text defaced/refaced by new inscriptions.

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Consideration of the spatial sphere of performance contestation involves analysis of: (1) the location of theatres in space, (2) the deployment of space in theatres, and (3) the representation of space in performances. Analysis of the location of theatres in space involves answering such questions as what spaces get utilized as performance spaces, where these spaces are in relation to spaces reserved primarily for other uses, and whether the use of the space for performance is sanctioned or non-sanctioned. Analysis of the deployment of space in theatres involves answering such questions as how the architecture of the theatre effects audience members' relationship to one another (e.g., racial & class segregation, presence or lack of lobbies) and to the performers (e.g., proximity of performers and audience members; proscenium, thrust, or theater-in-the-round). Analysis of the representation of space in performance involves answering such questions as how the spatial representation put forth in the performance reproduces or diverges from existing cultural uses of space.

Modal considerations operating at the level of the location of theatres in space include determining whether the space employed for the performance represents an intentional or a potential theatrical space and whether the use of the space for performance purposes is sanctioned or non-sanctioned. Both intentional and
potential theatre spaces are palimpsestic in nature; both involve writing on the space. They differ insofar as intentional theatre spaces include a space (a stage) that has been set aside specifically for the purpose of palimpsestic inscription (set construction) and that has been designed specifically for the purpose of efficient palimpsestic turn-over (bare stage, set built, set struck, bare stage, set built, etc.).

There is no necessary relationship between the modal considerations just discussed and the direction of effectivity of the performance. Performing in an intentional theatre may operationalize either an ideological or resistant direction of effectivity, just as performing in a potential theatre may operationalize either direction.

The tendency to conceptualize performances occurring in an intentional theater with an ideological direction of effectivity and performances occurring in a potential theatre with a resistant direction of effectivity results from a failure to consider whether the use of the theatre represents a sanctioned or non-sanctioned use of the space. For example, on December 24 of every year that I was in grade school, I participated in a Christmas play at church. The play was staged in the church, and, accordingly, it took place in a potential rather than intentional theatre. This transformation of the church
into a potential theatre, however, was sanctioned, and the direction of effectivity of these productions was invariably ideological rather than resistant. On the other hand, when the Workers Laboratory Theatre transformed the New York City sidewalks into a potential theatre the transformation was not sanctioned, and the direction of effectivity tended toward resistance.

Coupling consideration of the intentional/potential theatre distinction with the sanctioned/non-sanctioned performance distinction helps the critic to determine whether the direction of effectivity is ideological or resistant. However, just as there exists no necessary relationship between the direction of effectivity and the use of either intentional or potential theatre spaces so also no necessary relationship exists between the direction of effectivity and the sanctioned or non-sanctioned status of the performance. In an effort to inoculate persons against undesirable elements, the dominant culture sometimes sanctions exposure to small doses of that which it opposes. According to Roland Barthes, "One immunizes the contents of the collective imagination by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged evil; one thus protects it against the risk of a generalized subversion."\(^45\) Given that inoculation

amounts to sanctioning the non-sanctioned, determining whether a given performance operationalizes an ideological or resistant direction of effectivity often proves quite complex, and critics are wise not to assume a direct relationship between the direction of effectivity and the sanctioned/non-sanctioned status of the performance.

Modal considerations operating at the level of the deployment of space in the theatre include consideration of such factors as: whether fixed seating exists; whether the seating is segregated according to race, class, or sex; and whether the theatre architecture encourages or discourages audience member-audience member interaction, as well as audience-performer interaction.

A brief example will help clarify some of the issues just discussed. At 10:15 a.m. on June 2, 1937, clerks in the Penney's department store in Flint, Michigan, cleared the store of all customers and began a sitdown strike for higher wages. When the local newspaper refused to cover the strike story, the striking clerks decided to employ a series of performances to publicize their cause. They cleared a large shop window of merchandise, and using the shop window as their stage, they transformed the sidewalk in front of the department store into the theatre house.

Within this makeshift theatre, the striking clerks staged the events leading up to and including the calling of the strike. While some of the clerks performed
themselves, others performed customers and still others performed management roles. For costumes and props, the striking workers used Penney's merchandise.

The "Penney's Play" began with a series of customer-clerk improvisations designed to justify the clerks' demand for higher wages by demonstrating the sort of things the clerks encountered in their dealings with a sometimes less-than-considerate public. An elderly woman refused to listen to a clerk and insisted on buying a corset that was obviously too small for her only to return a few minutes later and angrily demand a refund. A mother entered with a baby, laid the infant down on the merchandise, and chastised the clerk when she attempted to pick up the baby to prevent the possible soiling of the merchandise. An apparently wealthy woman unfolded item after item of clothing, removed merchandise from its packaging, and unrolled reams of fabric only to leave the store without purchasing anything. Throughout each of the above interactions, a store manager policed the salesclerks to assure that they behaved politely.

After several such interactions, a customer entered who rapidly selected several items. As a clerk was about to wrap the items, the customer demanded a "union sales girl," threatening not to purchase the merchandise if her demand was not met. As the manager informed the customer that none of the clerks belong to a union, one of the
clerks stepped forward, announcing "I'm a union sales
girl, madam, and I'll be glad to wait on you." After the
sale was completed, the customer left, and the manager--
not so much angry as hurt--confronted the union salesgirl.
After a brief conversation, the manager departed, and the
clerks began talking among themselves.

One of the clerks revealed a previously hidden sign
reading, "Penney's clerks are on strike for higher wages!"
A sign was placed in the shop window: "Why we organized!"
Each clerk grabbed a placard as they lined up in picket
formation. Some of the signs read: "We sat down on
Penney's but we'll stand up for dollars!" "We're not
dolls. We need money to live." "We're on strike for $18
a week." After maintaining this final tableau for a few
minutes, the clerks left the playing space, and a sign was
placed in the window informing the audience when the next
performance would begin.46

The "Penney's Play" transformed a storefront space
designed by management to advertise merchandise into a
theatre space designed by union members to advertise the
striking workers' cause. Normally, a storefront window
functions as an enticement designed to lure passersby into
the store. In the context of the sitdowners' cultural

46 My reconstruction of the "Penney's Play" is based
on an account by an unnamed source, "Penney's Department
Girls Go On Strike," ts., Henry Kraus Collection, Box 10,
Folder 22, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University.
performance, however, the storefront window functioned as a stage from which the striking workers informed passerby of the reasons they were being kept out of the store. The striking workers transformed the potential theatrical space of the shop window into a stage on which they enacted their nonsanctioned performance, a performance designed to keep people out of but not away from the store. The striking workers' performances transformed individuals who otherwise would have merely passed by the closed store on their way to some other destination into a more or less stationary audience. By virtue of this initial transformation, a second, subtler, and perhaps unintended transformation also occurred: the ostensibly nonunion audience lining the sidewalk to witness the striking workers' performance functioned as a surrogate picket line, a human wall established along the perimeter of a struck industry to protect striking workers inside.

The Conceptual Sphere: Contestation at the conceptual sphere occurs at a meta-level and focuses on the strategic deployment of the concept "performance." Central to the conceptual sphere is an analysis of two modal considerations: first, an analysis of "performance" as an example of what W. B. Gallie, has termed an essentially contested concept (ECC)47 and, second, an

analysis of the operation of what Jonas Barish has termed the "antitheatrical prejudice." 48

According to Gallie, ECCs are concepts "the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users." 49 Gallie identifies five formal and two historical conditions that distinguish ECCs. The formal requirements specify that the concept must be (1) "appraisive," accrediting (2) an "internally complex" achievement (3) whose worth is attributable to variably weighted elements and (4) whose character is open to modification in the light of changing circumstances. Moreover, ECCs are (5) both deployed "aggressively" against other uses of the concept and maintained "defensively" against these other uses. 50

While these formal conditions describe what it means for a concept to be essentially contested, they fail to delimit sufficiently the class of concepts that are essentially contested. Specifically, Gallie notes, they fail to provide a means for distinguishing essentially contested concepts from "radically confused concepts." 51

The two differ insofar as disputes involving the former


49 Gallie 158.

50 Gallie 161.

51 Gallie 168.
result from differing construals of the same concept, while disputes involving the latter are only mistakenly perceived as resulting from opposing construals of the same concept, when "the truth is that they [the disputants] are confusing two different concepts about which there need never have been any dispute or contest at all."\textsuperscript{52} Put more simply, those engaged in disputes involving ECCs actually argue about the same thing, while those engaged in disputes surrounding radically confused concepts only imagine themselves to argue about the same thing. In order to distinguish ECCs from radically confused concepts, Gallie supplements the five formal conditions with two historical ones. These are (1) that the concept must derive from "an original exemplar whose authority is acknowledged by contestant users" and (2) that the competition among the various construals of the concept "enables the original exemplar's achievement to be sustained or developed."\textsuperscript{53} The exemplar, Gallie notes, may take the form either of a prototype or a tradition.

That "performance" is an ECC has been implied by Paul Gray\textsuperscript{54} and overtly stated by Strine, Long, and HopKins.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} Gallie 163.

\textsuperscript{53} Gallie 168.

To the extent that different construals of performance invoke different evaluative criteria, the contestation referred to here is not just over which phenomena persons designate as performances but also over which phenomena, so designated, persons evaluate as "good" and "bad" performances.

In addition to the contestation surrounding ECCs, a second mode of effectivity at the conceptual sphere involves the analogical deployment of the concept "performance." That the thirties are rich in the analogical deployment of the concept performance is evidenced by a sampling of the theatrical metaphors applied to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency. In 1933, for example, Dos Passos praised the new President, writing that he was a "fascinating performer" and a "sleek high wire artist." Frederick Lewis Allen also used a theatrical metaphor, noting that "newspaper men began to regard the NRA [National Recovery Act] as the center of the government exhibit and the White House as a side


show.\textsuperscript{57} That these metaphors are not merely neutral ornamentation but instead conceptual contestation is evidenced by the evaluative inflections the metaphors transact. While the Dos Passos passage employs a performance metaphor to valorize, the Allen passage employs a performance metaphor to disparage. The analogical deployment of performance may serve to valorize persons or events by making them seem especially worthy of an audience's heightened attention; conversely, the analogical deployment of performance may serve to disparage phenomena either by making them seem less than true (e.g., "My students know how to perform political correctness") or larger than life (e.g., "He made a spectacle of himself").

Thus far, I have outlined a framework for investigating performance contestation that involves analysis of a cultural performance's direction of effectivity, modes of effectivity, and spheres of contestation. Rather than focusing on cultural performances as a works of art, the proposed framework highlights the sociopolitical work of cultural performances. A general principle undergirding the entire framework is that cultural performances make things happen that would not have happened in that way, to that extent,

\textsuperscript{57} Frederick Lewis Allen, \textit{Since Yesterday} (New York: Bantam, 1961) 102.
in that place, at that time, or among those persons had the cultural performances not occurred. Investigating the direction of effectivity focuses the researcher's attention on whether a cultural performance moves the social formation toward a further entrenchment of status quo values and relations of power (i.e., ideological performance) or whether the cultural performance moves the social formation toward a loosening of status quo values and a redistribution of status quo relations of power (i.e., resistant performance). Investigating the mode of effectivity focuses the researcher's attention on the particular strategies through which the cultural performance transacts the directional movement. And investigating the spheres of contestation focuses the researcher's attention on the site at which the strategies are operationalized, whether textual, spatial, or conceptual. Together, the above three areas of inquiry provide a general framework for analyzing how cultural performances instantiate contestation.

Cultural performances, however, not only instantiate contestation. They also and at the same time negotiate community. That contestation and community are interdependent rather than oppositional has been suggested by numerous theorists including Kenneth Burke. Consider, for example, the following passage:
The *Rhetoric* must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the War of Nerves, the War. It too has its peaceful moments: at times its endless competition can add up to the transcending of itself. In ways of its own, it can move from the factional to the universal. But its ideal culminations are more often beset by strife as the condition of their organized expression, or material embodiment. Their very universality becomes transformed into a partisan weapon. For one need not scrutinize the concept of "identification" very sharply to see, implied in it at every turn, its ironic counterpart: division.\(^5\)\(^8\)

Thus far, I have focused on the centrifugal, divisive, contestatory dimensions of cultural performances. In the section that follows, I focus on the centripetal, solidifying, communal dimensions of cultural performance.

Cultural Performance and Community

Cultural performances negotiate community through a process of internal and external articulation. Cultural performances externally articulate community by constructing, maintaining, or reforming the boundary between community and other, insider and outsider, "us" and "them." Cultural performances internally articulate community by constructing, maintaining, or reforming the relationships among a community’s members.

The distinction between the external and the internal articulation of community is analogous to the distinction between a nation and its states. Just as national boundaries establish the parameters of a country that may then be further subdivided into smaller states possessing their own boundaries, so also the external articulation of community establishes the parameters of a community as a whole, while the internal articulation of community establishes that whole as comprised of manifold parts.

While the state-nation analogy clarifies the fundamental nature of the internal and external articulation of community, the fixed nature of most state and national boundaries may be misleading. The boundaries established by the internal and external articulation of community tend to be less rigidly established, though the degree of flexibility varies considerably. Moreover, while it is unusual for a person to be in two nations at once, it is not at all unusual for a person simultaneously to be a member of a several communities. For example, I am simultaneously a member of the academic community known as St. Lawrence University and the academic community known as the Speech Communication Association. Likewise, while it is unusual for a person to be in two states at once, it is not at all unusual for a person simultaneously to occupy multiple internally articulated positions within a community. For example, within the St. Lawrence
University community, I occupy several internally articulated positions: speech and theatre faculty, first year program faculty, member of the cultural affairs council, member of the St. Lawrence University Festival of the Arts planning committee, and forensics advisor.

While individuals often belong to multiple externally articulated communities, these communities are not equally valued. Even though I am a member of several communities, the intensity with which I approach these communities, the significance that I attach to these communities, and the psychic and social energy that I expend maintaining these communities varies. Furthermore, over time, the position of a particular community within this hierarchy of communities changes.

The same sort of temporally fluid hierarchy applies at the level of the internal articulation of community. Just as I attach different values to the different communities to which I am a member, so also I attach variable values to the multiple positions I assume within those communities. Further, just as the externally articulated communities to which I am a member move up and down the hierarchy over time, so also with the various internally articulated positions within a community.

When a social drama occurs within or between communities, certain of the multiple communities or positions within a community are highlighted by the
crisis, imbued with a heightened intensity. Participants in social dramas tend to distinguish between Us and Them, Inside and Outside, Ally and Opposition on the basis of the particular external articulation of community or internal articulation of a position within a community that has been highlighted by the conflict that ushered in the social drama. Usually though not always, a social drama involves two populations, with each population positing and arguing for its own particular construal of community, its own manner of determining insider and outsider status.

Understanding how cultural performances in social dramas participate in the process of community formation, transformation, and maintenance involves at least two levels of analysis: (1) analysis of the representation(s) of community inscribed within the cultural performances themselves, and (2) analysis of how relationships among members of a community and between members of different communities are enacted in the very process by which persons gather together to witness or participate in cultural performances.

In Communication as Culture, James W. Carey distinguishes between a transmission view of communication and a ritual view of communication.59 When a

communication is linked to terms such as "imparting," "sending," and "giving information"; however, when a ritual view of communication is operative, communication is linked to terms such as "sharing," "participation," and "association."

An analogous distinction can be made with regard to the views of performance adopted by performance scholars. Scholars employing a transmission view of performance focus on the circulation of texts in performance, while scholars employing a ritual view of performance focus on the circulation of texts in and as a result of performance. Scholars employing a transmission view of performance conceive of performance as a symbolic process whereby texts are enacted; scholars employing a ritual view of performance tend to conceive of performance as a symbolic process whereby social relations are produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed.

Scholars employing a transmission view of performance and scholars employing a ritual view of performance do not necessarily examine different performance phenomena, but they do tend to ask questions that highlight different aspects of the performance phenomena. Scholars employing

a transmission view of performance tend to ask questions that highlight those aspects that Schechner has identified as drama, script, and theatre. These refer respectively to the written text or score, the interior map or production or concept, and the event actually enacted by a specific group of performers.\textsuperscript{61} Scholars employing a ritual view of performance tend to ask questions that highlight that level that Schechner terms "performance": "the whole constellation of events, most of them passing unnoticed, that take place in/among both performers and audience."\textsuperscript{62}

As I noted earlier, understanding how cultural performances in social dramas participate in the process of community formation, transformation, and maintenance involves at least two levels of analysis: (1) analysis of the representation(s) of community inscribed within the cultural performances themselves, and (2) analysis of the relationships enacted in the very process by which persons gather together to witness or participate in cultural performances. The former focuses on those levels Schechner identifies as drama, script, and theatre and essentially involves adopting a transmission view of performance. The latter focuses on that level Schechner identifies as performance and essentially involves

\textsuperscript{61} Schechner 72.

\textsuperscript{62} Schechner 72.
adopting a ritual view of performance. I refer to these two levels respectively as analysis of inscribed community and analysis of enacted community.

Inscribed Community

Cultural performances inscribe community by putting into circulation particular construals of community, by pretending either to hold a mirror up to a community so that it can see itself or by pretending to open a window revealing an other or others or the Other that the community is not. Cultural performances may inscribe a community's self-image, an image of the community's other, or some combination of the two. Cultural performances that inscribe community suggest, imply, or represent the use of particular criteria for determining inclusion in and exclusion from a given community. When operationalized, these criteria of inclusion and exclusion reveal who is "inside" and who is "outside" a community, who "we" are and who "they" are.

Cultural performances may or may not inscribe community. Nonrepresentational cultural performances (such as concerts featuring instrumental music) by definition cannot represent anything, including community. Representational cultural performances (such as dance, drama, and singing), however, may or may not inscribe community. In arguing that nonrepresentational cultural
performances categorically cannot inscribe community, I am not arguing that these performances do not shape and are not shaped by communal politics. On the contrary, I believe that they do and are. My exclusion of inscribed community from nonrepresentational cultural performances is rooted in the distinction between representations of community and communities of representation. While all representations originate from within a community, circulate within and among communities, and are imbued with meaning and value on the basis of patterns of sense-making and evaluation operative within the community of which the percipient is a member, not all representations are representations of a community or of communities.

Analysis of inscribed community cannot proceed without an initial construal of community that sets forth its minimal features. Without this initial construal, it is impossible to determine whether a given representation is, in fact, a representation of community. The danger associated with choosing a particular initial construal of community is that in the very process of making this choice I might foreclose on the object of investigation. This danger is not so much regrettable as unavoidable. The enabling definition I assign to community necessarily determines which representations are viewed as representations of community and consequently become the objects of investigation from which I draw conclusions.
The advantage of the analytical framework I am proposing is not so much that it avoids the problem of deciding on an initial construal of community as that it recognizes that choosing a particular initial construal is, in fact, an issue.

The initial construal of community I employ is that set forth by David Clark in "The Concept of Community: A Re-examination." According to Clark, "the two fundamental communal elements of any social system are a sense of solidarity and a sense of significance." Clark refers to the first of these as a sense of "we-feeling" and the second as a sense of "role-feeling."

I employ Clark's construal of community as my starting point for a number of reasons. One reason is that an analogy can be drawn between Clark's we-feeling/role-feeling and my own external/internal articulation of community. While we-feeling and the external articulation of community center on how categories such as inside and outside, self and other, and us and them are established, maintained, and transformed, role-feeling and the internal articulation of community center on how specialized roles and subgroupings within a community are established, maintained, and transformed.

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64 Clark 404.
A second reason that I employ Clark's construal of community is that it is in accord with Mary Douglas' grid-group theory. According to Douglas, all social environments can be described as either high or low grid and either high or low group. In a high grid social environment, "an explicit set of institutionalized classifications keeps them [persons] apart and regulates their interactions, restricting their options." In a low grid social environment, abstract principles and unstated rules replace explicit institutionalized classifications as the mode of regulating social transactions among individuals. Douglas distinguishes between high and low group social environments in the following passage:

For scoring the array of environments for group strength, the investigator needs to consider how much of the individual's life is absorbed in and sustained by group membership. If he spends the morning in one, the evening in another, appears on Sundays in a third, gets his livelihood in a fourth, his group score is not going to be high. The strongest effects of group are to be found where it incorporates a person with the rest by implicating them together in common residence, shared work, shared resources and recreation, and by exerting control over marriage and kinship.

On the basis of the classification of social environments as high or low grid and high or low group, Douglas posits four basic types of social environments: high grid, high

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65 Mary Douglas, In the Active Voice (Boston: Routledge, 1982) 192.
group; high grid, low group; low grid, high group; and low grid, low group. As is probably clear, Clark's role-feeling corresponds to Douglas' grid, and his we-feeling corresponds to her group.

In addition to the theoretical support Clark's definition gains by its conceptual fit with Douglas' grid-group theory, another reason I chose to employ Clark's definition is its breadth. Clark's construal is broad enough to contain a wide variety of competing construals of community. Clark's essay was written as a follow up to and extension of Hillery's 1954 recognition of ninety-four different construals of community. While Hillery's purpose was to document conceptual diversity in order to point out the poverty of the concept in sociological investigations, Clark's purpose is to recognize the minimal features of a community, those features that run throughout all or most of the various competing construals and to which other features, particular to more specific construals of community, are added. Moreover, as I noted in the previous chapter, for most persons, community is not so much conceptually problematic (i.e., what constitutes community) as operationally contested (i.e.,

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67 Douglas 205-208. Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky summarize and expand on Douglas' grid-group theory, adding a fifth type of social environment that is essentially an asocial environment. They refer to this fifth type as "autonomy" and cite the hermit as its exemplar (Cultural Theory [San Francisco: Westview, 1990] 8).
to which of the myriad complementary and competing communities do I/should I belong, what does it mean to be a member of this/these communities, what does this membership entail?). Clark's definition of community is broad enough to enable the investigation of conceptual as well as operational diversity.

Cultural performances may inscribe an image of a community or an image of a community's Other or some combination of the two. Moreover, the inscribed representation may circulate an image of what the community or its Other was, is, will be, might be, or should become. In short, inscriptions of community in cultural performances may either describe or prescribe, focusing either on the past, the present, or the future.

Richard Bauman uses the phrase "the emergent quality of performance" to describe the transformative potential of cultural performances. According to Bauman, the emergent quality of performance operates at three levels: text, event, and social structures. The foregoing section focused on the first level, the emergence of images of community in the texts of cultural performances. The following section focuses on the second level, the emergence of communal relationships in cultural performances as events.

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Enacted Community

Analysis of enacted community involves examining the ways in which relationships among members of a community and between members of different communities are enacted in the very process by which persons gather together to witness or participate in cultural performances. Analysis of enacted community is essentially a matter of probing the communal relationships among the performers, among the audience members, and between performers who are communally related to one another in a particular fashion and audience members who are communally related to one another in a particular fashion. In order to facilitate analysis of the above mentioned relationships, I propose a variety of critical distinctions.

With regard to the relationship among performers, a number of possibilities exist, depending on whether the performers are drawn from different communities or the same community and, if they are drawn from the same community, whether they are drawn from the same or different segments of that community. (See Figure 2.1) When performers are drawn from different communities, the communal relationship among the performers may be described as externally heterogeneous. When performers are drawn from the same community, the communal relationship among the performers may be described as either internally homogeneous or internally heterogeneous,
The Communal Relationship Among Performers May Be:

- Externally Heterogeneous (Performers are drawn from different communities)
- Externally Homogeneous (Performers are drawn from the same community)

Performers drawn from the same community may be:

- Internally Heterogeneous (Performers are drawn from different segments of the community)
- Internally Homogenous (Performers are drawn from the same segment of the community)

Figure 2.1
Communal Relationships Among Performers
depending on whether the performers are drawn from the same or different segments of that community. For example, when a group of sitdown strikers at the Fisher Body No. 1 plant in Flint, Michigan, formed a sitdown orchestra, the communal relationship among these performers was internally homogeneous. The performers were not only drawn from the same community (i.e., the strike community), they were also members of the same segment of that community (i.e., UAWA members sitting down inside the plants). However, when the Women's Emergency Brigade—a group of strikers' wives, mothers, and sisters—visited the plants to sing along with the sitdown orchestra, the communal relationship among the performers was internally heterogeneous, with the performers drawn from different segments of the more encompassing community.

A similar set of distinctions can be used to describe the communal relations among audience members. (See Figure 2.2) In some cultural performances, audience members are drawn from different communities. The communal relationship among audience members for a cultural performance of this variety can be described as externally heterogeneous. Other cultural performances, however, possess audiences comprised entirely of persons drawn from within a single community. Cultural performances of this variety may be described as either
The Communal Relationship Among Audience Members May Be:

Externally Heterogeneous
(Audience members are drawn from different communities)

Externally Homogeneous
(Audience members are drawn from the same community)

When audience members are drawn from the same community, they may be:

Internally Heterogeneous
(Audience members are drawn from different segments of the community)

Internally Homogeneous
(Audience members are drawn from the same segments of the community)

Figure 2.2
Communal Relationships Among Audience Members
internally homogeneous or internally heterogeneous with regard to their audience, depending on whether or not the spectators are drawn from the same or different segments of the encompassing community. For example, when the sitdown orchestra described above first began performing, their audience consisted solely of other sitdown strikers within the struck plants, and, accordingly, the communal relationship among audience members was internally homogeneous. However, when the sitdown orchestra began piping its performances to outside pickets via a loudspeaker system, the communal relationship among audience members was transformed from internally homogeneous to internally heterogeneous.

From a given spectator's point of view, a performance may be either indigenous, exogenous, or mixed, and if the performance is mixed, it may be either simultaneous or reciprocal. (See Figure 2.3) A performance is indigenous for a spectator if all the performers are drawn from the same community as the spectator. A performance is exogenous if all the performers are drawn from a community of which the spectator is not a member. And a performance is mixed if some of the performers are drawn from a community to which the spectator belongs while others are not.

Moreover, mixed performances may assume one of two forms or some combination of the two forms. The two basic
When Community Is Externally Articulated
A Performance May Be:

I. Indigenous
(a spectator from one externally articulated community watches a performer or performers from the same externally articulated community)

II. Exogenous
(a spectator from one externally articulated community watches a performer or performers from another externally articulated community or from other externally articulated communities)

III. Mixed
A. Simultaneous
(performers, some of whom are drawn from the same externally articulated community as the spectator, perform together)

B. Reciprocal
(performers, some of whom are drawn from the same segments of the community as the spectator, perform alternately)

When Community Is Internally Articulated
A Performance May Be:

I.A. Indigenous
(a spectator from one internally articulated segment of a community watches a performer or performers from the same internally articulated segment of the community perform)

I.B. Exogenous
(a spectator from one internally articulated segment of a community watches a performer or performers from another internally articulated segment of the same community perform)

I.C. Mixed
I.C.1. Simultaneous
(performers, drawn from both the same and different segments of the community as the spectator, perform together)

I.C.2. Reciprocal
(performers, drawn from both the same and different segments of the community as the spectator, perform alternately)

Figure 2.3
Types of Performances from a Spectator’s Point of View
The two basic forms of mixed performances are simultaneous mixed performances and reciprocal mixed performances. In mixed performances of the simultaneous variety, performers (some of whom are drawn from the same community as the spectator and some of whom are drawn from a different community or different communities) perform together. In mixed performances of the reciprocal variety, the performers (some of whom are drawn from the same community as the spectator and some of whom are drawn from a different community or from different communities) perform alternately. The difference between simultaneous and reciprocal performances is essentially the difference between performing together and taking turns performing. While both simultaneous and reciprocal performances involve bringing different communities together, the manner of interaction once the different groups are brought together varies considerably.69

69 Detractors might argue that because the classificatory system I propose here requires specifying a particular spectator position and because multiple spectator positions exist for most performances, a single performance could be described variously as either indigenous, exogenous, simultaneous, or reciprocal. My response is: "Yes, exactly, and that is the value of the analytical framework I am proposing." Performances are not the same for all spectators. Just as reader-response criticism has taught us that the same text means differently for different persons, so too, I am arguing, that different performances instantiate different communal relationships for different audience members. Cultural performances not only mean differently for different spectators, they are also experienced differently. A performance that is indigenous from one spectator position may be exogenous from another. The analytical framework I
The distinctions I have been positing between indigenous, exogenous, simultaneous, and reciprocal performance at the level of the external articulation of community (i.e., whether the performers are from the same or a different community than the spectator) may also be employed at the level of the internal articulation of community (i.e., whether the performers are from the same segment of the community as is the spectator or from a different segment of the same community). When a spectator from one community witnesses other members of the same community perform, the performance may be described as either internally indigenous, internally exogenous, internally simultaneous, or internally reciprocal. The performance is internally indigenous if a spectator from one segment of a community witnesses other members of the same segment of a community perform. The performance is internally exogenous if a spectator from one segment of a community witnesses members of another segment of the same community perform. The performance is internally mixed if a spectator from one segment of a community witnesses a performance by a group of performers, some of whom are drawn from the same segment of the community as the spectator and some of whom are drawn from different segments of that community.

I am proposing invites analysis of the multiple perspectives audience members bring to bear on a single performance rather than masking these differences.
An internally mixed performance, moreover, may operate either simultaneously or reciprocally. The internally mixed performance operates simultaneously if the performers from the different segments of the population perform together. The internally mixed performance operates reciprocally if the performers from the different segments of the community perform alternately.

Having set forth the above framework for describing enacted communal relationships, a number of caveats are in order. First, the degree to which a community is internally articulated varies. While some communities exhibit a high degree of internal articulation (i.e., organization into subgroups or segments), others do not. Moreover, the degree to which a particular community is internally articulated may vary over time. Second, the distinction between simultaneous and reciprocal varieties of performance is not always unequivocally given. For example, whether a presidential debate represents a simultaneous or reciprocal performance cannot be determined absolutely. While the candidates together perform the debate (simultaneous performance), the way in which they do so often involves taking turns performing (reciprocal performance). Third, the distinction between performer and spectator, likewise, is not always unequivocally established in a cultural performance.
While some cultural performances, such as a traditional staging of a scripted drama, clearly differentiate performers from spectators, other cultural performances, such as a political demonstration, frequently blur this boundary. After all, it is not uncommon for a participant in a political demonstration to function simultaneously as an observing spectator and an observed performer. Furthermore, over the course of a given cultural performance, persons who had once functioned as spectators may be enticed to assume performance roles. Fourth, no necessary connection exists between the direction of effectivity of the cultural performance (whether ideological or resistant) and the communal relationships among performers, among audience members, or between a particular audience member and the performers. Just as the various symbolic modes of effectivity described earlier (e.g., legitimation, dissimulation, re-citation) may operationalize either an ideological or resistant direction of effectivity depending on the particular use to which they are put, so the various communal relationships I have just outlined also may operationalize either an ideological or resistant direction of effectivity.

In the previous chapter, I identified several limitations associated with extant performance studies
scholarship. The analytical framework proposed in this chapter, rooted as it is in an agonistic view of performance as simultaneously and inherently divisive and communal, promises a number of advances for performance studies scholarship.

First, by shifting the ground from performance as aesthetic communication to performance as sociopolitical act, the framework proposed in this chapter works against the biases of an evaluative view of culture. While a view of performance as aesthetic communication does not necessarily entail adopting an evaluative view of culture, the very use of the term "aesthetic," I contend, carries with it a great deal of baggage, including Immanuel Kant's notion of "disinterestedness" and Matthew Arnold's universal cultural treasure trove. The agonistic view of performance advanced in this chapter does not deny that performances may possess aesthetic qualities, but it does not view performance exclusively or even primarily as an aesthetic phenomena. Furthermore, it suggests that aesthetic qualities are not so much universally given and agreed upon as culturally relative and contested. Adopting an agonistic view of performance does not foreclose the investigation of performance in aesthetic terms, but it does problematize such an investigation.

Second, the agonistic framework aims at detailed description rather than moralizing prescription. Just as
the agonistic framework denies the existence of any universally accepted aesthetic qualities, so also it denies the legitimacy of maintaining that a dialogical relationship between performer and role represents a universally ideal performance stance. Rather than beginning with a moral imperative and investigating whether a given performance or group of performances conforms to that dictum, the agonistic framework investigates how performances embody moral imperatives and how performances that enact conflicting and sometimes mutually exclusive moral imperatives compete with one another.

Third, the agonistic view of performance avoids the tendency to view performance as representing conflict rather than engaged in conflict. The framework for analyzing performance advanced in this chapter recognizes that performances represent conflict but goes on to insist that, to the extent that the same conflict can be represented in different ways and for different purposes, the representation of conflict is itself conflictual. Or, to put the matter differently, performances leak, and, as a result, that which is inscribed in performances—including conflict—does not remain on the stage but rather seeps into the house, into the lobby, into the streets, and into the more encompassing culture in which the performance occurs.
Fourth, by recognizing that performances may realize either an ideological or resistant direction of effectivity, the agonistic view of performance avoids the tendency to view performance as occasionally rather than essentially contestatory. Unlike some strains of contemporary performance scholarship that view only performances that work against the grain of the status quo as contestatory, the agonistic view of performance recognizes that the status quo does not passively maintain itself but instead is actively maintained by agents whose interests are served by the status quo distribution of power. Just as performances that attempt to foment social change oppose the hegemonic normalizing and naturalizing of the status quo, so also performances that attempt to maintain and solidify the status quo oppose those social forces intent on upsetting or at least unsettling status quo relations of power.

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, the framework for analyzing performance outlined in this chapter offers scholars a concrete topoi for particularizing the product-producer/culture-performance dialectic popularized by new historicists. Arguing that performances are simultaneously a product of the culture out of which they emerge and the producers of the very culture in which they participate is no longer in itself sufficient. If the product-producer dialectic is to continue to offer
significant and exciting insights in performance scholarship, it needs to be particularized. It is no longer enough, I contend, for performance scholars to maintain that performances are shaped by and shape social contexts. Instead, we need to engage in micro-analyses geared toward uncovering the specific modalities through which the culture-performance dialectic operates in particular performances. The frameworks proposed in this chapter for analyzing how performances instantiate contestation and how performances negotiate community will help performance scholars to particularize the culture-performance dialectic.
CHAPTER THREE:
LEGISLATIVE STRIP TEASE

When the New Jersey State Legislature reconvened on April 20, 1936, after a three-day recess, the state government had run out of relief appropriations and turned relief back over to the local governments, most of which were in no better financial shape. David Lasser, spokesperson for the Workers' Alliance of America (WAA), an organization of unemployed and relief workers, warned legislators that "they were sitting on a volcano," threatened that "tens of thousands will camp at the State House if something is not done about the relief situation," and argued that if the legislators could not find a solution to the relief crisis, they should resign and let others take their places.1 This suggestion drew cheers from Alliance members seated in the gallery. The following afternoon, Roy Cooke--state chairman of the Workers' Alliance of New Jersey, secretary-treasurer of the Workers' Alliance of America, and unemployed vaudeville actor2--addressed the assemblymen:

"Appropriate two million dollars at once. If you don't,

we'll give you a real demonstration and right soon."³

Two hours into the session, having taken no action on the relief issue, the Assembly voted to recess until Monday, April 27. As House Speaker Marcus Newcomb banged his gavel, Ray Cooke and nineteen other Alliance members moved to the floor of the legislative chamber and slipped quietly into the Assemblymen's seats, announcing their intention to occupy the chamber until the legislators reconvened to act on the relief crisis. Thus began what would during the next nine days be referred to variously as a "mock assembly," the "jobless assembly," and a "pauper's parliament."⁴

Word of the occupation quickly spread, and within hours, fifty of the sixty seats in the Assembly were occupied.⁵ Members of the Women's Auxiliary of the WAA brought in donated food and tobacco, transforming the


⁵ "Jobless Begin Capitol Siege," Trenton State Gazette 22 April 1936: 1.
Speaker’s table into a makeshift cafeteria. At the legislators’ desks, piled with lawbooks and prospective bills, the unemployed and relief workers ate, dozed, read, played cards, and talked politics. As night approached, only two bulbs in the press boxes at the rear of the chamber illuminated the scene, and after sitting in the near dark for two hours, the beleaguered occupants petitioned the State House Police Chief for additional light. At 8:30, four bulbs in the huge overhead chandelier were lit.

Having been granted illumination, John Spain marched to the front of the chamber, sat down in the Speaker’s seat, picked up and banged the Speaker’s gavel, and announced that the House was in session. In response, some of those positioned in the House leaned back, put their feet on the desks, and began puffing imaginary cigars and reading newspapers—as one source put it, “as indifferent to what was going on in the House as true gentlemen of the Assembly.” Spain responded to their impersonation:

I’m glad to see that some of us know how real legislators act, but this is at present, an Assembly of the Workers’ Alliance, not the gathering of the...
bunch of miserable buffoons that you usually witness in this building. So let's show whoever's watching that we know how to conduct ourselves in a way the gentlemen of the Assembly don't know how to do, like decent people, like workers. . . . It is up to us . . . to show the state that there are people who can sit in this building and legislate honestly and intelligently—even though it's never been done before. Let's make the people of this state recognize what kind of people they have elected here by showing them what kind of people they should have elected.  

Alliance members sat up, removed their feet from the desks, and put away their newspapers. For several hours, bills that had been considered by the New Jersey legislators were reconsidered by those now occupying the chamber. After debating and defeating a proposed sales tax on the ground that it taxed the very persons it was designed to aid, the would-be legislative exemplars passed an income tax and corporate tax bill, as well as a resolution limiting the work week to a maximum thirty hours.  

Having depicted their ideal legislature, Speaker Spain directed those gathered in the Assembly to shift to a depiction of the actual legislature. Alliance members donned Harvard accents, used a vocabulary so pompous that what they said seemed perfectly congruent with the way they said it, and referred to one another as "the gentleman from ______," bowing to each other as they did

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9 Breitman 15.

10 Breitman 15-16.
so. They seldom listened as others spoke but frequently posed for imaginary and real reporters in the press boxes.\textsuperscript{11} They appointed each other roles such as Majority Leader Lawrence Cavinato, Speaker of the House Marcus Newcomb, and Minority Leader Grant Scott. At one point, Alliance member William "Schnozzle" Schroeder rolled a cigarette while imitating the oratory of actual Majority Leader Lawrence Cavinato. In the midst of his impersonation, he paused, momentarily stepping out of the Cavinato role to critique his own performance.

"Something's wrong here," he noted. "The Majority Leader should use tailor-made cigarettes."\textsuperscript{12}

After settling on their roles, the members proposed and debated resolutions, passing one bill that doubled their salary and another that turned "the Delaware and Raritan Canal over to the relief clients, letting them catch fish for their meals."\textsuperscript{13} In the course of consideration of the first of these bills, John Spain, acting as Speaker of the Assembly Marcus Newcomb, looked up to the gallery where just hours before he and his cohorts had sat and warned imaginary WAA members: "Any

\textsuperscript{11} Breitman 17-18.


\textsuperscript{13} Breitman 18-19.
more demonstrations, and the sergeant-at-arms will have to clear the gallery."\textsuperscript{14}

While performing consideration of the canal bill (the let-them-catch-fish bill), the following interchange apparently ridiculing the parliamentary form of discussion transpired:

1: Will the gentleman from Burlington submit to a question?\textsuperscript{1}
Speaker: Will the gentleman from Burlington submit to a question?
2: I will if it's not too technical.
Speaker: He will if it's not too technical.
1: Isn't it true that you have a brother-in-law who is third vice-president of a fishing supply company?
2: Mr. Speaker! I have never been so insulted in all my life! . . . He can't insinuate that I am personally interested in seeing this bill passed! . . . He can't insinuate that I am interested in anything that goes on in this place! And now will the gentleman from Hunterdon submit to a question?
Speaker: Will the gentleman from Hunterdon submit to a question?
1: I will.
Speaker: He will.
2: Are you a citizen?\textsuperscript{15}

In addition to targeting the parliamentary form, in the course of debating the canal bill, the demonstrators repeatedly articulated their take on the actual legislators' take on themselves (i.e., the unemployed and relief recipients). One demonstrator-as-legislator, arguing against turning the canal over to the unemployed,

\textsuperscript{14} Breitman 17-18.

\textsuperscript{15} Breitman 20. Breitman's account of this interchange is written in the epic mode; the transformation into the dramatic mode is my own.
warned: "They won't appreciate it if you give them so much. It'll make them lazy and shiftless." Another demonstrator-as-legislator echoed this sentiment: "Give them a fingernail and they'll want your arm up to your shoulder. We must teach them to rely on themselves."\(^{16}\)

The shifting back and forth among the postures delineated above continued through the night. By Wednesday morning, the number of protestors outnumbered the Assembly seats and the arrival of entire families necessitated that some protestors take up positions in the gallery, as well as that a second sergeant-at-arms be assigned.\(^{17}\) One local newspaper reported that throughout Wednesday "State House officials straggled in to watch what they called 'the show'" and that one spectator--an unnamed legislator who slipped into the gallery--assessed the scene as follows: "These are not the really hungry people. These are agitators and should go out and go to work."\(^{18}\) Although the governor met with Alliance representatives for two hours Wednesday afternoon, no action was taken to redress the relief crisis. Interest in the insurgent assembly did not slacken, however, and that evening some 250 persons were present, most of them

\(^{16}\) Breitman 19.

\(^{17}\) "Jobless Invasion," *Time* 4 May 1936: 16.

\(^{18}\) "Governor Refuses" 1.
as spectators watching the events in the chamber from the gallery.

Thursday brought fresh drama to the demonstration. A civil service exam had been scheduled for the assembly chambers, and after State House officials attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the squatters to take up residence temporarily in one of the committee rooms, a compromise was reached. Demonstrators were granted use of the Senate chambers for the day with the understanding that after the civil service exam was completed, they would be free to return to the Assembly chamber.\(^{19}\) The change of venue resulted in changes in the number and names of the dramatis personae, as well as in deportment. The New York Times reported that

"Speaker" Spain of the Assembly became "Mr. President" and the session was called to order. . . . The meeting, in keeping with its new surroundings, was carried on with more decorum than in the Assembly. Since the Senate has only twenty members, all but twenty of the group took their places in the gallery to act as spectators and applaud.\(^{20}\)

The session began with the demonstrators burlesquing the real Senators. Impersonating the actual Senators, they reconsidered a bill that had been debated and defeated the week before that would have cut their salaries in half. Urging that the bill be passed, one "Senator" contended,

\(^{19}\) "Senate Balks as House Gets Call to Meet on Relief Snarl," Trenton Evening News 23 April 1936: 2.

\(^{20}\) Lyman, "Jersey Assembly Heeds Relief Call" 6.
"It'll look as though we're trying to help out in the crisis, and that'll make us go over great with the relief clients." When the demonstrators shifted performance postures--enacting ideal legislators--they continued to consider bills actually proposed by the real Senators, passing a five million dollar emergency appropriation bill (by the margin of 24 to 0 despite the presence of only 20 "Senators").

By Friday morning, the demonstrators were once again in the assembly chamber, alternately enacting actual and ideal legislators, and the day appears to have been relatively uneventful. On Saturday, the governor released a statement justifying his refusal to approve emergency appropriations: "Already there is grave danger that the constitutional ban against creating debt has been violated. Without the vote of the people, the state has no power to borrow money or to create debts of any kind except for war purposes, to repel invasions, or to suppress insurrection." Within minutes the demonstrators passed a resolution and sent it to the governor.

Whereas, since the Governor advises that the Constitution gives him power to create indebtedness to repel invasions and insurrections:

21 Breitman 23.
22 "Senate Balks" 2.
23 Lyman, "Jobless Assembly in Trenton" 1.
Therefore be it resolved: That the group of citizens now invading the State Assembly chamber in the State House at Trenton do hereby inform the Governor of the state of New Jersey that an insurrection is in progress against the State legislature for failure to provide relief funds.\textsuperscript{24}

Those opposed to the WAA seizure became more vociferous Saturday than they had been earlier in the week. Assemblyman Horace Bogle told the press he had proof that the demonstrators were not actually unemployed but were instead being paid $4.50 for each day they participated in the demonstration.\textsuperscript{25} Assemblyman J. Parnell Thomas suggested to the governor in a telegram that the "mob of occupation [was] under Communist leaders" and that "the present show at the State House is being deliberately staged to build a case for new taxes." The telegram concluded with: "If you don't care to exercise your authority [i.e., have state police clear the demonstrators out of the chambers], I then suggest you feed the crowd caviar and chocolate eclairs."\textsuperscript{26} Upon hearing of Thomas' telegram, the eclair motif was picked up by the demonstrators themselves who passed a resolution challenging Thomas to select any of the demonstrators

\textsuperscript{24} Lyman, "Jobless Assembly in Trenton" 1.

\textsuperscript{25} "Mercenary Crusaders?" \textit{Trenton State Gazette} 26 April 1936: 6; "Unemployed Groups Mobilize for March on State Capitol," \textit{Trenton Evening Times} 27 April 1936: 2.

\textsuperscript{26} Lyman, "Jobless Assembly in Trenton" 1; "Legislative Tax Action Compelled by Campers," \textit{Sunday Times Advertiser} 26 April 1936: 1.
above the age of three for a fight to the finish with cream puffs.\textsuperscript{27}

That evening, Trenton residents appear to have had an unforeseen theatre offering. One local newspaper reports:

For several hours, curious spectators, some of them in evening clothes, watched the members enact parliamentary scenes. . . . As the hour approached midnight, the crowd of spectators increased. They stood behind the glass barricade, their faces pressed tightly against the glazed surface, watching with intense interest the antics of the "legislators."\textsuperscript{28}

Sunday, after being compared to "good samaritans" in a sermon by a local clergyman,\textsuperscript{29} the demonstrators returned to their legislative duties. One of the more interesting resolutions of the day appropriated a thousand dollars "to permit Governor Harold G. Hoffman and Mayor Frank Hague of Jersey City to go to Alaska and survey the Alaskan salmon, its life, loves and tax problems, so the New Jersey legislature will be free to do its duty without outside influence."\textsuperscript{30}

Monday evening the regular assembly was scheduled to reconvene, and the demonstrators spent much of that day negotiating whether they would leave the chamber, whether

\textsuperscript{27} Breitman 28.

\textsuperscript{28} "Alliance Moves To Sue Thomas," \textit{Sunday Times Advertiser} 26 April 1936: 2.


\textsuperscript{30} "Unemployed Groups" 2; "See Relief Action Within Few Days," \textit{Trenton State Gazette} 27 April 1936: 3.
they would have the right to speak during the assembly session, and whether they would be allowed to return to the chamber floor after the session was completed. By Monday afternoon, Assembly Speaker Newcomb and a committee of WAA demonstrators had reached an agreement that all but five of the demonstrators would retire to the gallery, that only one of the delegation remaining on the floor would be allowed speaking privileges, and that after the session recessed the demonstrators could once again take up position in the chamber. By 4:30, all but ten of the demonstrators had moved to the gallery, and when the assembly was called to order at 7:30 between five and seven thousand persons were present in and outside the State House. The Senate was scheduled to meet at the same time, but after fifteen minutes it recessed so that the members could watch the session taking place in the Assembly.

Shortly into the Assembly session, WAA spokesperson Ray Cooke was allowed the privilege of the floor, which he used to respond to Thomas' assertion that the demonstration was being staged by Communist agitators.

33 Breitman 29.
34 Breitman 29.
His response: "I am here to say that he is a liar." \textsuperscript{35}

The Assembly's response: a gag rule. By a vote of 50-5, Cooke was denied speaking privileges. \textsuperscript{36}

Two resolutions were debated during the course of the evening. Frank Osmers put forth a resolution echoing Thomas' "they're just a bunch of Communists" and calling for a full investigation of the demonstrators' identities. \textsuperscript{37} Another legislator moved that the resolution be tabled, and the movement to table the resolution passed. The evening's second resolution was put forth by Grey Higbie:

Whereas, the Assembly Chamber . . . has for the past week been the scene of a vulgar and burlesque demonstration against the duly constituted representatives of the people of New Jersey; and
Whereas, the aforementioned Assembly Chamber exists solely for the orderly and judicial execution of State business by said duly constituted representatives; . . .

Be It Hereby Resolved: that the Governor censure those persons responsible for permitting this

\textsuperscript{35} "Jersey Assembly" 3.

\textsuperscript{36} "Jersey Jobless Again Camping at State House," \textit{Washington Post} 28 April 1936: 9.

\textsuperscript{37} The text of this resolution reads: "Whereas, the State of New Jersey has been subject to the ridicule of the entire nation by the unwarranted habitation of its legislative halls by a certain few self-styled unemployed; and . . . Whereas, there are definite indications that influences outside this State and nation are financing the activities of this group . . . Be it resolved, that the Attorney General make a full investigation of the facts and present the results of such investigation to the House of Assembly of the State of New Jersey at the earliest possible moment." \textit{Minutes of Votes and Proceedings of the One Hundred and Sixtieth General Assembly of the State of New Jersey} (Trenton: MacCrellis & Qigley, 1936) 697-98.
unwarranted insult to the dignity of this House and Sovereign State and take suitable steps to prevent a repetition of similar occurrences in the future.\^38

Although this resolution was adopted, State House police--apparently honoring the settlement agreed upon earlier--did not restrain the demonstrators from returning to the chamber floor when, after having met for only an hour, the assembly again recessed until Wednesday evening.\^39

Once back in the chamber, WAA demonstrators passed a resolution calling for the formation of a Farm-Labor party to represent the laborers' interests in the upcoming November elections.\^40 The idea of a Farm-Labor party became the keynote of the final two days of the WAA seizure. After the Wednesday evening session adjourned and the demonstrators were not permitted to return to the floor of the chamber, a final session of the insurgent assembly was held in the gallery where the following resolution was approved:

Whereas, we have held the halls of legislature for a period of nine days; and
Whereas, the regular assembly has been thoroughly exposed by the Workers Alliance as an impotent, inefficient tool of the public utilities, banks, and big industries;
Be it therefore resolved: that the Workers Alliance divorce itself entirely from the State

\^38 Minutes 698-99; "Crowd Scenes Mark Unparalleled House Session," Trenton Evening Times 28 April 1936: 12.

\^39 "Jersey Jobless" 1.

\^40 "Rumpus Kicked Up" 1.
machine of finance and capital and adjourn immediately to prepare a State machine of its own.\textsuperscript{41}

With the approval of this final resolution, the nine-day old WAA’s Insurgent Assembly came to a close.

WAA Demonstration as Performance/
Performance in the WAA Demonstration

The seizure of the State Assembly by the Workers’ Alliance functioned in at least two primary ways. First, it advertised a state of affairs (the relief crisis), and, second, it staged alternatives. In attempting to achieve these functions, two levels and three postures of performance were assumed. The two levels employed in the WAA action are framing performance and framed performances. The three postures exhibited in the framed performances are: (1) alliance members as worker-legislators considering resolutions addressing the relief crisis; (2) alliance members as worker-legislators considering resolutions addressing the actual legislators; and (3) alliance members as actual legislators.

The encompassing performance frame--the demonstration as performance--engaged Alliance members in the role of WAA representatives staging a sitdown of sorts in order to advertise the relief crisis. That protest demonstrations

in general represent a dramatic form of advertisement was suggested by Mary Heaton Vorse six years prior to the seizure: "Why is it not possible for us to understand the nature of demonstrations? While there are abuses, this primitive form of advertisement will be used. The people will continue to use their primitive right so as to dramatize their wrongs and demand redress."  

That the entire demonstration, in fact, was viewed as a performance is evident in the following newspaper excerpts:

> It is unfortunate in many ways that the members of the Assembly could not have occupied the gallery while the performance was in progress.

> The unfortunate part of it is that partisan cowardice prevents the one move that could bring an end to the present opera bouffe.

Within this encompassing frame of the demonstration as performance, three performance postures are embedded, and it is primarily—though not exclusively—at the level of the embedded performance postures that alternatives are staged.

The first embedded performance posture engaged Alliance members as ideal worker-legislators considering resolutions that addressed the relief crisis. I refer to

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this posture as demonstrative performance because it operates in the fashion of the "how-to" and the exemplary and because a tone of seriousness pervades. The core of this level is that demonstrators enact legislators who represent workers' interests and who pass resolutions that respond to the relief appropriation crisis. The resolutions that emerged while this posture was adopted followed the formal, semantic constraints ("Whereas . . . Therefore, Be It Resolved . . . ") of legislative resolutions, differing primarily in content. Given the available information, it is difficult to tell whether traditional parliamentary form of discussion was employed in debating the resolutions, and if so, how tightly or loosely it was followed. Significantly, there is no evidence suggesting that when this posture was adopted parliamentary procedures were the object of ridicule or derision.

The second and third embedded performance postures are both types of remonstrative performance. Etymologically "remonstrate" is derived from the Latin "monstrare," meaning "to point out, show." Interestingly, "monstrare" also functions as the derivative root of "monster." The second and third postures function respectively "to show" and "to point out" what the WAA perceived as a monster. In both postures the dominant
mode is ridicule, but the ridicule is transacted differently in each.

The remonstrative performance posture that shows the monster involves enacting the object of ridicule by impersonating the actual politicians who had failed to act on the relief crisis. If a tone of seriousness seems dominant in the first posture, here the mood is doubly inflected—the mood is serious but it is, more importantly, mock-serious. Here we are in the realm of phoney accents, pompous vocabularies, "the gentleman from Trenton" and "the gentleman from Hunterdon." The primary objects of ridicule in this posture are the actual legislators.

While the remonstrative posture that shows the monster involves enacting the object of ridicule, the remonstrative posture that points out the monster involves enacting the act of ridiculing. In this posture, as in the demonstrative posture, Alliance members enact the role of worker-legislators. Unlike the demonstrative posture, however, here worker-legislators do not consider resolutions responding directly to the relief crisis but instead consider resolutions responding to the actual legislators, and the dominant mood is mock-seriousness. Examples of resolutions passed while this performance posture was assumed include a resolution sending the Speaker and majority leader to Alaska so that work on the
relief crisis could be done and another resolution challenging Thomas to a duel to the death with cream puffs. Another moment in this performance posture had Helen Rosenberg suggesting that "if the Legislature convenes for four hours and then has to recess for four days, there must be something wrong with their diet." She moved that the actual legislators be served some of the workers' beans, insinuating that they were constipated, that they were, in essence, full of shit. At another point it was suggested that the legislators be fed a pail of cabbage soup. As should be obvious, many of the resolutions passed while demonstrators assumed this particular performance posture are in that common if not prestigious tradition—the _ad hominem_ attack. The foregoing sketch of the levels and postures of performance invoked during the WAA seizure indicates that the demonstrators adopted a variety of performance stances.

Communal Identity Politics

In this section, I propose to explore the ways in which the WAA seizure of the New Jersey legislative chamber participated in the negotiation of communal identity politics, first, by inscribing in performances particular construals of communal relationships and,

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45 "Governor Refuses" 1.
second, by enacting communal relationships in the very process of gathering for a performance, participating in the performance as either performer or spectator, and dispersing after the performance.

Inscribed Community

Analysis of inscribed community involves exploration of how categories such as "us" and "them," "insider" and "outsider," and "self" and "other" are deployed in cultural performances. It is important to recognize that the deployment of the above categories in WAA cultural performances represents a response to competing construals of the same categories circulated by those the WAA opposed. Accordingly, before exploring the particular configuration of "us" and "them" inscribed in WAA cultural performances, I will briefly explore how those opposed to the WAA circulated symbolic representations designed to position WAA demonstrators as Other.

Those opposed to the WAA seizure of the state house employed at least three strategies to induce New Jersey residents to view the demonstrators as Others. One such strategy centers on the representation of the demonstrators as communist agitators rather than unemployed persons in legitimate need of relief. For example, in a telegram to the Governor, one assemblyman described the demonstrators as "a mob of occupation under
Communist leaders." Similarly, a resolution proposed by another assemblyman during the Monday night session charged that "there are definite indications that influences outside of this State and nation are financing the activities of this group." A second strategy centers on the metaphoric association of demonstrators and parasites. A letter to the editor signed "Get Them Jobs" suggested that "as for the professional relief agitators and parasites, they should be taken to the country’s border lines and kicked out." Another letter to the editor argued, "I’m not classing all men out of work with the above mentioned parasites, but I do repeat that any man who spends his entire time demanding something for nothing never did a real day’s work."

A third strategy centers on the representation of demonstrators as unclean and diseased. The Trenton Evening Times, for example, reported that upon being recalled to respond to the emergency relief crisis, some of the assembly men refused to return to their positions in the state house until the assembly chamber had been

46 "Jobless Assembly" 1.
47 Minutes 697.
thoroughly swept, dusted, ventilated, and disinfected. Apparently, the WAA demonstrators (who had agreed to move into the gallery for the duration of the actual legislative session) considered making a similar demand before returning to the assembly floor after the evening legislative session.⁵⁰

Not surprisingly, the representations of categories such as "us" and "them," "insider" and "outsider," and "ally" and "opposition" inscribed in WAA cultural performances differed markedly from those circulated by their opponents. Just as the actual legislators situated themselves as the "duly constituted representatives" of the people of New Jersey and vilified the WAA demonstrators as unclean, potentially disease-ridden, parasitic communists, so also WAA demonstrators situated themselves as champions of the common man and vilified the actual legislators as political insiders who by virtue of their "insider" status were "outsiders" to the community of the ordinary citizens.

Cultural performances staged by WAA demonstrators redefined the relationship between extant political parties, construing the relationship between Democrats and Republicans as one of complicitousness rather than opposition. Instead of positioning Democrats and

Republicans as each other's Other, WAA demonstrators repeatedly employed cultural performances to argue that the parties are not each other's Other but rather Other to the people of New Jersey--particularly, though not exclusively, to New Jersey's unemployed and relief workers.

Spain initiated this argument in his opening statements on the first night of the demonstration when he described the relief crisis as "something our predecessors have played around with for months, and something they have made no real effort to solve because it wasn't in their best interest to solve it." Breitman underscores the existence of a shared interest uniting Democrats and Republicans:

They weren't seeking a method of providing funds to feed the hungry, they were seeking a method of being re-elected. And the best way to do that, they figured, was to lay low and keep on doing what they had been doing . . . nothing. So they brought up a luxury tax bill . . . and debated over it very loudly and made it look very important and they frowned very seriously as they talked about it and then let it go to the Senate and the Senate defeated it, and they adjourned for five days and went home to "rest up." When "Speaker" Spain requested that the demonstrators role-play the actual legislators, the demonstrators immediately divided into factions and factions within factions. As performed by the Alliance members, however,

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51 Breitman 15.
52 Breitman 10.
these factions were less the outcome of real differences than the means for realizing the shared goal of postponing legislative action on the relief crisis until after the election. The supposed alterity of Democrats with regard to Republicans and of Republicans with regard to Democrats was inscribed within WAA cultural performances as a deceptive performance purposefully engaged in by legislators from both parties in order to mask their more fundamental commonality.

A second operation occurring at the level of inscribed representations of communal politics centers on the way that WAA cultural performances construed the relationship between WAA members and the legislative vocation. Initial WAA cultural performances presented the very category of assemblymen as necessarily Other. While from the beginning WAA members inscribed images of ideal legislators as well as images of actual legislators, both categories of legislators were presented as essentially Other. The actual legislators were Assemblymen-Others who failed to represent the interests of unemployed and relief workers, and the ideal legislators were Assemblymen-Others who would represent the interests of the unemployed and relief workers. During the course of the nine-day occupation of the state house, however, a gradual shift occurred such that by the end of the demonstration the position of assemblyman was no longer inherently defined
as the Alliance's Other but was instead the goal toward which the Alliance aspired. The focus in the final few days of the demonstration on the formation of a Farm-Labor party was instrumental in ushering in this shift. By the end of the demonstration, WAA members are suggesting that the role of legislator is not necessarily Other and that they (the demonstrators) will form a Farm Labor party in order to wrest control of the legislature from the incumbent assemblymen, the true Others.

Enacted Community

Analysis of enacted community involves examination of how relationships among members of a community and between members of different communities are enacted in the very process by which persons gather together to witness or participate in cultural performances. Given, first, that analysis of enacted community is essentially a matter of probing communal relationships among performers, among audience members, and between performers and audience members and, second, that performers and audiences underwent frequent changes throughout the nine-day WAA demonstration, I will focus on a few specific cultural performances staged within the more encompassing social drama rather than attempt to generalize about the communal relationships enacted throughout the entire social drama.
In order to provide a context for subsequent WAA mock legislative sessions, I will begin by very briefly analyzing communal relationships as enacted in the final, Tuesday afternoon session prior to the beginning of the WAA demonstration. Because all of the performers were drawn from the community of elected assemblymen, the communal relationship adhering among them can be described as externally homogeneous; however, because the gallery included persons drawn from a variety of communities (e.g., Alliance members, reporters covering the relief crisis, clergymen), the communal relationship among audience members can be described as externally heterogenous. For at least the vast majority of the spectators, the performance operated as an externally exogenous performance, a performance in which members of one community watch members of another community perform.

The cultural performance staged by the mock legislators the following afternoon enacted a surprisingly similar set of communal relationships. Like the relationship adhering among performers for the Tuesday afternoon session of the actual legislators, the Wednesday afternoon session of the mock legislators was also of the externally homogeneous variety: all performers were WAA members. The relationship among audience members was likewise similar to that enacted the previous day with both cultural performances drawing externally
heterogeneous audiences—that is, spectators from a variety of communities. The audience for the Wednesday afternoon mock legislative session, for example, included an eager cadre of reporters, at least one actual legislator, a constantly changing contingent of State House employees who used their coffee and lunch breaks to "watch the show," a group of curious Trenton residents, and unemployed and relief workers forced to assume positions in the gallery because all sixty of the legislative roles had already been filled.

While the communal relations enacted in the two sessions were structurally similar, important differences ought not to be glossed over too readily. One major difference centers on the degree to which each of the two homogeneous performance populations (actual legislators on Tuesday and WAA members on Wednesday) was internally articulated into discrete subunits. The degree of internal articulation operative within the community of actual legislators was relatively high with clear distinctions drawn between representatives from different political parties, as well as from different parts of the state. Conversely, the degree of internal articulation operative within the community of WAA demonstrators was quite low.

A number of possible explanations for the low level of internal articulation within the WAA community exist.
Throughout the occupation of the assembly chamber, those camping in the state house tended to identify themselves as members of the New Jersey WAA rather than as members of smaller, local branches under the jurisdiction of the state organization. No doubt, this resulted at least in part from Alliance members' expressed desire to shift the focus with regards to the relief question from the local to the state level. The actual assemblymen had turned the relief question over to the local municipalities; the local municipalities, however, were not in a financial position to deal with the demands made upon them; and, consequently, the WAA wanted the responsibility for relief to be re-established at the state level. A second reason for the low level of internal articulation within the WAA community may center on the fact that Alliance demonstrators were protesting the crippling factionalism among the actual legislators and did not want to replicate in their own presentation of themselves that which they critiqued in their performances of the actual legislators.

Of all the performances staged during the nine-day demonstration, the Monday, April 27, return of the actual legislators is perhaps the most interesting in terms of the enactment of communal relationships. On Monday morning, state house officials and representatives from the WAA reached an agreement that all but five of the demonstrators would retire to the gallery, that only one
of those remaining on the floor would be allowed speaking privileges, and that after the session recessed the demonstrators could once again take up possession of the chamber.

Determining which of the categories of communal relationships among performers that was posited in the previous chapter applies to the Monday night session is difficult to establish with certainty. Although the evening began with an externally heterogenous performer population (with performers drawn from a variety of communities, including the actual assembly and the WAA), by the time the evening session was adjourned, the imposition of a gag rule on the one WAA member who had been granted speaking privileges essentially transformed the communal relationship among performers from externally heterogeneous (assemblymen and others) to externally homogeneous (assemblymen only).

More interesting than the relationship among performers, however, is the relationship among audience members. The spectator population--like the performer population--was drawn from multiple communities: unemployed and relief workers, newspaper reporters and photographers, New Jersey State senators, state house officials and employees, friends and family members of elected assemblymen, and curious New Jersey residents. The variety of spectators who witnessed the evening's
session suggests that the audience was externally heterogeneous (drawn from a variety of communities). However, the way in which those present in the assembly chamber were clustered is such that the communal relationship among audience members was actually more externally homogeneous than externally heterogeneous. The various communities that together comprised the audience were physically segregated in such a manner that while they simultaneously watched the same performance, they simultaneously watched the same performance separately.

The spectators essentially were split into three groups with each group having its own physical space. The reporters and photographers filled the press box at the rear of the assembly chamber. State house officials, New Jersey state senators, and friends and family members of the assemblymen took up position in one of the two galleries that had been reserved especially for them. The remaining gallery was largely filled by relief workers and unemployed persons who had occupied the assembly chamber throughout the week-long ordeal, as well as additional persons in the same situation who had traveled to Trenton from various parts of the state to lend their support. Suzanne LaFollette, a correspondent for Nation, reports that hours before the gavel signalled the opening of the official session, the gallery where she had taken up position with the relief workers and unemployed was full.
Our gallery was crowded to suffocation. I remarked that the other one should be opened. "They don't open that," said the blonde, "that's for members' friends. The women came in evening dress at the last session. One of 'em was wearing a long white evening dress trailing behind her right along the floor. Wonder how it must feel to be pretty and well fed."53

LaFollette reports that prior to the opening of the official session those positioned in her gallery compared notes on the relief situation in their respective communities and that a "spirit of comradeship born of a common need and a common effort" dominated.54 Of the two galleries, only the WAA gallery was racially integrated.55

Contestation

The WAA seizure of the New Jersey State Assembly instantiated contestation at each of the three spheres of contestation identified in chapter two: spatial, conceptual, and textual. In the following section, I analyze the contestation occurring at each sphere, noting the strategic modes of effectivity through which the contestation is enacted. The contestation occurring in


54 LaFollette 608.

55 John Spain, introduction, The Trenton Siege by the Army of Unoccupation, by George Breitman (n.p.: n.p, 1936) 5.
this event is too complex to present exhaustively. With no delusion of comprehensiveness, I offer the following analyses.

Spatial Sphere of Contestation

Two major struggles occur at the spatial sphere of contestation: a battle to renegotiate the boundary between domestic and political space and a battle between the influential and the latent environment. Alliance members’ attempts to renegotiate the boundary between domestic and political space took place on two fronts and in two directions. Demonstrators in the assembly chamber domesticated the political space for the nine days of their stay: desks became beds, law books became pillows, and the speaker’s table became a makeshift cafeteria. While the assembly chamber was being domesticated by WAA demonstrators inside the Assembly chamber, WAA demonstrators on the outside were politicizing domestic space by periodically targeting assemblymen’s homes for picketing and demonstrations.

A second battle at the spatial level centers on what Stanford Anderson calls the influential and latent environment. The influential environment is the dominant or realized function of the space. The latent environment
includes non-realized potential functions of the space. Central to Anderson's analysis of these is his concept "resiliency." Resiliency refers to the degree of adaptability of an environment for multiple purposes. The WAA seizure of the assembly represents a battle by Alliance members to realize a latent environment in an environment with little resiliency, a space whose resiliency is limited by a firmly entrenched influential environment. In/on the influential environment of a legislative chamber, alliance members realized the latent environmental possibility of using the space as a theatre.

That the legislative chamber was temporarily transformed into a theatre, however, is only half the story. The other half is that the latent theatrical environment was then employed to re-present the displaced influential environment. The assembly chamber (influential environment) was transformed into a theater (latent environment) that was then used to re-inscribe and comment upon the displaced influential environment. By thematizing the displaced legislative chamber within the latent theater, a doubling effect is put into operation in which the assembly chamber functions simultaneously as the container and the contained. Moreover, by employing three different performance postures to re-present the

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legislative function of the assembly, a sense it-could-be-otherwise/it-doesn’t-have-to-be-this-way is introduced.

Conceptual Sphere of Contestation

The primary contestation at the conceptual sphere centers on situating or locating "performance," with WAA opponents and proponents arguing that the "real performance" occurs in different places. WAA opponents attempted to situate the "real" performance at the level of the framing performance with charges such as "these are not really hungry people," "the present show at the State House is being staged to build a case for new taxes," and "the demonstrators are being paid $4.50 per day." This interpretation of the events at Trenton is epitomized in an editorial in the Trenton State Gazette: "All these are by no means unemployed workers. There are some with a consistent record of aversion to employment, others with a chronic urge for publicity, and few to whom the novelty of the idea of living in the State Capitol has a somewhat natural appeal." Months after the seizure had ended, Joseph Kamp was still portraying WAA demonstrators as performers and WAA demonstrations as performances:

The same stunt [occupation of a public building] was tried a few weeks later at the Chicago City Hall, but after attempting to take possession of the Mayor's

office, the marchers were dispersed with tear gas. In St. Louis, they were more successful when, in September, a march converged on the Council Chamber and held possession for several days. Now, the Alliance repeats previous Communist performances in staging a march on Washington.58

The whole damned thing, the whole framing demonstration, WAA opponents argued, was a sham, a scam, an attempt by charlatan agitators to dupe the public.

The WAA situates "real performance" in a markedly different position, and this situating is inextricably linked to the presentation of multiple performance postures. While demonstrative performance operates in the subjunctive mood presenting the hypothetical rather than the actual, the remonstrative depiction of the actual legislators operates in the indicative mood, ostensibly representing the real, the actual, the existent. Ultimately, however, these two postures are staged by the WAA in such a way that the hypothetical of demonstrative performance becomes more real and less feigned than the remonstrative depiction of the actual legislators.59


59 My use of the terms "indicative" and "subjunctive" is borrowed from Victor Turner. "Culture," Turner contends, "like verbs in many if not all languages, has at least two 'moods,' indicative and subjunctive. . . . [The indicative] presents itself as consisting of acts, states, occurrences that are factual. . . . The 'subjunctive' (so legislates Webster) 'expresses supposition, desire, hypothesis, possibility'" (The Anthropology of Performance [New York: Performing Arts Journal P, 1986] 41). Put most simply, while the indicative expresses "what is," the subjunctive explores the "what if."
This reversal is accomplished in a number of ways. First, the actual assemblymen are depicted stereotypically as larger than life and, consequently, as less life-like. Second, the actual assemblymen are depicted as consciously performing or feigning concern for the little person. Recall, for example, the Senator who argued for a pay cut, noting that accepting the reduction "will make us look as though we’re trying to help out in the crisis, and that’ll make us go over great with the relief clients. . . . Even Presidents have been known to use this stunt." Third, the presentation of parliamentary procedure as akin to vaudeville shtick ("Will the gentleman from Hunterdon submit to a question? Will the gentleman from Hunterdon submit to a question? I will. He will.") makes this particular remonstrative posture seem more put-on than the demonstrative performance of the hypothetical legislative exemplars.

Textual Sphere of Contestation

One of the more interesting struggles at the textual sphere centers on attempts to transcend the Other’s derision of the self by overtly thematizing this derision in a depiction of the Other that is itself derisive. Thus, when demonstrators engaged in the remonstrative posture of enacting the object of ridicule, they included, as a part of this performance, the legislators’ derision
of themselves. This occurred when Alliance member Cooke, portraying the Assembly Speaker, threatened to clear imaginary Alliance members from the gallery if there were any more outbursts, as well as when, during debate over an appropriations bill in the Senate, an alliance member-Senator protested that the bill was "for a bunch of trouble-makers who don’t want jobs because they don’t want to get up in the morning." In this manner, the derision aimed at the self by the hostile other is both recognized and thematized/contained in a performance of the hostile other that is itself derisive. In effect, the derision of one’s self becomes the object of derision, and the insulted self is invited to laugh at the slight by contextualizing it in the frame of a laughable Other.

Reform and revolution are distinguishable insofar as reform attempts change through systematically sanctioned channels while revolution attempts a transgression of the system. John Spain of the WAA characterized the nine-day seizure as a "revolutionary rehearsal." At least in

60 "Senate Balks" 2.

61 Quoted in Kamp, "Hunger March" 402. It is interesting to note that Spain’s description of the relationship between the WAA demonstration and revolution prefigures Augusto Boal’s description of the relationship between the "theatre of the oppressed" and revolution. Boal writes, "Perhaps the theatre is not revolutionary in itself; but have not doubts, it is a rehearsal of revolution!" (Theatre of the Oppressed, trans. Charles A. McBride and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride [New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985] 155).
retrospect, however, the event seems as much an advertisement for reform as a rehearsal of a revolution. The transformation of the legislative space of the chamber into a theatrical space is revolutionary to the extent that it does not operate through systemically approved channels; however, from the very beginning, the demonstrators were clear in their intent to occupy the space only until the legislators acted on the relief crisis. Thus, although demonstrators operated outside the system, they did so only temporarily and even while doing so, they ultimately employed the theatrical "outside" only in order to suggest "inside" legislative reforms. Moreover, in all of the performance postures assumed within the encompassing frame of the demonstration as performance, the resolutions put forth mirrored the semantic conventions of the system being critiqued, and to a considerable extent, the demonstrators maintained the conventions of the settings they occupied: more decorum in the Senate, a sergeant-at-arms to keep order, the prescribed number of legislators, etc. Even their final resolution--the call for a Farm-Labor party--represents a continuation of rather than a break from the system.
Implications

The WAA seizure of the New Jersey State Assembly suggests a number of implications for performance studies scholarship. First, the WAA demonstration suggests the need for performance studies scholars to rethink the nature of actor training. Twenty years ago, when our discipline was almost exclusively concerned with conspicuous performances--performances that overtly announced their status as such--actor training seemed a cut-and-dried issue. While a variety of methods of actor training such as Stanislavski's method acting and Meixnor's repetition method competed with one another for prominence, the process of actor training was as conspicuous as the performances toward which the training was geared.

However, in the intervening years, as performance studies scholars have broadened the parameters of the discipline to include the performance of everyday life, public ceremonies as performance, and rituals as performance, the issue of what constitutes actor training has become as unsettled as the issue of what constitutes performance. If, for example, the recounting of personal narratives in everyday conversation constitutes a type of performance, then the narrator functions as a performer. How does the narrator prepare for this performance? How
and by whom is the narrator trained? Similarly, if public ceremonies such as trials and executions constitute performances, then lawyers, witnesses, judges, executioners, and the condemned function as performers? How and by whom are these social actors trained?

In the case of the WAA demonstration, the performers included demonstrators who acted out the roles of ideal and actual assemblymen, as well as duly elected officials who performed the role of legislators. Exploring the nature and function of actor training in these performances is as difficult as it is important. My goal here is not to definitively answer the question of how the demonstrators or assemblymen trained for their performances. That must wait for another study. Rather, my goal is simply to suggest the importance of the issue of actor training given the expanded view of performance that dominates our discipline.

To realize this goal I will focus briefly on the demonstrators' performance of the actual legislators. According to Brietman,

For months now, members of the organization had attended every session of the Assembly, had come to know all the mannerisms of the individual gentlemen, had quietly and intently studied all the bills having bearing on the relief problem before the Legislature and had become well acquainted with parliamentary procedure.\(^6^2\)

\(^{62}\) Breitman 13.
Later, Breitman comments that "all the time the unemployed had spent watching the gentlemen of the Assembly at their 'work' had not been wasted. These workers knew all the formalities, all the technicalities, all the stupid little trivialities of the parliamentary procedure." The foregoing passages clearly suggest that, for the demonstrators' performance of the legislators, actor training consisted not so much of active embodiment rooted in empathic identification as active scopophilia rooted in general disdain. In preparation for their own performance, the demonstrators watched the assemblymen perform their legislative roles. By watching the actual assemblymen transact their legislative duties, the demonstrators acquired insights into both the formal features that characterized parliamentary procedure and the substantive features that characterized the oratory and policy predilections of individual legislators. After the rehearsal period ended and the WAA seized control of the legislative chamber, the demonstrators were prepared both to display (replicate) and dis-play (denigrate) these formal and substantive features. I leave unexplored many issues regarding "actor" training for the WAA demonstration. Hopefully, however, the foregoing discussion has suggested that given our discipline's

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63 Breitman 17.
expanded view of performance, renewed emphasis on the nature, methods, and goals of actor training is in order. In addition to suggesting the need to renew exploration of actor training, the WAA demonstration also suggests the need to continue investigations into the relationship between performance as efficacy and performance as entertainment. As was noted earlier in this study, Schechner distinguishes between performance as efficacy and performance as entertainment. "No performance," Schechner contends, "is pure efficacy or pure entertainment." Schechner employs the metaphor of a braid to describe the relationship between efficacy and entertainment in the historical evolution of theatre, noting that at a given moment one or the other of the simultaneously present strands dominates but that over time its dominance diminishes and the other strand takes the upper position.

The WAA demonstration seems to suggest that whether the efficacy or entertainment strand dominates depends less on the content of the performance, the performers' intentions, and the historical period in which the performance is enacted than on what an individual spectator or participant makes of and does with the performance. For example, from the point of view of John

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Spain, one of the leading figures in the New Jersey WAA, the efficacy strand no doubt appeared dominant. From his vantage, the demonstrators were there not primarily to entertain or be entertained but to act on a matter of profound social importance. However, from the point of view of at least some of the spectators, the WAA members' parody of the actual assemblymen functioned primarily as an entertaining diversion. Recall, for example, the presence of curious spectators in evening clothes who visited the Assembly chamber Saturday night to watch the "antics" of the demonstrators or the state house officials who, during their breaks, rushed to the chamber to watch the "show." Unlike the WAA demonstrators and relief clients for whom the efficacy strand of Schechner's braid probably seemed dominant, for other spectators, the entertainment strand of Schechner's braid appears to have been dominant. The WAA demonstration strongly suggests that whether the efficacy or entertainment strand dominates depends less on the content of the performance, the performers' intentions, and the historical period in which the performance is enacted than on what an individual spectator or participant makes of and does with the performance. The function of performance, in other words, depends not on the makers' intentions but on the use to which the performance is put by individual spectators.
Third, the WAA seizure of the New Jersey State Assembly both supports and extends J. Robert Cox's theory of the discursive deferral of performance. In his analysis of controversies surrounding productions of *The Normal Heart* and *Ghetto*, Cox writes, "What engages me as a rhetorical critic, however, is precisely the "indirect" and "mediated" nature of this rhetorical moment, particularly the manner in which each performance becomes an occasion for its own discursive deferral." At the end of the essay, Cox concludes that

the experiences that Yordon and Bradley [the directors of the two productions] report here called into being a social rhetoric beyond the performances; it was in this social space that campus and community speech resisted the slurs, silence, and rationalizations that sustain attitudes of hatred and intolerance. "This is the hidden categorical imperative of art," Marcuse argues. "Its realization lies outside of art." It is, finally, in this wider community of discourse that "the power of theatre to persuade" is repositioned--in performances of memory/speech.

I find Cox's theory of discursive deferral insightful insofar as it recognizes that performances frequently function as compelling invitations for further discourse; however, I am troubled by his conclusion that "it is, finally, in this wider community of discourse that 'the power of theatre to persuade' is repositioned."

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66 Cox 389.
Specifically, I take issue with Cox on two matters: first, his claim that the power of the performances to persuade resides not in the performances per se but in "the wider community of discourse" they engender and, second, his tendency to perceive the relationship between theatrical performances and "the wider community of discourse" as unidirectional--that is, from theatrical performance to discourse in the community.

I do not take issue with Cox's point that discursive deferral occurs as a result of performances. I do, however, take issue with the notion that the deferral occurs only or even primarily in one direction--namely from performance to discourse. Instead of deferral from performance to discourse, I would suggest that, at least in social dramas and probably in other contexts as well, the deferral is ongoing (i.e., from performance to discourse to performance to discourse etc.). Once the ongoing status of the deferral is recognized, isolating and identifying the source of the persuasion becomes as difficult as determining whether the chicken or the egg came first.

I recognize that the fixed, fully scripted nature of the theatrical performances Cox examines accounts (at least in part) for his tendency to construe the deferral as occurring primarily from performance to discourse. While the productions of *The Normal Heart* and *Ghetto*
elicited great quantities of discourse, the verbal text spoken by the actors remained unchanged. The fluid nature of the WAA's seizure of the New Jersey State Assembly demonstrates more clearly the ongoing deferral that frequently occurs between performance and other forms of discourse in social dramas.

For example, after the WAA took over the assembly chamber and began their performance, they passed a resolution demanding that the governor approve emergency relief appropriations. The governor responded by stating that he could create debt only to repel an invasion or suppress an insurrection. The mock assembly then passed and sent to the governor a resolution stating that an insurrection was in progress. Similarly, after the WAA had been parodying the duly elected legislators for several days, one assemblyman responded by sending a telegram to the governor suggesting that if the governor was not going to remove the demonstrators he ought to feed them caviar and chocolate eclairs. Upon hearing of the telegram, the demonstrators picked up the eclair motif, challenging the assemblyman to select any demonstrator above the age of three for a fight to the finish with cream puffs. The WAA seizure of the New Jersey Assembly demonstrates that while discursive deferral occurs, this deferral is essentially dialectical rather unidirectional.
One of the actual Assemblymen characterized the demonstration as "a vulgar and burlesque demonstration." And ultimately, I believe, he hit the mark. The demonstration was vulgar. It was of or related to "the common people," and it was, at times, morally crude and a bit lewd. The demonstration was also a burlesque, a theatrical entertainment of a broadly humorous character consisting of short skits and often a strip tease act. The short skits take the form of the shifting performance postures, and the strip tease takes the form of ideological unmasking, revealing through performance what the demonstrators perceived as the naked truth about the actual legislators: performers, performers, performers.
PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZED LABOR IN DEPRESSION AMERICA:
COMMUNITY AND CONTESTATION
VOLUME II

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CHAPTER FOUR:
SITDOWN THEATRE

This chapter begins by chronologically reconstructing the major cultural performances during and immediately following the Flint, Michigan, autoworkers' 1936-1937 sitdown strike. Primary attention is afforded the cultural performances staged by and for the striking autoworkers. Despite the primacy in my historical reconstruction of cultural performances staged by and for striking autoworkers, exclusive attention on this class of performances is not possible. After all, these cultural performances are intimately bound up with the larger strike context in which they occurred. As a result, I consider both pro-strike and anti-strike cultural performances, as well as description of nonperformance dimensions of the Flint sitdown strike that bear directly upon the cultural performances. After narrating the major episodes and cultural performances of the strike, I then employ the analytical framework proposed in chapter two to analyze how cultural performances functioned as sites of contestation where opposing parties dramatized their conflicts and sites of social formation where opposing parties acted out identities and allegiances.
A Striking Performance/Performing the Strike

At 7:00 a.m., on Wednesday, December 30, 1936, fewer than fifty workers in the Fisher Body No. 2 plant in Flint, Michigan, stopped working, refused to leave their positions on the assembly line, and demanded that three employees who were being transferred to new jobs because of their refusal to quit the union be reinstated. The company refused to halt the transfer of the union workers, arguing that the men in question, because they were employed in a supervisory capacity as line inspectors, could not also maintain union membership. As a result, union workers sat down, tying up production all along the 1,000-person assembly line that daily produced 450 Chevrolet bodies.

Fifteen hours later, a group of workers in the nearby Fisher Body No. 1 plant, which employed 7500 persons and daily produced 1400 Buick bodies, also staged a sitdown. The ostensible cause of this sitdown was a report, circulated during the night shift's lunch hour, that the company was attempting to engage in a "runaway shop," loading key manufacturing parts onto freight cars for transfer to more weakly unionized plants.¹ Shortly

¹ According to United Auto Workers members, the company had loaded eight freight cars with dies for transport to more weakly unionized Pontiac and Grand Rapids plants. The company claimed that only part of one die had been shipped to Pontiac and that this was an
after 10:00 p.m., after returning to the line at the conclusion of their lunch break, United Auto Workers (UAW) members in Fisher No. 1 sat down, tying up the assembly line.

On January 31, workers at the Fisher Body plant in Martin, Michigan, and at the Chevrolet plant in Norwood, Ohio, staged walkout strikes, and workers at the Guide Lamp plant in Anderson, Indiana, sat down. On January 4, workers at the Toledo, Ohio, Chevrolet plant sat down. On Tuesday, January 5, workers at the Janesville, Wisconsin, Chevrolet and Fisher plants sat down. On January 8, Cadillac workers in Detroit sat down. On January 12, workers at the Fleetwood plant in Detroit sat down. And on Wednesday, January 13, workers at the Fisher and Chevrolet plants in St. Louis staged a conventional walkout strike.\(^2\) Although the 1936-1937 General Motors auto strike ultimately involved thousands of GM workers in a variety of cities across the nation, the occupation of


\(^2\) Fine, *Sit-Down* 146.
the two Fisher Body plants in Flint remained the focus of the strike.

On Friday, January 1, the *Flint Journal* ran a full page ad entitled "A New Years Statement From Buick." Buick's president and general manager, Harlowe Curtice, opened the statement by noting that "in accordance with its annual custom, Buick has prepared a page carrying a New Years statement. Since it was placed in type, a situation developed which has deprived thousands of our employes [sic] of their right to work." Curtice goes on to comment on the "warm ties that link us to thousands of old-time Buick owners," the "fine human relationships which run like glowing threads through the whole history of Buick," and the way in which "every job with Buick . . . is something more than a mere means of earning a living--every man and woman of Buick is a part of Buick." Never employing the word "strike," Curtice refers to the labor unrest euphemistically, first, as a "situation . . . which has deprived thousands of our employes [sic] of their right to work," second, as "this idleness which they [the employees] and we do not want," and third, as "the only obstacle we know to a prosperous year."

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On Saturday, January 2, just four days after the sitdowners began their siege, Judge Black issued a sweeping injunction against the strikers. The injunction charged the strikers with damaging company property, trespassing on company property, creating unsanitary conditions, and depriving General Motors of capital gain by halting manufacturing.4

Hours after Judge Black issued the injunction, Sheriff Wolcott attempted to serve the document on the strikers in Fisher body plants No. 1 and 2. The *Detroit Free Press* reports that "in Plant No. 1 on S. Saginaw St. the 300 who stayed in made so much noise that the sheriff couldn’t hear himself as he called the names of a dozen leaders and called upon all to vacate the plant."5

4 Black’s injunction restrained the sitdowners "from interfering in any manner with the ingress and egress to and from the plants . . . , from interfering with the delivery of merchandise or materials to or from said plants . . . , from picketing said plant or loitering in or near its approaches or upon the public streets or highways leading thereto . . . , from continuing to remain in said plants in idleness in a so-called ‘sit-down’ strike . . . , from injuring or damaging any of the property and materials . . . , from using any form of intimidation whatsoever to prevent employes . . . who desire to work from entering upon their duties, . . . from addressing any threatening or insulting or abusive language to employes of the plaintiff who may desire to work, from unlawfully conspiring, confederating or combining directly or indirectly for the purpose of doing any of the acts hereinbefore mentioned" ("Complete Text of Court Injunction Issued," *Flint Journal* 3 January 1937: 2).

5 "Flint Strikers Jeer at Order to Quit Plants," *Detroit Free Press* 3 January 1937: 1.
Wolcott's reading of the injunction elicited a similar reaction from the 200 sitdowners in the Fisher No. 2 plant. Kraus reports that in one of the plants, strikers drowned out the sheriff's reading by singing "Solidarity Forever."  

On Sunday, January 3, the day after the sheriff served the injunction on the sitdowners at the two Fisher plants, more than a thousand union members packed Pengelly Hall, union headquarters, for a mass meeting during which Homer Martin, president of UAW, revealed the union's demands. These included among others: "minimum wages of 80 cents an hour, recognition of the United Auto Workers as the sole bargaining agency of the workers, no discrimination against union members, establishment of unqualified seniority rights, abolition of piecework." During Martin's speech, Sheriff Wolcott arrived at Pengelly, hoping to serve the injunction on Martin and other CIO officials who had not been in attendance at the earlier injunction readings at the Fisher plants. Martin refused to allow Wolcott to serve the injunction until after he had finished his speech, and, after finishing his

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6 Kraus 109.


speech, Martin promptly left Pengelly before the sheriff
could serve the injunction.9

Following the mass meeting, union members paraded in
automobiles through the streets of Flint to the struck
plants. A sound car, a new labor weapon consisting of a
vehicle rigged with loudspeaker capability, led the auto
parade. The Flint Auto Worker reported that

a motorcade following the meeting proved to be the
most magnificent manifestation of labor ever held in
Flint. A thousand cars paraded horns tooting,
paraders cheering, past the struck plants of Fisher
one and two, while the insiders shouted lustily their
determination to stick and win!10

The less effusive and probably less hyperbolic Louis
Stark, a New York Times labor reporter, set the number of
parade vehicles at 150.11

On Tuesday, January 5, Homer Martin issued a
statement calling into question the legitimacy of Judge
Black’s injunction against the strikers. Martin contended
that, because Black owned 3,665 shares of GM stock worth
an estimated $219,000, the injunction lacked validity.
According to Martin, "To say the least, Judge Black, in
issuing an injunction under the circumstances, was guilty

9 "General Strike in GM Plants Is Authorized,"

10 "300 Delegates From GM Plants Adopt Program at
Copies of the Flint Auto Worker are available in the
Unbound Newspaper Collection, Box 62, Walter Reuther
Library, Wayne State U.

11 Stark, "Auto Union Votes" 2.
of unethical conduct. In addition to that he flagrantly violated the law which he himself had sworn to uphold. He has dealt a cruel blow at the integrity of the court."¹² As a result of the alleged violation of a Michigan statute barring judges from sitting on a case in which they have a vested interest, Martin suggested that the state initiate impeachment and disbarment proceedings against Black. General Motors responded by seeking a new injunction from another judge.

Even as Martin issued the statement challenging Black's injunction, Sloan--one of the vice-presidents of General Motors--issued a statement "To All Employes [sic] of General Motors Corporation." The statement, posted on bulletin boards in nonstriking General Motors plants across the nation and reproduced in full page ads in Detroit and Flint newspapers,¹³ maintained that "the real issue" is whether you will "pay to a private group of labor dictators for the privilege of working, or will you have the right to work when you desire." Sloan three times referred to "labor dictators" in the course of the statement, always opposing them to a system of "individual


merit" in which employment "depend[s] on the ability and efficiency of the worker—not on the membership or non-membership in any labor organization whatsoever."

On Wednesday, January 7, Martin responded to Sloan's statement, taking special care to counter the "labor dictatorship" charge. "Employes [sic] realize," Martin argued, "that on the production and conveyor lines only youth can serve. Any attempt to right this condition is not labor dictatorship. It is the hope for release from such dictatorship that has given the United Automobile Workers of America its membership." The current sitdown is not an example of an un-American labor dictatorship, Martin contended. Rather, the sitdown strikers are cut from the same cloth as our patriot heroes of the Revolutionary War. "As the American workman in 1776 fought for political freedom, so we today are fighting for social and economic freedom." Martin's statement ended with a return to the "labor dictator" charge:

Only through the effective medium of a national agreement can dictatorship by management be avoided. "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with knowledge in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in." --Abraham Lincoln.

15 "Text of Martin's Statement" 8.
16 "Text of Martin's Statement" 8.
Even as Martin countered the labor dictatorship charge imputed to the CIO by Sloan, the Flint Alliance, a back-to-work organization headed by George Boysen, a former Flint mayor and former Buick paymaster, announced its arrival on the scene, launching a billboard campaign promoting what it called the "American Plan."\textsuperscript{17} Taking as its motto "for the security of our jobs, our homes, and our community," the Flint Alliance sought to "combat the threat of prolonged idleness" and to "provide a means for the expression of anti-strike feeling."\textsuperscript{18} According to Boysen,

There is also bitter resentment because the agitation was brought here from the outside. Keeping the anti-strike sentiment orderly and to show how Flint stands are among the purposes of the new organization. . . . Flint is proud of its record as a peaceful industrial center and is aroused by being put in a false light by this strike agitation which has been brought here from the outside.\textsuperscript{19}

In order to "show how Flint stands" the Alliance urged residents not in support of the strike to fill out enrollment cards asking for a name, address, and place of employment (if the applicant was working). The cards were to be picked up at and returned to the Flint Alliance

\textsuperscript{17} Bruce Bliven, "Sitting Down in Flint," \textit{New Republic} 89 (1937): 378.

\textsuperscript{18} "Alliance Drafts George Boysen to Direct Activities For New Civic Group," \textit{Flint Journal} 7 January 1937: 1.

\textsuperscript{19} "Alliance Drafts George Boysen" 1.
headquarters located in the heart of the city at 221 South Saginaw. Painted in large letters on the two large plate glass windows of the Alliance headquarters was: "The Flint Alliance: For the Security of Our Jobs, Our Homes, and Our Community."\(^{20}\)

At 4:00 p.m. on the day that the Flint Alliance was formed, Roy Ruether parked his sound truck near the corner of Asylum and Kearsley in front of the Beer Vault and across the street from a Chevrolet plant. During the shift change, he exhorted workers not to join the newly formed Flint Alliance. A crowd of 200-300 spectators gathered to listen. When one of the spectators smashed the loudspeaker system, a fight ensued, and two strikers were arrested, 29-year old Roy Slee of Toledo and 30 year-old Harold Hubbard of Fisher No. 1. Police reported that "one of the men was armed with a screwdriver."\(^{21}\) As a result of the incident, the Beer Vault was closed.

According to a *Flint Journal* report the following day,

Just before the trouble began, several cars with out-of-town license plates were parked on Glenwood Avenue near Asylum street and the injured men were taken away in them. . . . Besides Reuther, the agitators who harangued the workers at the meeting and across the street from the Chevrolet plant are: Outside Agitators [in bold]


Bill Carney--veteran CIO organizer from Akron, Ohio who came to Flint Thursday.\textsuperscript{22}

The report goes on to cite, among others, Victor Reuther and Robert Travis--the former from Detroit, the latter from Toledo.

At an evening rally at Pengelly, Victor Reuther assailed General Motors and the \textit{Flint Journal}. In his speech, he defended his status as a non-Flint resident, declaring that "workers in other fields will support the strike here to an extent that will force General Motors into compliance."\textsuperscript{23} At the conclusion of his speech, he called on those present to march over to the nearby jail and demand the release of the two men being held as a result of the Beer Vault skirmish earlier that afternoon.

Two hundred demonstrators marched to the city jail where they sent a delegation of six representatives up to meet with Police Chief Wills to demand Slee and Hubbard's release. Wills not only refused to release the prisoners, he also refused to let the delegation meet with the prisoners. After the delegation returned with this news, the demonstrators remained on the sidewalk before the jail for almost two hours, listening to and making impassioned speeches punctuated by the singing of union songs. Two hundred spectators gathered across the street to watch the

\textsuperscript{22} "March on Flint City Jail" 19.

\textsuperscript{23} "March on Flint City Jail" 19.
demonstration. Just before midnight, Chief Wills and Sheriff Wolcott, accompanied by an eight member gas squad, emerged from the municipal building, giving the demonstrators five minutes to disperse.24

After dispersing from the jail, the crowd returned to Pengelly where they listened to additional speakers, including Bill Carney—"a veteran CIO organizer from Akron, Ohio, who came to Flint Thursday."25 Carney characterized the newly-formed Flint Alliance as "the beginning of a vigilante scab outfit" and bestowed on Flint Alliance leader Boysen the epithet "Rat."26 Other speakers included Victor Reuther and Robert Travis. A New York Times report published the following day indicated that police and sheriff's officers were "guarding all roads into Flint . . . to halt a delegation of U.A.W. strikers from Toledo known to be en route here."27

On Sunday, January 10, between five and seven hundred men, women, and children congregated at Pengelly Hall to listen to speeches by union representatives. Martin, in his speech, compared the persons who work for General


25 "March on Flint City Jail" 19.

26 "March on Flint City Jail" 19.

27 "Police With Tear Gas Guns" 3.
Motors to the persons who run General Motors. After pointing out that "the men who run General Motors are perfect examples of what President Roosevelt meant when he spoke the phrase 'economic royalists,'" Martin noted, "I can point out to you here in Flint hundreds of workers with long years of service whose children do not have proper clothing, proper food, proper dental work, proper medical care, or the other things needed to enjoy life." Another speaker, John Brophy, Washington director of the CIO, urged the workers to continue their efforts to win the struggle against what he termed "the make believe collective bargaining" offered the workers by General Motors. Characterizing the striking autoworkers as "the minutemen of social justice," Brophy declared that "collective bargaining is the American way of settling disputes." Victor Reuther, after attacking the recently formed Flint Alliance as having been "organized by the barons of the automobile industry to mislead and swindle the workers," went on to contend that "throughout this community there is a sincere desire to organize all Flint workers in a strong workers' organization which will press forward to win our demands of higher wages, slowing

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30 "Martin Tells Striking Workers" 7.
down the line, and true security." The rally concluded with Russell Merrill, a representative of the Studebaker local at South Bend, Indiana, presenting the UAW with a check for $6,000 to aid the strikers.

Following the mass meeting at Pengelly, a group of 300 striking workers and strike sympathizers paraded to both Fisher plants where the Union War Veterans, a group of fifty union autoworkers who had served in World War I, conducted a flag-raising ceremony and where children of the sitdown strikers participated in a children's parade. According to a report in the *Flint Auto Worker*, "With a very impressive flag raising ceremony, accompanied by the Union War Veterans and a great mass of union men, a color guard presented a flag to men sitting inside the plant at Fisher Body No. 1." More details concerning the flag-raising ceremony appear in the *Daily Worker*:

The post consists of about 50 members who accompanied by several hundred strikers formed a car parade through Flint to the plant. Marching in military formation to the windows of the department occupied by the stay-in strikers, the veterans sounded a bugle call as they raised an American flag, which was later presented to the men on the inside. As the flag was held aloft, the whole crowd sang the "Star Spangled Banner". A union leader spoke, "We have always looked upon 'Old Glory,'" he said, "as a symbol of American freedom and American democracy. This flag for us has always stood for religious

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31 "Martin Tells Striking Workers" 7.

32 "Martin Tells Striking Workers" 7.

freedom and political freedom. From this day forward it shall for us stand for industrial freedom as well."34

Following the presentation of the flag to the sitdown strikers, the strikers at Fisher No. 1 performed for the assembled crowd, singing labor songs that were piped outside via a loudspeaker system.35 A group of 25 children, ranging in ages from two to fourteen, began to parade back and forth in front of the struck plants, carrying picket signs or wearing sandwich boards stating: "My Daddy Is a Union Man," "Our Daddies Will Win," "We're Behind Our Daddies 100%," "We Can't Lose. This Is a New Day," "My Daddy Strikes For Us Little Tykes," and "Give Us a Chance For Better Food and a Better Life."36 After finishing the ceremonies at Fisher Body No. 1, the assembly paraded to Fisher Body No. 2 where the ceremony was repeated.

On Monday, January 11, a group of 200 of Flint's business leaders held a meeting to consider the strike situation and unanimously endorsed the objectives of the Flint Alliance. The Flint Journal published a first page


35 "Martin Tells Striking Workers" 7.

story recounting the meeting and reproducing statements by prominent Flint citizens. In one such statement, Otto H. Powell contended that "Flint is in a hell of a spot. We are living in a great city, but if we don't get busy in an orderly manner and attempt to settle this, when, and if, they [the strikers] get through with it, we couldn't give Michigan back to the Indians." Similarly, George Boysen warned that "Flint is on the spot, confronted by a movement that is vicious. They have taken possession of the plants and the same thing is liable to happen to your business. If they once get Flint, if they succeed in making Flint helpless, then we're all through."

Hours after the above story appeared on newsstands, company officials cut off heat in the Fisher No. 2 plant where the sitdowners occupied the second floor, and company guards who had maintained control of the gate leading into the plant refused to allow outside strike forces access to the ladder they had previously used to transport food in to the strikers. Under the direction


38 "More Than Two Hundred Demand Action" 1.

39 "More Than Two Hundred Demand Action" 1.

of Roy Reuther in the sound car, a contingent of sitdown strikers emerged from the plant and seized control of the gate. The frightened company guards fled into the ground floor of the plant, and while one of the guards called police, claiming that they had been captured by the sitdowners, the remaining guards, to the great amusement of the strikers, barricaded themselves in a women's restroom where they remained until the following morning.

Shortly after the strikers' seizure of the gate and the guard's phone call, a contingent of local police armed with tear gas arrived. After police sent several gas canisters into the midst of the pickets, as well as through the second floor window of the plant, a pitched battle ensued. While some sitdowners directed firehoses at the police, others hurled heavy hinges used in automobile doors at their attackers who, after several minutes, retreated a few blocks up Chevrolet Avenue where they regrouped for a second assault. When the mist from the second tear gas assault cleared, the police were once again several blocks away, and the sitdowners remained in control of the plant.

Later that night, outside pickets who guarded the plant against a predicted third tear gas attack commemorated the evening's events in "The Battle of 1937: 1."
Running Bulls," sung to the tune of "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight."

Cheer, boys, cheer,
For we are full of fun.
Cheer, boys, cheer,
Old Parker's on the run.
We had a fight last night,
And I tell you boys we won.
We had a hot time in the old town last night.

Tear gas bombs
Were flying thick and fast.
The lousy police,
They knew it couldn't last.
Because in all their lives
They never ran so fast
As in that hot time in the old town last night.\(^4\)\(^1\)

According to Kraus, "The Battle of Running Bulls" was composed jointly by those on picket duty on the very night described in the song, with one striker or strike sympathizer proposing a line and another proposing a second and so on.\(^4\)\(^2\)

The following day, as a result of the riot, Michigan governor Frank Murphy mobilized the National Guard and moved them into Flint as a peacekeeping force. Both the corporation and the strikers applauded Murphy's decision.

On Friday, January 15, as 600 additional National Guardsmen arrived in Flint, bringing the total to 1800, an estimated 4000 persons who opposed the strike met at General Motors' Industrial Mutual Association (IMA) Hall for a Flint Alliance meeting presided over by Buick die

\(^4\)\(^1\) Fine, Sit-Down 8-9.

\(^4\)\(^2\) Kraus 143.
worker Victor Breece. Boysen of the Flint Alliance acted as the meeting’s keynote speaker. Commenting on the turnout, Boysen stated, "The Flint Alliance is greatly pleased at this demonstration of workmen. It is a visual and vocal expression of your desire to keep Flint’s factories open and to keep your jobs." Claiming that the strike was opposed by the vast majority of GM workers, Boysen argued,

A small minority--less than 5 per cent--of the workmen has no legal or moral right to deprive the great body of the majority from earning their living. . . . Flint business men and Flint laborers resent the methods of the minority in seeking to gain what we believe are political ends for men whose only interest in this community is to further their own personal ambitions.

In addition to Boysen, Dr. C. H. O’Neil, a Flint physician, also addressed the crowd of "loyal" workers. Charging that most of the pickets were from Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio, O’Neil argued that "if the mass of GM workers were supporting the strike there would be hundreds of thousands of Flint men on the picket lines."

Oddly enough, only two years earlier, the entire work force of Flint consisted of only 53,929 workers (Fine, Sit-Down 104).
James Witmark, a UAW member, asked for the floor after O'Neil's address, requesting the right to give voice to the union's viewpoint. As the crowd shouted, "Throw him out!" Breece denied Witmark's request to speak, noting that the forum was not a debate.47

The final speaker, Albert Tate, a Buick die worker and minister at the local Berean Baptist Church, offered a prayer that the strike be replaced by arbitration:

We appeal to God Almighty to put the wheels of industry back in motion so that we can go back to work. Let us settle this strike over the arbitration table and not over the workingman's dinner pail. . . . We appeal to God to bring about a healing in the city of Flint--and that's back to work.48

Before adjourning, those present voted against staging an anti-strike parade, stating as their reason the fear that such a demonstration might "precipitate a clash."49

Although a peaceful settlement of the labor unrest seemed highly unlikely at this juncture of the strike, later that afternoon, GM and union officials announced that they had reached an agreement whereby the sitdowners would evacuate the plants with the guarantee that the company would neither operate the plant machinery, move

47 "4000 at Meeting Assail Agitator" 2.

48 "4000 Workers At Meeting Assail Agitators" 2; A slightly different version of Tate's statement appears in Russel Porter, "4,000 at Flint Ask Return to Work," New York Times 15 Jan. 1937: 4.

49 Porter, "4000 at Flint Ask Return" 4.
the plant machinery, nor negotiate with any other group claiming to represent the workers during a two week period after the evacuation. The sitdowners' evacuation was scheduled for 2:00 p.m. the following Sunday, January 17.

On Sunday afternoon, as a slow drizzle fell, several hundred persons gathered outside Fisher No. 1 to cheer the strikers as they left the plant. As they waited for the two o'clock departure, the union band blared labor songs, and the 250 sitdowners leaned from the plant windows. From an upper story window, an effigy labeled "Boysen" dangled from a rope. Just a half hour before the scheduled evacuation, word came to the sitdowners that union officials had obtained a copy of a telegram in which Knudsen, in defiance of his earlier agreement, set a Tuesday afternoon meeting with representatives of the Flint Alliance. When the strikers were informed of the apparent double-cross by General Motors, one striker hacked at the effigy, which then fell into the crowd below where it was torn to pieces. As the crowd enacted their symbolic violence on the effigy, they verbally abused Boysen with shouts of derision.


The strikers, who only moments earlier believed they were about to march out of the plants, settled back into the daily routines they had established during the preceding three weeks. Although these routines varied slightly from plant to plant, cultural performances of various types figured largely in the daily routines at both Fisher Body No. 1 and No. 2.

One routine cultural performance centered around the time clock. Sitdowners within the struck plants were divided into "family" units of six or seven who established communal living quarters in some portion of the shop and who were assigned special strike duties. Among these duties were: policing the plant to see that no sitdown rules were being violated; manning the information window to receive messages from strikers' wives and other family members, checking the veracity of the messages received, and, after verifying the messages, passing them on to the appropriate party; and cleaning those portions of the plant occupied by sitdowners. In some of the striking GM plants, workers punched the company time clock as they began and finished these duties; in other plants, strikers ceremoniously punched the time clock at those hours they would ordinarily have punched them had they not
been on strike, thereby "symboliz[ing] the fact that they still consider[ed] themselves employees."\textsuperscript{52}

In addition to punching the time clock, a second routine cultural performance involved the sitdowners as spectators of or participants in the proceedings of kangaroo courts. In an essay on sitdown strategies, George Morris noted that "worker 'policemen' usually distinguished by 'chicken inspector badges' of the 5 & 10 variety are continually on the watch for rule violators. Criminals are brought before the judge of the kangaroo court, usually a grey-haired old-timer in the plant."\textsuperscript{53} The judge who presided over the kangaroo court in Fisher No. 1 referred to himself as Judge Black,\textsuperscript{54} alluding to the federal judge who issued the injunction ordering the sitdowners to vacate the plants. In one of the plants, a striker who had previously studied law was designated as prosecuting attorney.\textsuperscript{55} A group of the accused


\textsuperscript{54} "Strike Shorts," \textit{Flint Auto Worker} 31 January 1937: 3.

\textsuperscript{55} Fine 159.
sitdowners' peers functioned as the jury. Some hints as to courtroom protocol appear in the *Flint Auto Worker*: "Court is conducted in the same manner as other courts. Hats must be removed. The flag is on the wall behind the judge. Any person making noise in the court is held for contempt."

Punishable crimes included: failing to report to assigned duties; leaving one's post before the scheduled hour or sleeping on duty; throwing rubbish on the floor or "foreign matter" in the commodes or urinals; smoking anywhere other than the cafeteria or carrying matches outside the smoking area; bringing liquor into the plant; circulating rumors; overstaying leaves; not washing dishes as one finished using them; failing to respect quiet zones and quiet hours; not taking a daily shower; entering or exiting the plant without the proper credentials; and contempt of court.

Punishments varied from crime to crime. Francis O'Rourke, a sitdowner, recorded in his strike diary the outcome of one case: "Two of the fellows were found guilty after a fair trial and sentenced to scrub the dining room.

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56 "Strike Shorts" 3.
57 "Strike Shorts" 3.
floor on their hands and knees. A severe sentence but order must prevail."59 The Punch Press, a mimeographed strike newspaper, reported that three sitdowners who failed to execute the punishment prescribed by the court were slapped with contempt charges, for which each received "several lashes from the judge's belt."60 The kangaroo court, itself a cultural performance, on some occasions elicited further cultural performances as sentences for rule violators. For example, Leroy Lott, a Fisher No. 1 sitdowner, confessed his crime and reported his sentence in the Flint Auto Worker:

As I was entering the plant to get some information, I didn't have the right credentials, so I was pulled in front of the Kangaroo Court to be tried for unlawful entering. The judge . . . asked me if I wanted a lawyer, but I refused and fought my own case. The jury made up of six men found me guilty, but recommended as I was a good brother and leniency was allowed. My sentence was to make a speech.61

Nor, apparently, was the kangaroo court concerned solely with the comportment of strikers. Two photographers who entered one of the Fisher plants without credentials to obtain exclusive photos were apprehended, hauled before

59 Francis O'Rourke Diary, 20 January 1937: n.p.; the O'Rourke diary is located in Accession #518 of Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State U.


61 "Strike Shorts" 3; The issuing of other sentences requiring rules violators to deliver speeches is recorded in "Hours in Fisher #2" n.p. and Fine, Sit-Down 160.
the court, tried, and sentenced. They were each fined $1.25, and the film from their cameras was confiscated. Edward Levinson, a reporter assigned to the Flint strike, wrote that "there is more substantial and original humor in a single session of the Fisher strikers' Kangaroo Court than in a season of Broadway musical comedies." In addition to punching the time clock and participating in the kangaroo court, other cultural performances were also routinely staged. Each day at 7:00 p.m. a strike meeting was held in the Fisher plants, and the hour before this meeting was reserved for "entertainment." One of the more popular entertainments consisted of a homespun game in which a group of strikers gathered in a circle; a volunteer began by singing a song, telling a joke, dancing a jig, reciting a poem or limerick, whistling, or recounting a story. The initial volunteer, after completing his performance, chose the next entertainer and so on. One evening's entertainment hour consisted of a dance contest pitting two of the sitdowners against one another. The victor performed a hula dance that, according to one source,

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64 Kraus 104.
65 Kraus 104.
"would make even the dusky belles of Hawaii green-eyed with envy." 66

One frequent feature of the entertainment hour was the performance of skits either dealing with unionism in general or recounting specific incidents from the Flint strike itself. 67 The January 24 edition of the Flint Auto Worker, for example, reported that "the newly organized dramatic group has been in such great demand for its play 'Union Label' that another group has been set up!" 68 Although I was unable to locate a copy of "Union Label," details concerning other skits staged for the strikers shed some light on the general nature of these amateur theatricals. A fragmented scenario for one skit is as follows:

The scene: Mr. Kelly's office
The time: last October


The actors: Mr. Kelly and one of our brother workers (who has been employed here seven years)

Mr. Kelly: Now, Bill, your job has been eliminated so now you haven’t any seniority rights, but if you can cut the buck on this new operation, your seniority will be restored to you.

Bill: But, Mr. Kelly, that isn’t right.

Mr. Kelly: Oh, I know that, but that’s the way we do things here.  

Another of the skits gave voice to the union’s version of an automobile "accident" involving pickets from Saginaw on their way into Flint. As depicted in the skit, the accidents were caused by strikebreakers in order to intimidate non-Flint unionists against lending their support to the striking autoworkers.

In addition to the above-mentioned skits performed either by the sitdown strikers themselves or by groups directly aligned with the Flint UAW (e.g., Emergency Brigade, Women’s Auxiliary), on some occasions, the entertainment hour preceding the evening strike meeting boasted non-UAW performers who entered the plants to perform for the strikers. "Our entertainment committee arranged a very interesting program of songs and tap dances by Tommy Miller from the floor show at the Silver Dollar. ... Go on out to the Silver Dollar, you union

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69 "Scenario for a Skit--Fragment," Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, File 11: "Flint Sitdown; Reports on Conditions, January 16-29."

70 "Melodramatic Fact Play," Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 25: "Flint Sit Down; Letters to Union."
men, and give this Miller boy a big hand. He's really hot." 71

The Detroit Contemporary Theatre provided a second evening of outside entertainment when they performed *Virtue Rewarded, or Company Union Gets the Gate* for sitdowners in both striking Fisher body plants. 72 *Virtue Rewarded* had been performed for portions of the Flint UAW local 156 the previous summer as part of the summer chautauqua program of Brookwood Labor Players, another worker's theatre company. *Virtue Rewarded* is a short comic farce--approximately 15 to 18 minutes in length 73--based on the classic domestic melodrama plot in which a fair maiden is forced to choose between two suitors, one the malevolent villain who possesses and threatens to

71 "Open House" 7.

72 By the time of the Flint autoworkers' sitdown, the Detroit Contemporary Theatre, comprised of worker-actors drawn from a variety of industries, was in its fifth season as a regular producer of stationary theatre addressing working-class problems. Their most recent production prior to the autoworkers' sitdown was Clifford Odets' *Awake and Sing*. In 1936 and 1937, the Detroit Contemporary Theatre became increasingly mobile, taking their productions to their desired audiences. "During the past year and a half . . . the Detroit Contemporary Theatre went into the shops and presented short plays, skits dealing with labor problems, and even full length productions" ("Detroit Has a Labor Theatre," clipping from unidentified newspaper dated 1 November 1937: n.p., Joe Brown Collection, Box 14, Folder: "Labor in Literature--Drama," Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State U).

foreclose the mortgage on the maiden’s elderly parents’ home and the other the benevolent hero whom the maiden truly loves.

As translated into labor terms by the Brookwood Labor Players and the Detroit Contemporary Theatre, the plot is as follows. Tillie the Toiler (fair maiden) must choose between Company Union (the villain) and Trade Union (the hero). Tillie chooses and marries Trade Union. Angry at having been spurned by Tillie the Toiler, Company Union threatens to foreclose the mortgage of Mama and Papa Toiler’s home. As Company Union is about to evict the Toilers from their home, Trade Union intervenes, and Trade Union and Company Union engage in pitched battle. At a precipitous moment in the skirmish in walks Industrial Union, the recently born offspring of Tillie the Toiler and Trade Union. The six foot, 200 pound infant promptly vanquishes Company Union, and the security of the Toiler homestead is once again established.74

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The performance appears to have been enthusiastically received by the striking autoworkers in the Fisher plants.

One Fisher striker commented:

To say that we were greatly entertained [sic] would be putting it mildly when the Union Dramatics Club of Detroit enacted a play entitled "Virtue Rewarded." No better example of the wide activities of the CIO can be found than the efforts of this talented group. Composed of workers in a dozen different lines of work, these men and women have united to form what we believe to be one of the most entertaining [sic] presentations we have seen.75

The play, "presented in a burlesque, melodramatic manner," is frequently reported to have been received in the same spirit, with audiences hissing the villain and cheering the hero as they appeared or were mentioned.76

Each evening at 7:00, following the "entertainment hour" featuring cultural performances such as those described above, those sitdown strikers not assigned to a particular duty at that hour attended a strike meeting. At the strike meeting, sitdowners discussed strike strategies, problems they were facing, rumors that were circulating, and other union business. The strike meeting always opened and closed with those present singing "Solidarity Forever."77 Nor were the struck plants the only site for nightly strike meetings. Similar strike

75 "Flint Sit-Down; Reports on Conditions, January 16-29," typescript, Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 11.

76 "Brookwood Shows Held Big Success" n.p.

77 Fine, Sit-Down 158.
meetings were also held in Pengelly for strike sympathizers as well as striking UAW workers not sitting down inside the plants.

Following the evening strike meetings, concerts were usually held at both Pengelly and Fisher No. 1. The strikers’ orchestra at Fisher No. 1 consisted of two mandolins, one guitar, one banjo, one accordion, and three mouth organs. Beside the information window at the plant, strikers posted a sign inviting audiences to attend the nightly 8:00 p.m. concerts. A loudspeaker was installed to broadcast the concert throughout much of the plant as well as to those who gathered outside to listen. According to one reporter, "Hundreds of people every night accept the invitation of the strikers to stand outside the information window and listen to the concert through a loud speaker directed out of the window." At one point in the strike, it became customary for the union orchestra to provide both an afternoon and an evening concert. Occasionally the strikers’ orchestra was joined by the

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union choir who, led by striking worker Kermit Johnson, sang labor songs.⁸¹

Similarly, following the evening meetings at Pengelly, those in attendance transformed the meeting hall into a self-service, union night club. Vorse records the nightly ritual:

Young hands fold and stack the chairs. Accordians, guitars, trumpets, harmonicas and a base [sic] drum are unlimbered. Tiny, so-called because is well over six feet tall, is ready to play the piano indefatigably. Pengelly Hall is a night club now. Singing, entertainment, dancing. Coffee and sandwiches are served in the kitchen. A self service night club with no cover charge. The show is on and is on till dawn. A group of pretty girls gather round the piano. They know the words of all the popular songs. Self appointed quartets, duets and tenors take over the microphone from time to time. Many are good. Some are awful. Tiny’s accompaniment is always excellent. Dancing never stops. In the first grey light the broom brigade arrives to sweep away the day’s collection of dust and cigarette buts [sic]. The dancers step in and out among the dirty piles.⁸²

On at least one occasion, the sitdown orchestra left their usual post at Fisher No. 1 and traveled the few miles to Pengelly where they provided the evening’s musical entertainment.⁸³

On Monday, February 1, the above routine was interrupted by a surprise widening of the strike. While union workers at the small Chevy 9 plant pretended to

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⁸² Vorse, "Flint Sitdown Strike" n.p.

⁸³ Fine, Sit-Down 163.
stage a sitdown there in order to divert the attention of the company guards, union workers at the much larger Chevy 4 actually captured that plant, closing one of the few Flint plants that had managed to remain on line. A pitched battle between company police and union workers transpired during the course of the decoy sitdown at Chevy 9, and, as a result, the National Guard established a sizable military zone, including Chevy 4, Chevy 9, and Fisher No. 2. Entrance into the military zone was highly restricted. Passes issued by the National Guard were required to get past sentries who took up positions behind machine guns along the military zone’s perimeter. For a brief period immediately following the seizure of Chevy 4, no food was allowed into the plant. After the National Guard had ascertained that persons inside Chevy 4 were indeed employees of the plant, those transporting food to the strikers were afforded access into the military zone.

During the evening hours of Tuesday, February 2, Sheriff Wolcott of Genesee County, accompanied by Major Edward Carrier of the National Guard, entered the military zone to serve a new but not substantially different injunction. Wolcott first served Judge Gadola’s injunction on strikers at the Fisher No. 2 plant. As he read the injunction in a monotone, he was heckled by the strikers who shouted, "Run along, Fatty," "Tell it to the Marines," and "Get on out of here." At Fisher No. 1,
strikers guarding the entrance to the plant initially refused Wolcott entry until he surrendered his gun in accordance with the sitdowners' rule prohibiting the carrying of firearms in the plants. Although the sheriff refused to surrender his gun, the strikers eventually allowed him entry. As he read the injunction, he again was heckled and booed by the strikers.\footnote{\textit{10,000 Watch Demonstration},} \footnote{\textit{Detroit News} 3 February 1937: n.p., clipping in Joe Brown Scrapbook, Vol. 6.}

Prior to Gadola's issuing of the injunction, strike organizers had slated February 3 as Women's Day, planning an afternoon women's parade and an evening rally at Pengelly, featuring women speakers from Flint and surrounding automobile towns. When news spread that Wednesday, February 3, would be not only women's day but also injunction day, "flying squadrons"--groups of union members from regional plants who mobilize along with locals at key picket locations during key strike situations--descended on Flint. According to Dee Garrison: "By dawn of February 3, the roads leading into Flint were clogged with hundreds of autos filled with people responding to the call."\footnote{Dee Garrison, ed., \textit{Rebel Pen: The Writings of Mary Heaton Vorse} (New York: Monthly Review P, 1985) 176.} While union officials admitted to the presence of flying squadrons from Detroit, Pontiac, Lansing, Saginaw, Toledo, and Akron, they refused
to give an exact number of non-Flint participants. A *New York Times* reporter attributed this reticence to ambivalence among union leaders as to the effect of such information on public opinion. While some leaders felt the presence of non-Flint residents would demonstrate "the solidarity of the workers in all mass production industries, . . . others feared that the idea of thousands of armed men coming into Flint to interfere with the carrying out of an injunction order issued by a local court might arouse the public here and nationally against the union."\(^{86}\)

The Women's Day parade began at 2:30, an hour before the injunction deadline, when from 500 to 700 women emerged from Pengelly Hall and marched up Saginaw Street through the heart of Flint's downtown business district and past the headquarters of the Flint Alliance.\(^{87}\) The parade was led by a marcher carrying the American flag. This color bearer was followed by 200 women of the Flint Emergency Brigade wearing red tams and armbands, and these marchers were followed in turn by 300-500 members of ladies auxiliary units from Flint and outlying cities who

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wore green tams and armbands. Many of the marchers carried banners or placards bearing inscriptions such as "We Stand By Our Heroes In the Plants," "We Are Against Violence," "UAWA Women’s Auxiliary, Detroit," and "Equal Pay For Men and Women For the Same Work." As the women paraded past the thousands of spectators who lined the streets, they alternately shouted imprecations at Sheriff Wolcott and the Flint Alliance, sang "Solidarity Forever," and sent up cheers for themselves and the UAW. One of the cheers they shouted is as follows: "We’re the wives, we’re the mothers, of our fighting union brothers. We’ll fight for kith and kin, and when we fight we fight to win. Rah! Rah! Rah!" After completing their march along the parade route, the women returned to Pengelly Hall where they loaded, seven and eight to a vehicle, into hundreds of cars that transported them to Fisher No. 1. The women’s autos were decorated with red and white bunting and with placards bearing union slogans.

An hour before the 3:30 injunction deadline, an estimated 600 pickets had already gathered at Fisher No. 1

88 Fine, Sit-Down 279.
90 Kraus 236.
and begun marching back and forth along the window-lined facade of the plant. Within twenty minutes, the number of pickets grew to 2000, forcing the demonstrators to adopt a new marching formation.\footnote{"Club-Swinging Women" n.p.} Two abreast and led by a large American flag, the pickets marched in a large oval along the plant windows, across the snow-covered lawn to the sidewalk, along the sidewalk, and then back across the lawn to the row of windows.\footnote{"10,000 Watch Demonstration" n.p.} Every window that could be opened was opened, and out of these leaned stay-in strikers, including the "House of David," a group of bearded sitdown strikers who chanted for the marching pickets, "No shave till victory."\footnote{Vorse, "The Automobile Workers' Strike" n.p.}

Despite instructions from Roy Reuther in the sound car that the pickets were to "use no violence" and that they should "let the other side start things if anything is to be started,"\footnote{"Club-Swinging Women" n.p.} signs of expected violence were rampant. As the picketers marched along the row of plant windows, those pickets not already carrying a weapon of some sort were handed either a 2" x 2" brace used in car windows or a cloth strap usually fastened across the back
seat of cars.\textsuperscript{96} Other pickets carried clubs, pieces of pipe, claw hammers, iron bars, sod cutters, and clothes trees.\textsuperscript{97} An effigy dangled from a rope out of a third floor window, seeming to underscore the strikers' determination to meet a violent eviction attempt with a violent response. Although the effigy bore no identification sign, from the rope around the effigy's neck hung a rat, indicating the effigy's symbolic link to George Boysen, the head of the Flint Alliance who was widely referred to by strikers and strike sympathizers as "The Rat."\textsuperscript{98}

As the zero hour approached, more and more persons poured into the strike zone. According to Mary Heaton Vorse, "An almost continual flow of cars streamed up Saginaw Street as curious people came to look at the demonstration."\textsuperscript{99} In the absence of a police presence in the area, a contingent of union persons acted as traffic cops, directing the cars through the congested area.\textsuperscript{100} While some persons were satisfied with merely driving past the strike zone, others wanted a better seat for the

\textsuperscript{96} "Flint Is Preparing For More Rioting" 11; "Club-Swinging Women" n.p.; Kraus 237.

\textsuperscript{97} Fine, \textit{Sit-Down} 280.

\textsuperscript{98} "10,000 Watch Demonstration" n.p.

\textsuperscript{99} Vorse, "Flint Sit Down Strike" n.p.

\textsuperscript{100} Vorse, "Flint Sit Down Strike" n.p.
expected confrontation, and by 3:00 p.m. an estimated 7,000 spectators\textsuperscript{101} had gathered to watch the picket line that one reporter described as "a moving wall of humanity."\textsuperscript{102} Vorse characterized as unprecedented the labor demonstration the spectators witnessed. "No such demonstration was ever seen in Flint. No such demonstration had ever happened in automobile towns. Few such demonstrations have ever been seen in all the history of the labor movement in America."\textsuperscript{103}

Eventually, as the number of pickets grew to 3,000, a new marching formation was employed with the pickets marching four abreast around the entire quarter mile perimeter of Fisher No. 1.\textsuperscript{104} As the pickets marched en masse around the plant, the sound car functioned as both stage director and actor, sometimes shouting directions to the marchers, sometimes leading the marchers in songs and chants. At one point, the sound car led the marchers in a song, sung to the tune of "The Old Gray Mare": "Daddy Knudsen ain't what he used to be, ain't what he used to be, ain't what he used to be."\textsuperscript{105} At other points in the

\textsuperscript{101} Fine, \textit{Sit-Down} 280.

\textsuperscript{102} "10,000 Watch Demonstration" n.p.

\textsuperscript{103} Vorse, "Flint Sit Down Strike" n.p.

\textsuperscript{104} "10,000 Watch Demonstration" n.p.; Vorse, "The Automobile Workers' Strike" n.p.; Vorse, "Flint Sit Down Strike" n.p.

\textsuperscript{105} "Flint Is Preparing For More Rioting" 11.
afternoon, the sound car instigated antiphonal responses by asking questions of pickets or strikers who then responded in unison. At one point, for example, Roy Reuther asked strikers leaning from the windows, "Are you going to be evicted?" The strikers roared back, "No!" At yet another point in the afternoon, the sound truck led the assembled mass in the antiphonal singing of "Solidarity Forever" with outside pickets and inside strikers taking turns intoning the song's lyrics, sung to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic": "When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run, There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun. Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one, But the union makes us strong."

Shortly before 4:00, the strikers and pickets received news that the eviction had been postponed for twenty four hours. Herbert Harris reports that "when this event was made known, sitdowners, pickets, and unionists from other cities made high holiday. Their violins, saxophones, banjos, and coronets struck up hillbilly airs and square dance tunes, and men and women swung partners

107 "10,000 Watch Demonstration" n.p.
joyously over the frozen lawns." While many of the pickets stayed at the struck plants, a group of approximately 1000 demonstrators broke away from the Fisher No. 1 picket line, returned to their cars, and staged an impromptu auto parade through downtown Flint, "honking their horns, shouting as they drove, and ignoring traffic regulations."

By 6:30, Pengelly was already crowded to capacity for the rally featuring women speakers from Flint and other automobile centers in the area. Women filled all the available seats, and men occupied any available standing space. Most of the speeches that night were made by rank and file wives of union men who summarized the activities engaged in by their respective Women's auxiliaries. A woman from Detroit, for example, reported:

Our auxiliary is growing by leaps and bounds. We are expanding in all sorts of ways. The children come in from five to six in the evening for singing. We put on amateur shows about strike incidents. For instance, a woman came in who hated unions. She came in looking for her husband. Of course her husband was on the picket line. Oh, she was plenty mad! One of the ladies said to her, "We are awfully short handed here in the kitchen. Don't you want to help?" "Now I'm here I might as well," and now she is one

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111 Fine, Sit-Down 280.

112 Vorse, "Flint Sit Down Strike" n.p.
of the most prominent members of our auxiliary. We made a little play out of that.\textsuperscript{113}

Mary Heaton Vorse, writing of this incident in an account of the Flint strike, asserted that "the importance of such an event can't be overestimated. This making of a play out of a strike incident of the workers themselves is the beginning of a new form of workers' theater."\textsuperscript{114}

In addition to rehearsing the activities of the women's auxiliaries, participants at the evening rally also planned for the following day when sitdown strikers were once again scheduled for eviction. Henry Kraus reports that while "everyone was in the grandest of spirits, . . . some of us had been worrying right along and wondering what to do to stop the carrying out of the injunction the following day."\textsuperscript{115} These worries were allayed at least partially when one of the evening's speakers suggested that a mass dance be staged in front of Fisher No. 1 the following afternoon.\textsuperscript{116}

Reactions to the events of February 3 varied widely. Before going to bed, Emma Brigadier, a participant in the afternoon women's parade and injunction picket, reflected:


\textsuperscript{114} Vorse, "Women Stand By Their Men" 178.

\textsuperscript{115} "A Dance in Front of Fisher No. 1," ts., n.d., n.p., Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 23.

\textsuperscript{116} "A Dance in Front of Fisher No. 1" n.p.
Today I marched through the Flint business district displaying to the crowds my union emblem. Today I picketed Fisher Body No. 1. But I wasn't alone. I was with FIVE HUNDRED UNION WOMEN. And we not only sang "Solidarity" to the city of Flint and the press, we gave the city of Flint and the press an OBJECT LESSON on solidarity! And what a huge shivery thrill it was.117

The day's events elicited a decidedly different response from a Flint clergyman: "I have witnessed the abdication of the law and the rule by the pug ugly of the law of the jungle, the law of the tooth and fang."118

The following afternoon, expecting an attempt to evict the sitdowners, strikers and other unionists once again massed at Fisher No. 1. As the new 3:30 zero hour approached, the ten-piece strikers' band began setting up their instruments for the concert that was to be piped outside via a loudspeaker system.119 As the band prepared, the demonstrators massed outside the plant began to execute increasingly complex marching formations for the sitdowners who leaned out of plant windows, as well as for a second audience consisting of the estimated 1,000 persons who gathered as spectators.120 One reporter indicated that after marching two abreast in a

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118 Quoted in Fine, Sit-Down 280-81.
119 Vorse, "Flint Sit Down Strike" n.p.; "A Dance in Front of Fisher No. 1" n.p.
conventional fashion "as a warm up," "the line was divided as it approached one of the lawns into a grand right and left and sacheted, if that is the word, into two lines circling in opposite directions."\(^{121}\) As the two circles of pickets revolved on the lawn, other marchers took up position within the circles, forming "a less recognizable but equally impressive design in the middle."\(^{122}\) The reporter went on to predict that "a few more days and the picket line will undoubtedly be spelling out UAW as neatly as any college band."\(^{123}\)

Eventually, the picketers shifted from marching formations to snake dances, and when the orchestra began to play, the pickets paired off--men and women, women and women--and began to dance. At one point in the evening, a "twang-voiced" singer, accompanied by a guitar, serenaded the dancing pickets with "The Fisher Strike Song."\(^{124}\) The song, sung to the tune of "The Martins and the Coys" and commemorating the calling of the strike at Fisher No. 1 five weeks earlier, had been composed by the strikers themselves on the first night of the strike\(^{125}\)--the night described in the song itself:

\(^{121}\) "Pickets Defy Snow" n.p.
\(^{122}\) "Pickets Defy Snow" n.p.
\(^{123}\) "Pickets Defy Snow" n.p.
\(^{124}\) "Picket Defy Snow" n.p.
\(^{125}\) Kraus 104-105.
Gather round me and I'll tell you all a story
Of the Fisher Body Factory No. One.
When the dies they started moving,
The union men they had a meeting
To decide right then and there what must be done.

These 4000 union boys
Oh they sure made lots of noise
They decided then and there to shut down tight.
In the office they got snooty so we started picket duty
Now the Fisher Body is on a strike.

Now this strike it started one bright Wednesday evening,
When they loaded up a boxcar full of dies.
When the union boys they stopped them
And the railroad workers backed them
The officials in the office were surprised.

Now they really started out to strike in earnest.
They took possession of the gates and buildings too.
They placed a guard in either clockhouse
Just to keep nonunion men out
And they took the keys and locked the gate up too.126

At another point in the evening, pickets of foreign birth gave exhibitions of the folk dances of the countries of their origins.127

As night descended, a slow snow began to fall. Fires were lit to illuminate and warm the dancers. Coffee and sandwiches were served. One witness described the evening's events in the following fashion:

When the participants have had enough weeks of experience, picketing gradually emerges from a kind of grim walking marathon into something of a social function, with all the essentials. The picketing at Fisher Body No. 1 yesterday is a good case in point. A few deft touches and what began as a demonstration

126 Kraus 104-105.
127 Kraus 261.
of labor's solidarity ended as a demonstration of labor's cheerfulness, even in the face of a five-week strike. It was, in fact, a lawn party complete with dancing.\textsuperscript{128}

Henry Kraus offers a similar description in \textit{The Many and the Few}, writing that "the approaching night, the flurries of snow, and the leaping flames of four salamanders gave atmospheric background to a scene that almost made one think of a medieval carnival rather than a strike."\textsuperscript{129}

Throughout the week, the Emergency Brigade returned to Fisher No. 1. One afternoon, they staged a concert for the sitdowners there, after which a group of the sitdowners--the House of David--came out of the plant led by a drummer and marched through the assembled crowd.\textsuperscript{130}

On another afternoon, members of the Emergency Brigade performed labor charades for the sitdowners, with the women staging tableaus and the sitdowners guessing the labor slogan or strike event depicted. Among the tableaus depicted were "Solidarity Forever" and "Sole Collective Bargaining."\textsuperscript{131}

The sitdown strikers at Fisher No. 2 and at the recently seized Chevy 4 received considerably less outside attention during this period of the strike due to the

\textsuperscript{128} "Pickets Defy Snow" n.p.

\textsuperscript{129} Kraus 261.

\textsuperscript{130} "Uniformed Officers Direct Traffic," \textit{Flint Journal} 8 February 1937: 2.

\textsuperscript{131} Kraus 260-61.
heavily restricted military zone that had been established around these neighboring plants. Nevertheless, sitdowners at Fisher No. 2 and Chevy 4 engaged in a variety of cultural performances. On the afternoon of Monday, February 8, sitdowners at both plants climbed to the roofs of their plants and took turns cheering and serenading one another with popular labor songs from the strike.¹³²

Three days earlier, these same strikers had participated in the staging of a quintessentially American cultural performance, a baseball game.¹³³ Having taken up positions on their respective roofs, as well as on the overhead bridge that joined Chevy 4 and Fisher 2, the sitdowners threw a baseball and bat down to the newspaper photographers and motion picture cameramen who gathered below. Reporters were among the few parties afforded access to the military zone. The press personnel separated into two teams, the "Stills" and "Movies." After establishing a home plate, a first base (a fire hydrant), and a third base (a rock)––there wasn't room for a second base––the sitdowners and press corps staged what one reporter termed "the most cock-eyed game in the


history of baseball"\textsuperscript{134} and another termed "a weird travesty of a ball game."\textsuperscript{135}

The 500 strikers who lined the roofs and the catwalk joining Fisher No. 2 and Chevy 4 acted as umpires. When the sitdowners declared a "Movie" player out at first, the player's teammates cleared the bench and sat down on the playing field. Struck by what they witnessed, the umpires quickly reversed their call. A few innings later with the "Movies" at bat, the umpires called a fourth ball. The "Stills" sat down, protesting the call, but the umpires remained adamant. The "Stills," after gathering in a huddle to decide their next move, returned to their positions on the field, once again sat down, and began singing "Solidarity Forever." The umpires again reversed their decision. For subsequent disputed calls, a unique form of arbitration was employed in which the disputing parties took turns singing "Solidarity Forever" with the loudest group being awarded the appropriate decision. The game, which lasted 26 innings and was called only when darkness overtook the playing field, was witnessed not only by the sitdowners who acted as umpires but also by the National Guard who took up positions behind machine guns that framed the playing field. Other spectators took up positions in "the benches"--the hilly portions of

\textsuperscript{134} "500 in Plant Umpire Game" n.p.

\textsuperscript{135} "Strikers Keep Plants Clean" 3.
Chevrolet Avenue immediately behind the machine guns. The game was also witnessed by at least one company guard protecting a nearby plant that had been closed due to material shortages caused by the strike. When one of the players hit a home run that sent the ball into the fenced area protected by the company guard, the guard retrieved the ball, returning it to the strikers amid a volley of cheers.

During the early morning hours of Thursday, February 11, after having engaged in nonstop negotiations throughout the night, Michigan governor Frank Murphy and federal conciliator James F. Dewey finally coaxed General Motors and CIO officials into tentatively accepting a strike settlement. While union negotiators agreed to the settlement's terms, they refused to sign any document until the sitdown strikers themselves agreed. Within hours, the terms were revealed to the strikers, and after some debate the sitdowners agreed to evacuate the plants under the terms specified by the agreement.

On Thursday afternoon, a large crowd of reporters, municipal officials, and other interested persons packed into a Lansing courtroom usually presided over by Judge George Murphy, the Michigan governor's brother. On that particular afternoon, however, those assembled met not to carry out judicial litigation but to culminate labor negotiations, and as the leading actors in the negotiating
process filed into the high-vaulted courtroom and assumed their assigned positions, the assembled spectators broke into applause. The front row, flanked by court officers, consisted of James F. Dewey, William S. Knudsen, Frank Murphy, and Wyndham Mortimer (UAWA vice-president). Standing directly behind these front line negotiators were members of the supporting cast: John Thomas Smith and Donaldson Brown (GM vice-presidents) and Lee Pressman (general counsel for the CIO). Additional union officials took up position directly behind Smith, Brown, and Pressman on the judge’s bench. After brief statements from the various parties, the agreement was signed, first by Governor Murphy, then by Dewey, Knudsen, Mortimer, Pressman, Brown, and Smith.\footnote{Louis Stark, "Action Officially Ends 44-Day Strike That Tied Up Plants," \textit{New York Times} 11 February 1937: 1.}

Seventy miles away in Flint, while union officials planned for an early evening victory procession from the plants, sitdowners gathered together their belongings and readied the plants for evacuation. Although the victory procession was not scheduled to begin until 5:30, a crowd of eager spectators—many of them wives, children, and siblings of the sitdowners—began assembling at Fisher No. 1 as early as 3:30.\footnote{"Flint Goes Into Tailspin To Celebrate Strike’s End," \textit{Detroit News} 12 February 1937: n.p., clipping in Joe Brown Scrapbook, Vol. 6.} Shortly before 5:30, a sound car
arrived at the plant, carrying Roy Reuther who had manned the vehicle throughout much of the 44-day ordeal, and ceremonies began in earnest.138

After a short speech by UAWA president Homer Martin, Roy Reuther addressed the 400 sitdown strikers still inside the plant:

We will march out as a victorious army in a glorious crusade for a better life. We have held our forces for 44 days. And we are about to evacuate this plant under the victorious banner of the auto union, and not because the sheriff showed us a piece of paper and told us to get out. The eyes of the country are on Flint at this moment.139

As the 5000 spectators cheered Reuther's statement,140 a group of twelve sitdowners suddenly appeared on the roof of Fisher No. 1, unfurling first a small banner bearing the inscription "United We Stand" and then a sixty foot white banner on which red letters announced "Victory Is Ours."141 For the first time in forty four days, the factory whistle blew,142 announcing that the sitdowners' shift had finally ended, and then the strikers, many of


139 Porter, "Flint Hails Peace" 15.


141 "Victory Meeting Set For Sunday," Flint Weekly Review 12 February 1937: n.p., clipping in Henry Kraus Collection, Oversize Folder 1; Fine, Sit-Down 311-12; Porter, "Flint Hails Peace" 15; Kraus 289.

142 Kraus 289.
them wearing new white shirts and freshly pressed suits that had been sent in during the day, began their triumphant march from the plant to the accompaniment of 5000 voices singing "Solidarity Forever."143 The procession was headed by four color bearers followed by a comic drum major leading two drummers and a makeshift band more bent on producing noise than music.144 Bud Simons, chairman of the Fisher No. 1 strike committee, marched out close on the heels of the makeshift band, followed directly by the still unshaven Bearded Brigade.145 The Bearded Brigade was followed by a mock funeral procession in which four pall bearers carried a first aid stretcher on which lay an effigy bearing a sign marked "The Rat."146 The other sitdowners who had occupied Fisher No. 1 followed these mock mourners, some marching out orderly in pairs, others snake dancing their way through the factory gate.147 Many of

143 "Victory Meeting Set For Sunday" n.p.; Porter, "Flint Hails Peace" 15.


145 Kraus 289.


the sitdowners either smoked or carried fat cigars, symbols of their newly-won prosperity.\textsuperscript{148} All of them either waved or wore in their hat a small American flag.\textsuperscript{149}

Having evacuated the first of the plants, the sitdown strikers fell in line with the women’s Emergency Brigade,\textsuperscript{150} and, amid a downpour of confetti, began their two mile trek to the Chevy 4 and Fisher No. 2 plants. As the tail of the parade passed those who lined the sidewalks to witness the spectacle and cheer their heroes, spectators became participants, falling in line behind the triumphant sitdowners.

As they passed the Rialto, a local movie house, the strikers sent up a volley of cheers for Maxie Gaeler,\textsuperscript{151} the proprietor of the business who throughout the ordeal had cast his sympathies with the strikers, providing weekly movies for sitdowners in the closed plants as well as for other unionists in Pengelly Hall.\textsuperscript{152} One of the films Gaeler provided was Charlie Chaplin’s \textit{Modern}

\textsuperscript{148} Kraus 289.
\textsuperscript{149} Fine, \textit{Sit-Down} 311-312; Kraus 289.
\textsuperscript{150} Porter, "Flint Hails Peace" 15.
\textsuperscript{151} Kraus 291.
\textsuperscript{152} "Plenty of Food" n.p.; Fine, \textit{Sit-Down} 162.
a film whose send up of the speedup and montage of milling sheep being led to slaughter juxtaposed against factory workers at shift change, no doubt, took on special significance in the strike context. After all, control of the speed of the line was one of the union’s chief demands. Later in the parade route, as they passed the Strand Theater, marchers sent up a salvo of boos for its owner, Lester E. Matt, who had recently hired scabs "when bona fide union men went out on strike against unfair wages and working conditions."

As the parade neared the military zone surrounding Chevy 4 and Fisher No. 2, the National Guard sentries stepped aside, allowing free access to the two plants that had for the past eleven days--since the rioting that attended the strikers’ seizure of Chevy 4--been off limits. Crossing the Flint River on Saginaw Street, the


<sup>154</sup> In one scene in *Modern Times*, Chaplin depicted "the shakes" that frequently plagued line workers. To a contemporary film audience, Chaplin’s machine-induced, involuntary twitchings may seem nothing more than a comic invention. To many line workers, however, "the shakes" were a daily reality. A striker’s wife, interviewed at the union commissary, stated: "I’d like to shout from the housetops what the company’s doing to our men . . . . At night in bed, he shakes, his body, he shakes" (quoted in Don Congdon, ed., *The Thirties: A Time to Remember* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962] 479).

<sup>155</sup> Kraus 291.

procession momentarily halted while UAW president Homer Martin, a former Baptist minister, performed last rites for the Boysen effigy. After Martin completed his mock ceremony, the pall bearers bore the stretcher to the edge of the bridge where they dumped the "corpse" into the river below.\textsuperscript{157}

Darkness had descended by the time the Fisher No. 1 parade reached the other plants, and, as the procession came to a halt before the Chevy 4 gates at 6:30, great flares suddenly lit up the scene, a renewed downpour of confetti began, and the enormous gates of the plant slowly opened. Led by Kermit Johnson, chairman of the strike committee in Chevy 4, the 300 men who had occupied the plant for the past eleven days made their way out of the plant and onto the landing deck where, under a weather-beaten banner reading "100% Sit Down," they were flanked by two flag bearers.\textsuperscript{158} Roy Reuther, at the helm of the soundtruck, asked the strikers to sing "Solidarity Forever" as they marched out,\textsuperscript{159} and doing so, the jubilant sitdowners marched down the steps, through the

\textsuperscript{157} Kraus 291.


gate, and on to the Fisher No. 2 plant a few yards away where they were joined by the 125 sitdown strikers who had occupied that plant for 44 days.

In a telegram to Henry Kraus, Mary Heaton Vorse describes the victory procession:

The Fisher 2 boys have marched out stop they march out in military formation from the empty waiting plant carrying neat bundles of their possessions stop they make part of the huge joyful crowd by now bright with confetti stop people are carrying toy balloons stop the whole scene is lit by the burst of glory of photographers flares and big flags punctuate the crowd with color stop they are shouting freedom freedom freedom stop chevrolet avenue is packed from bridge to bridge stop it seems as though the street can hold no more stop the old dam of fear has burst stop they are in the grip of a mighty creative power stop . . . armistice day has come to Flint.160

Unlike Vorse who assumed a position within the parade, a Detroit News reporter opted for a more detached view:

You can look right out of the window of the hotel where this is being written and see more motor cars lost in an impenetrable forest of red and green than a traffic cop can shake a night stick at. Nothing can ever be done about it. All by way of saying that the evacuation of the strike-bound motor plants led the way to something of a celebration. It was unique in the annals of labor demonstrations. In fact, it was no demonstration in the capital and labor sense of that word. It was a hoop-la of the veriest sort.161

The victory celebration did not end with the evacuation of the Fisher No. 2 sitdowners from the plant. Rather, these

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160 Mary Heaton Vorse, telegram to Henry Kraus, 12 February 1937, Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 14.

161 "Flint Goes Into Tailspin" n.p.
strikers merely joined the other 10-15,000 celebrants who then proceeded to Pengelly for the final rally there.

Prior to the announcement that a settlement had been reached, an evening's entertainment at Pengelly had already been planned. The evening was to consist of the presentation of an original play entitled The Strike Marches On, a speech by ULGWA official Rose Pesotta entitled "The Importance of Trade Unionism to Women," the singing by the union choir of two original labor songs composed by union member Carl Wahl, and a dance. With the surprise announcement that a settlement had been reached, additional speeches by various union officials were added to the slate of the evening's events.

According to Kraus,

Pengelly auditorium was jammed beyond the last inch of space. The vestibules on all the floors and the long hallway downstairs were packed also, and when the crowd couldn't get into the building anymore, the people began to mass outside. And still more came. Sound apparatus was strung down to the second floor from the hall and was hung out of the auditorium windows facing the street. Five thousand people were gathered outside. No one could estimate the number that had crushed and fought their way into the building.164

162 "Flint Goes Into Tailspin" n.p.; "Union Parades From Plants" 1.


164 Kraus 292.
After some two hours of speeches, the assembled mass was treated to the first and only performance of The Strike Marches On.

On Monday, February 8, upon arriving in Michigan to present a lecture for the League of Industrial Democracy in Lansing the following day, Morris Watson—vice-president of the American Newspaper Guild and production manager of the Living Newspaper Unit of the Federal Theatre Project—was confronted by Mary Heaton Vorse, Josephine Herbst, and Dorothy Kraus. The women asked Watson if he would be willing to direct a group of striking Flint autoworkers and their supporters in a living newspaper production depicting key incidents from their present strike. The women had already prepared an outline for the living newspaper. As Watson recalls, "It was with some misgivings that I undertook the job. Two days to whip up a show with a cast of 80 amateurs! The misgivings were unnecessary. The show shaped itself like plaster in a mold." After presenting his lecture in Lansing on Tuesday, Watson travelled to Flint to cast and begin rehearsing the performance.

Casting proved more difficult than Herbst, Vorse, and Johnson initially imagined. Herbst explained the idea of

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166 Watson 123.
the project to a group of unionists gathered at Pengelly, asking them if they were interested in participating. Silence. Only after Watson suggested to Herbst in a whisper that she inform the prospective cast "that they wouldn't have to act, . . . that they would merely be telling the story of their strike" did the unionists agree to participate. According to Watson, after the "you-won't-have-to-act" announcement was made, "the response was immediate and enthusiastic."\textsuperscript{167} In a letter to her husband in one of the striking plants, one cast member wrote: "My Dear Clarence, I suppose you are glad you don't have to listen to me say my part in the play. I have it all learned. I am real proud."\textsuperscript{168}

Although Herbst, Vorse, and Kraus wrote the outline for the performance, much of the \textit{inventio} rested with the performers themselves. Vorse writes that "it was supposed to have been written by Josephine Herbst, Dorothy Kraus, and Mary Heaton Vorse . . . , but it was really the workers who put it on. They amplified it and gave body to the authors' skeleton outline."\textsuperscript{169} Watson agrees, noting that the performers had their own ideas about how the play ought to be executed and that feedback from rehearsal audiences

\textsuperscript{167} Watson 123.

\textsuperscript{168} Letter to Clarence, [source unidentified], Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 24.

\textsuperscript{169} Vorse, "Flint Sit Down Strike" n.p.
comprised of persons carrying on other business at union headquarters proved a valuable asset.\textsuperscript{170}

On Wednesday, February 10, just hours after the production began rehearsals and just hours before the final truce was reached, promotion for the living newspaper got under way. The \textit{Flint Auto Worker} billed the performance as "an original play with 200 actors depicting the great Ch\'evrolet battle."\textsuperscript{171} Under the headline "A Play!" the promotional news story promised that "the struggles of the past six weeks will live again as workers re-enact on stage the valiant roles they have played in real life."\textsuperscript{172} The \textit{Punch Press} predicted that

Flint theatrical history will mark a new development Thursday when the Living Newspaper players present their pageant-play, \textit{Strike Marches On}. . . . The production, an innovation in its combination of pageant and play features, is a dramatic interpretation of the issues in labor's struggle with General Motors.\textsuperscript{173}

In addition to promotional stories in union newspapers, mimeographed flyers were posted around town.\textsuperscript{174} The flyers, noting the date, time, place, and title of the production included a hand-drawn proscenium stage complete

\textsuperscript{170} Watson 125.

\textsuperscript{171} "The Strike Marches On," \textit{Flint Auto Worker} 10 February 1937: 1.

\textsuperscript{172} "A Play!" \textit{Flint Auto Worker} 10 February 1937: 8.


\textsuperscript{174} A copy of the flyer is available in the Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 21.
with tidy wing curtains and overhead valance despite the fact that the performance would actually transpire in a rented union hall complete with a sagging hardwood floor, a ceiling bearing witness to persistent leaks, and numerous cardboard windows testifying to the meager union coffers. The performance space itself consisted of a small five inch high platform centered along one of the room's four walls.

On the evening of Thursday, February 11, while union representatives celebrated their accomplishments in a round of speeches before a packed house, Vorse made her way to Pengelly. Recalling the evening, she writes:

As I went up to union hall, I thought, "Now there probably will be no one there" . . . . But the streets leading to Bengalli [sic] Hall were so choked with people I could hardly get through. I could not fight my way up the stairs. In desperation I climbed the fire escape and finally arrived where the cast was waiting.

Nor was Vorse alone in having difficulty getting to the performance. According to Watson, a few of the actors arrived only minutes before the show began, and "two of them never made it, and I had to press into service two spectators." After the last of the speeches, the performance began.

175 Kraus 100.
176 Vorse, "Flint Sit Down Strike" n.p.
177 Vorse, "Flint Sit-Down Strike" n.p.
178 Watson 125.
As a percussionist monotonously beat out a rhythm simulating the noise of the assembly line, a group of male worker-actors took their places on the stage, pantomiming the motions they actually engaged in for hours on end as they worked. Over a loudspeaker, a voice announced: "1928--Notice how leisurely the boys work. See the foreman exchanging a chew of tobacco with one of the boys." After a pause during which the percussionist slowly increased the pace of his drumming and the worker-actors slowly increased the pace of their pantomimes, the loudspeaker returned: "1930--Notice the slight speed-up." After another pause during which the percussion and pantomime again increased their pace, the loudspeaker returned: "1932--Here began the era of industrial progress in America. Now look at the foreman pulling a man out of line--too slow--the others must do his work. See how fast they go." The performance continues speeding up in this fashion through 1936, at which point a cymbal crashes

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181 Vorse, "Outline" n.p.

182 Watson 123; Baker 1.

183 Watson 123; Baker 1.
and the percussion and pantomimes stop. A foreman grabs a worker wearing a large button and pulls him from the line.

Foreman: What's that?
Worker: You know what it is.
Foreman: You tell me.
Worker: I don't have to, you've got fellows who can tell you.
Foreman: You belong to the union?
Worker: You know damn well I do.
Foreman: Then you can go. We haven't any room for union fellows here.

As the union worker is escorted from the stage, the other workers resume their pantomimic line work, whispering about what has just transpired. A factory whistle blows, and the workers move offstage.

The next short scene consisted of an interchange between a worker-actor and the loudspeaker. As the worker-actor walked on stage carrying a wooden soapbox, the loudspeaker asked him, "Who are you?" The worker-actor responded, "I'm an automobile worker." The loudspeaker asked him, "What have you got there?" Turning the soapbox to reveal a label reading "JOB," the worker-actor responded, "It's my job." The loudspeaker queried, "What are you gonna do with it." The worker-actor, placing the soapbox on the floor and sitting on it responded, "I'm gonna sit on it." The loudspeaker asked, "You ever heard

184 Vorse, "Outline" n.p.
185 Watson 123-24; Vorse, "Outline" n.p.
186 Vorse, "Outline" n.p.
of property rights." The worker-actor countered, "You ever heard of human rights." The loudspeaker began, "But the court said . . ." before being cut off abruptly by the worker-actor: "I don't care what the court said. This is my job. I own it and I'm gonna sit on it and nobody's gonna take it away from me." 187

The following scene depicted the discovery of a stool pigeon. Watson comments on the difficulty of casting this scene, noting that "nobody wanted to be a stool pigeon. I had to use all my persuasive powers to convince a prospective stool pigeon that the representation of such a low creature was in this particular instance an important, a very important strike duty." 188 In the scene, a group of striking workers came on discussing their suspicion that a stool pigeon in their midst had been revealing union plans to company officials. 189 As the worker-actors conversed about the stool pigeon, a female performer--one of the striker's wives who had actually pointed out a stool pigeon the previous week--rose from her position in the audience, pointed at one of the men on stage, and announced, "There's your stool pigeon!" The use of an actual informant to depict the informant in the scene lent

187 Baker 1; Watson 122-23.
188 Watson 124.
189 Vorse, "Outline" n.p.
to the play what Watson described as a "thrilling reality." 190

The next two scenes in The Strike Marches On depict the Emergency Brigade in action. The first of these scenes depicts the Emergency Brigade in action against the police in front of the Chevy 9 plant. The second of these scenes depicts the Emergency Brigade in action in front of Chevy 4 after it had been successfully closed. 191 The police in the first of these scenes were played by city bus drivers who had gone on strike prior to the autoworkers and whose bus boycott was supported by the striking autoworkers. 192 Members of the Emergency Brigade portrayed themselves. In the first of these scenes, the loudspeaker depicted the sound truck, shouting instructions to the Emergency Brigade and the workers inside the plant. In the second of these scenes, the loudspeaker resumed the narrator role.

For the finale, a worker-actor took up a position on a small soapbox and was encircled by members of the Emergency Brigade who stood on the floor with their arms locked. The loudspeaker asked, "Detroit, have you heard of our victory?" The audience, led by confederates, responded, "Detroit has heard of your victory." The loudspeaker asked, "Cadillac, have you heard of our victory?" The

190 Watson 124.

191 Vorse, "Outline" n.p.; Watson 124.

192 Watson 124.
audience responded, "Cadillac has heard of your victory."
The loudspeaker continued to ask the same question, substituting for Detroit and Cadillac, first, other automobile manufacturers and towns, then, nations such as France and Spain. Finally, the loudspeaker asked, "World, have you heard of our victory?" The audience roared back, "The world has heard of your victory."\textsuperscript{193} The Emergency Brigade, joined by the audience inside and outside the union hall, sang "Solidarity Forever."\textsuperscript{194}

Henry Kraus describes the performance as "exceedingly crude," but, significantly, he does go on to note that despite this

one did not require a special gift of loyalty to see something there. The mere numbers on the low stage; their exuberant, infectious vitality; the audience prompting and responding across the hardly distinguishable break; the universally shared rock-bottom terms of the enacted message. . . . Were these not amply expressive of the class awakening, of a mass soul in birth?\textsuperscript{195}

The Strike Marches On was the final cultural performance staged within the GM/UAWA social drama.

\textsuperscript{193} Vorse, "Outline" n.p.; Watson 124-25.

\textsuperscript{194} Vorse, "Outline" n.p.

\textsuperscript{195} Kraus 292.
Contestation

Cultural performances staged during the Flint sitdown strike instantiated contestation at all three of the spheres of contestation identified in chapter two: textual, spatial, and conceptual. Because strategies operating at the spatial sphere of contestation in the Flint autoworkers' strike are intimately connected to the negotiation of community, I will address these strategies in a later section of this chapter.

Textual Sphere of Contestation

Contestation at the textual sphere tended to cluster around four nodal points: work and idleness, home and family, democracy and dictatorship, and community and other. In order to analyze the contestation surrounding each of these symbolic clusters, I first rehearse the arguments circulated by those opposed to the strike and then analyze how union forces used cultural performances to respond to these arguments.

Work and Idleness: Much of the contestation at the textual sphere tended to center around the binary pair work and idleness. Symbolic constructions circulated by anti-strike forces frequently represented the strike as a form of idleness and a threat to job security. In his "New Year's Message," the president of Buick referred to the strike as "idleness which they [the employees] and we [the
employers] do not want." Similarly, Judge Black’s injunction restrained the strikers "from continuing to remain in said plants in idleness." The Flint Alliance, likewise, coupled the strike and idleness, claiming as one of its objectives "to do something to combat the threat of prolonged idleness."

Antistrike forces contrasted the threat of idleness with the value and privilege of working. In a full-page ad addressed to "all General Motors Employes [sic]," Alfred Sloan assured his audience that they would "not have to pay tribute for the privilege of working in a General Motors plant." An even more general paean to work appeared in a full-page ad placed in the Flint Journal by the Flint Journal shortly after the calling of the strike. A large, framed drawing of the neck and head of plow horse consumes the top two-thirds of the page. Inside the frame but beneath the picture is a poem:

I know it’s nearly supper time. We’ve plowed a lot today. We’ve done our best and earned a rest, But something bids me stay

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196 Curtice 5.
197 "Complete Text" 2.
199 Sloan 9.
200 "Let’s Get This Done Before Dark," Flint Journal 5 January 1937: 17.
To finish up this little piece--
Ten furrows more to face.
The way we'll go right down each row
Will make a jolly race.

Hard looking things can't make me think,
"Too much to make a start."
They skip away like colts at play
When faced with cheerful heart.

It's fun to work and get things done--
Complete one's task each day.
My oats and hay taste good that way.
Let's go! What do you say?

Beneath the frame, in large letters, the headline reads,
"Let's Get this Done Before Dark," and beneath the headline
are six paragraphs. The first three paragraphs, a paean to
work in general, contain statements such as:

A good horse loves to work.

With the cooperation of an intelligent driver, he [a
good horse] is ready to step right into the collar and
walk away with any load when extra demands are made.

Love of work and willing, intelligent cooperation
account for most of the progress we human beings have
made in homes, in business enterprises, and in
communities.

Work is no hardship; it is a blessing.

The final three paragraphs describe the work of "a good
newspaper."201 Although the ad nowhere mentions the

201 After noting that "a good newspaper is never out of
harness," the ad continues: "The Flint Journal naturally
reflects the tastes and the viewpoint of those who read it
regularly. Working together with them for the common good,
we necessarily think as they do on many important
questions, and by bringing out all sides of it, we help
crystallize public opinion and keep it alive until proper
action is secured. This is not only one of the basic
reasons a newspaper has for being: it is also one of its
great and lasting satisfactions. We deem it a genuine
privilege to 'step into the collar' whenever community
strike situation, the sitdown no doubt served as a subtext for many readers who encountered it. In fact, one reader later wrote a letter to the editor urging that a solution to the strike situation be arrived at promptly so that her husband could return to work. She ended her letter with the sentence, "Let's get this done before dark."202

Union forces employed cultural performances to respond to their opposition's arguments regarding work and idleness. While antistrike forces portrayed the strike as a form of idleness, cultural performances staged by union forces depicted the strike as a form of work. At a rally on January 7, for example, Martin concluded his speech by invoking Lincoln in a manner that implied that striking was working: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with knowledge in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in" (my emphasis). Similarly, when the sitdown strikers, before marching out of the plants in their victory procession, sounded the factory whistle that had remained silent for 44-days, they were enacting a rebuttal to the strike-equals-idleness argument. In the context of the evacuation parade, the factory whistle signalled the striking workers' perception, first, that they had been engaged in a form of

interests can use our help to 'get this done before dark.'"202 Mrs. O. J. Hoagland, letter, Flint Journal 14 January 1937: 3.
work and, second, that their shift was now over. Particularly interesting is the way in which the sitdowners responded to General Motors' argument by appropriating a General Motors' signifying apparatus, the factory whistle. While Martin's deployment of the Lincoln quote and the sounding of the factory whistle were unique indications of the union's perception of the sitdowners as engaged in a form of work, the ritual punching of the timeclock functioned as a daily enactment of this argument.

**Home and Family:** In addition to the contestation surrounding work and idleness, a second group of arguments cluster around the nodal points home and family. Those opposed to the strike deployed home and family in at least two ways, depicting the strike, first, as anathema to the metaphorical corporate family and, second, as a threat to the actual homes and families of Flint workers.

The corporation-as-family metaphor begins to be articulated in Curtice's New Years' statement. After asserting that "every job with Buick . . . is something more than a mere means of earning of a living," Curtice goes on to contend that "every man and woman of Buick is part of Buick."^{203} While the corporation-as-family metaphor remains implicit in Curtice's statement, it is given overt form in a letter to the editor published in the *Flint Journal*: "We must all remember that our foremen and

^{203} Curtice 5.
managers are Genesee county residents and as neighbors we know we can get along like any sensible family."204 A cartoon published in the Punch Press suggests that this metaphor was a recurrent dimension of antistrike rhetoric. The cartoon depicts a uniformed policeman with a rifle in each hand descending the steps leading out of a building. At the foot of the steps, a group of men, many with guns, have gathered. Two men in the crowd who do not have guns hold up their hands, signalling their lack of firearms to the officer descending the steps. Two signs are posted on the exterior of the building. One reads, "Police Station Jail." The other reads, "Get Guns Here!" Below the cartoon are two captions: "After those strikers, boys!" and "THIS is General Motors' happy, peaceful family!"205 Antistrike forces construed the sitdown strike not only as a threat to the metaphorical General Motors/Flint family but also as a threat to the homes and families of Flint workers. Sloan's bulletin board statement to General Motors workers warned: "Your employment and wages and the welfare of your families are being endangered by actions beyond your control and that of your company."206 Similarly, "privation and hardship to employes [sic] and


206 Sloan 9.
their families" appears in a back-to-work petition circulated among Chevrolet workers. When the Flint Alliance was formed, Boysen contended that participation was "the job of everyone interested in Flint and its homes." On the same occasion, Boysen explained the formation of the Flint Alliance as the expression of the resentment of thousands of loyal workers angered by "the prospect of prolonged idleness and the suffering it means for themselves and their families just when they are getting back on their feet." A letter to the editor articulates a similar argument:

Thousands of families who have just emerged from a depression, which has left horrible imprints upon their minds, who were just beginning to look forward to paying their just debts, and now they are being thrown back into the abyss by this power seeking dictator whose only object is to promote himself regardless of how many mouths go hungry or how many may lose their homes and be thrown out into the cold.

Anti-strike rhetoric depicting the strike as a threat to the security of homes usually took one of two forms, depending on whether its basis lay in economic considerations or in civil liberties. The economic form of the argument maintained that the strike threatened the


value of Flint property. Eli Bearup articulated a no
frills version of the economic argument in his letter to
the editor, claiming that "if the strike keeps up it will
render the people’s property in Flint worthless."\(^{210}\)

Unlike the economic form of the argument that
maintained that the strike threatened the value of private
property, the civil liberties form of the argument
maintained that the strike threatened the existence of
property rights. An editorial in the *Detroit Free Press*
exemplifies the civil liberties/property rights argument:

> If the laws designed to protect private property were
> being enforced, there would be an early expulsion of
> the "sit-down" strikers. But no attempt at
> enforcement has been made, and it is a fair
> conclusion that for the time being at least, the
> statute has broken down. Which, incidentally, is
> something for every cottage owner, now relying on law
> to protect him from intruders, to think over.\(^{211}\)

One former Michigan probate judge suggested that perhaps
the strikers would come to understand the civil liberties
issues involved in a sitdown if they were given a turn-the-
tables object lesson. The former judge suggested that
those opposed to the strike pack a suitcase, take that
suitcase to a sitdown striker’s home, gain admittance by

\(^{210}\) Eli A. Bearup, letter, *Flint Journal* 14 January
1937: 3.

\(^{211}\) "The Real Strike Victims," *Detroit Free Press* 26
pretending to be salespersons, and then proceed to "stay right there until the man of the house came home." \(^{212}\)

At least three strategies appear to have been operating in cultural performances staged by union forces to respond to the above charges concerning home and family. One strategy involved the use of cultural performances to attack the family metaphors circulated by General Motors and the Flint Alliance. A second strategy involved the use of cultural performances to put into circulation alternative family metaphors. And a third strategy involved the frequent use of strikers' families as performers in and audience members for pro-strike cultural performances.

Rather than outright denying the legitimacy of the General Motors-as-a-family metaphor, the strikers instead frequently adopted the metaphor, bestowing on it a specificity that undermined the metaphor's potency. References to General Motors' president Alfred Sloan as "Papa Sloan" and to General Motors' vice-president William S. Knudsen as "Daddy Knudsen" frequently made their way into cultural performances, particularly labor songs. The "Yankee Doodle Sit Down Song," for example contains the verse: "Now Papa Sloan he swore by heck/ He couldn't see the union./ He's going to get it in the neck/ with a

slightly rotten onion."\textsuperscript{213} The "Yankee Doodle Sit Down Song," like "Daddy Knudsen, he ain't what he used to be," makes explicit the paternalism of the GM family, and given this paternalism in which the corporation functions as father and the workers as children, it is, in a sense, fitting for the worker-children to sing these "childish" songs. Both of the songs cited employ the family metaphor first circulated by the opposition, but both inflect this metaphor in a decidedly pro-strike manner, suggesting that if General Motors is a family, then the Knudsen/Sloan father figures are decidedly poor at carrying out their roles as providers.

Labor songs were not the only medium through which unionists deflated the GM-as-family metaphor. During the early days of the strike, sitdowners slept wherever they could find a comfortable space, frequently using the seats in the unfinished cars on the line as beds. While most of these makeshift sleeping quarters were sparsely furnished, one striker took special pains to construct a comparably posh bedroom suite. According to a story in the \textit{Punch Press}, the striker has his bed mounted on a portable body truck, to be moved should he wish a change of scenery. The superstructure of the truck is draped with curtains, the bed is rather high and thick and soft. On the floor beside the bed lie sheepskins used in body

\footnotetext{\textsuperscript{213} "Yankee Doodle Sit Down Song," \textit{Punch Press} 7 (n.d.): n.p.}
polishing, which form nice soft rugs. Quite mid-Victorian.\textsuperscript{214}

The addition of a sign reading "Papa Sloan" to the apparatus transformed the setup from a merely functional sleeping arrangement into an architectural argument. The structure simultaneously repeated and undermined the GM-as-family metaphor, pointing out the discrepancy between the posh living quarters of the father-employer and the meager, makeshift living quarters of the children-employees.

In addition to attacking and deflating the familial metaphors circulated by those opposed to the strike, union forces also circulated their own versions of home and family metaphors. Shortly after the beginning of the strike, sitdowners were divided into "family units" of six to ten men who established their own communal homes. One striker wrote that he and his union family had "managed to create a home out of a factory."\textsuperscript{215} Similarly, in a letter written on the final day of the strike, another sitdowner wrote: "One must pack. Into a paper shopping bag I place the things which helped make my 'house' a place to live in: house slippers, extra shirts, sox [sic] and underwear; razor and shaving equipment; two books, a reading lamp, and the picture of my wife that hung above my

\textsuperscript{214} "Sit Down Comfort," \textit{Punch Press} 5 (n.d.): n.p.; see also Kraus 95.

\textsuperscript{215} Quoted in Fine, \textit{Sit-Down} 162.
The connection between the makeshift homes that housed the metaphorical union families and the actual homes that housed the unionists' actual families was underscored in a letter written by a Chevy 4 striker to his wife:

Dear Mable,

We are a happy family now. We have our different guard posts to cover and regular union police to see that the rules are lived up to. We all feel fine and have plenty to eat. We have several good banjo players and singers. We sing and cheer the Fisher boys and they return it... Tell Larry and Suzanne that when we get home I will have more time to play together as I will not have to work so hard or long.

Love, Harold

The union-as-family metaphor got played out not only in the division of the sitdowners into family units but also in the terms of address union members used to refer to one another during kangaroo court sessions: "Brother Howard," "Brother Smith," etc.

In addition to being played out in living arrangements and terms of address, the union-as-family metaphor functioned as the dominant rhetorical trope in the Detroit Contemporary Theatre's performance of Virtue Rewarded. While antistrike forces argued that the UAW threatened the cohesion of the metaphorical GM family and the security and welfare of workers' actual homes and families, Virtue Rewarded appropriated a classic domestic melodrama plot to

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217 Letter from Harold to Mable, Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, File 24: "Correspondence Between Chevy 4 Strikers and Families."
put into circulation a decidedly different argument. *Virtue Rewarded* responded to antistrike arguments centering on the home and family in at least three ways. First, the performance replaced the GM-as-family metaphor with the Toilers-as-family metaphor. According to *Virtue Rewarded*, a family of workers (Toilers) exists, and management remains outside the worker-family. Second, the performance replaced the UAW-as-threat-to-home-and-family argument with the Company-Union-as-threat-to-home-and-family argument. In the performance, the principal threat to the Toilers' home is the villainous Company Union who has promised to foreclose the mortgage on the Toiler's home unless Tillie the Toiler offers him her hand in marriage. Finally, the performance argues for a decidedly different method of re-establishing the security of the Toilers' home. While antistrike forces argued that the security of the workers' homes depended upon the workers returning to work, *Virtue Rewarded* argues that the security of the Toilers' home depends upon the Toilers embracing Trade Union and Industrial Union.

In addition to opposing the home and family metaphors circulated by antistrike forces and putting into circulation alternative home and family metaphors, a third strategy centered on the frequent use of strikers' families as performers in and audience members for pro-union cultural performances. Strikers' children regularly met at
Pengelly from 5:00 to 6:00 where they sang labor songs for those assembled there. The January 10 rally in front of the struck plants featured a children's picket. During the final weeks of the strike, a contingent of wives and children traveled to Detroit where they picketed the GM headquarters. The women's auxiliary wrote and performed a play about the wife of one striker who converted from union skeptic to union enthusiast. On one occasion the Emergency Brigade enacted labor tableaus for the strikers. On another occasion, they marched through downtown Flint chanting, "We're the wives, we're the mothers of our fighting union brothers. We fight for kith and kin, and when we fight, we fight to win." As this partial listing indicates, literal families—like metaphorical families—were afforded significant attention in pro-strike cultural performances.

**Democracy and Dictatorship:** A third cluster of arguments centers around democracy and dictatorship. Antistrike forces tended to argue, first, that Lewis and Martin were labor dictators and, second, that the strike threatened both democratic principles in general and American democracy specifically.

Those opposed to the strike frequently referred to Lewis and Martin as labor dictators. Although Sloan, in his bulletin board message to GM workers, was the first to hurl the labor dictatorship charge at Lewis, others quickly
followed suit. In a letter to the editor, Fred Dobbertin asked, "Are the men we elected to Congress and the Senate, as well as the President, helpless before the face of this dictator, this dominating revengeful Lewis?" Frequent analogies to Hitler underscored the dictator charge.

Consider, for example, the following excerpts published on the editorial pages of area newspapers:

In developing his methods, Mr. Lewis takes a leaf out of the book of Adolph Hitler.

Do we want Lewis as Germany has Hitler?

Any true American would tell Homer Martin and his organized band of political racketeers that they are in the United States and not in Germany, Russia, or Italy.

After charging that UAW leaders were dictators, those opposed to the strike frequently went on to argue that the strike was un-American, that it threatened democratic principles. Sitdown strikes, these persons argued, are "the instruments of the undemocratic," represent "an attack on the liberties of all American working people," and signal "the end of individual freedom and initiative."

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218 Dobbertin 12.


220 Hoagland 3.


In a letter to the editor, one Flint resident likened America to a corporation and its citizens to stockholders:

I am not a capitalist, an industrialist, or a rich man, or a factory worker. I do not own a single share of General Motors stock or any other stock except one share given me at birth of the stock of the structure of the government of the United States. It seems the value of this share of stock I hold is in grave danger of having its value lessened.\textsuperscript{223}

Those opposed to the strike frequently contrasted the un-American sitdowners to the upstanding Americans who comprised the membership of the Flint Alliance. "We have no argument against any organization," maintained the head of the Flint Alliance. "We are just for the plain American who has no organization."\textsuperscript{224} Boysen's quote was printed in the \textit{Flint Journal} under the creatively elliptical header "We're Just Plain American."

Cultural performances staged by union forces responded to the above charges in at least two ways. First, union forces employed cultural performances—especially rallies featuring speeches by union leaders—as occasions for verbally refuting the opposition's charge that the union's methods were authoritarian and un-American. Martin's speech on January 7 exemplifies the use of cultural performances to verbally deny the opposition's construal of the strikers as un-American. Speaking to the crowd at


\textsuperscript{224} "4000 Workers at Meeting" 2.
Pengelly before parading to the plants, Martin denied the labor dictator charges, arguing that "it is the hope for release from such dictatorship that has given the United Automobile Workers of America its membership."^{225}

While some cultural performances staged by union forces featured verbal statements denying the opposition's construal of strikers as unpatriotic, other cultural performances appropriated patriotic ceremonies and iconography. The Union War Veterans' presentation of the American flag to the strikers inside the plant exemplifies the union's appropriation of patriotic ceremonies. Similarly, the union's appropriation of patriotic iconography is evident in the use of red, white, and blue bunting on cars used in strike parades, as well as the frequency with which flags appeared in cultural performances. In addition to the appropriation of patriotic ceremonies and iconography, the sessions of the kangaroo courts staged within the struck plants also appropriated American judicial structures, including defense attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, and a jury of one's peers.

The final nodal point around which arguments at the textual sphere of contestation tend to cluster is community. Rather than addressing these arguments here, however, I will address them in a later section of this

^{225} "Text of Martin's Statement," 8.
chapter designed specifically to analyze, first, how cultural performances staged by union forces inscribed images conforming to their particular construal of community and, second, how cultural performances enacted community in the very process of gathering, performance, dispersal.

Conceptual Sphere of Contestation

A headline in the February 13, 1937, Detroit News reads "Vivid Picture Story of the Flint Drama's Happy Closing Scenes."\(^{226}\) This use of theatrical metaphors to describe the Flint autoworkers' sitdown strike is not unique. Theatrical metaphors are prevalent in accounts of the strike written both during and after the strike by both strike sympathizers and strike opponents. For example, the week after the strike began, The Nation reported that

> the men had names, but the names did not matter. They had jobs--and the jobs did not matter. The men and their jobs were part of a machine, and without them the machine could not function. Last week a few thousand anonymous human units in the automobile industry's production lines transformed that banality into a national drama.\(^{227}\)

Variations on this theatrical metaphor are echoed in a wide range of sources. The January 17, 1937, Battle Creek Enquirer and Evening News wrote that "however the play

\(^{226}\) "Vivid Picture Story" n.p.

ends, Governor Murphy has displayed qualities of leadership and statesmanship during the first act." Writing for the New Masses later the same year, Joseph North noted that "this year the great wave of sit-down strikes holds the center of the stage." Writing in American Labor the following year, Herbert Harris described the strike by Fisher Body workers as "the most spectacular and significant capital-labor drama of the post-crash period." James Jackson, a labor reporter for the Akron Beacon Journal who covered the 1937 auto workers' strike, interpreted the Flint "drama" intertextually, comparing it to the rubber workers sitdown strike in Akron during the previous year and finding in Flint "a stage setting almost identical, a plot that is similar and many leading characters who are the same." Jackson's view of the Akron rubber workers' 1936 sitdown strike as a rehearsal for Flint is echoed by Sidney Fine:

Although its sit-down phase was very brief, the Goodyear rubber strike of February 14 - March 21, 1936, was the first American stoppage really to focus public attention on the sit-down tactic. It was the "first CIO strike," and it was in some ways a

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228 Quoted in Fine, Sit-Down 251.


That the Flint strike was rehearsed is also corroborated by Henry Kraus whose memoir of the Flint autoworkers' strike contains a chapter entitled "First Sitdown: A Dress Rehearsal." Gordon Carroll’s "Revolution in Michigan" exemplifies the use of theatre metaphors to call into question the legitimacy of the Flint autoworkers' strike. After characterizing the Flint strike as a "serious economic upheaval staged by a handful of Left-wing racketeers," Carroll goes on to portray union officials as masters of manipulation. At one point, Carroll writes,

The following list includes virtually all the Radical impresarios upon whose shoulders lay the task of cracking General Motors:

JOHN BROPHY, . . . the man accused inferentially by Mr. Lewis of being a paid agent of the Soviet Government. . .

POWERS HAPGOOD, an organizer for the CIO, veteran rabble-rouser, and member of the national executive committee of the Socialist Party.

ADOLPH GERMER, member of the advisory board of the CIO and former national secretary of the Socialist Party.

After naming and describing 17 more labor leaders associated with the Flint strike, Carroll notes that "in

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232 Fine, Sit-Down 123.

233 Kraus 31.


235 Carroll 392-93.
addition to these distinguished spellbinders, the strikers received the full moral and financial support of the Communist Party of America,"\(^{236}\) a party that "long ago discovered the inestimable value of political disguise."\(^{237}\) Carroll's use of theatrical metaphors to discredit the labor movement in Flint is evident, first, in the appellation "impresarios" (i.e., organizers, directors, or managers of a performance company), second, in the use of a format for identifying/describing the labor leaders that mirrors the format used to identify/describe *dramatis personae* in play scripts and theatre programs, and, third, in the reference to these persons as "spellbinders" who use "disguise" to mask their real identities. (Anti)theatrical metaphors are rampant throughout Carroll's essay. At one point, he writes that "in the face of such propaganda, Big Business *plays the role* so skillfully forced upon it by its Left-wing enemy."\(^{238}\) He concludes that "the sum total of all such efforts is shrewdly calculated to bring about a dramatic climax with the inevitability of a Grecian tragedy."\(^{239}\)

The use of theatrical metaphors to discredit the opposition is by no means unique to those opposed to the

\(^{236}\) Carroll 394.

\(^{237}\) Carroll 394.

\(^{238}\) Carroll 396.

\(^{239}\) Carroll 397.
strike. Pro-strike forces employed theatrical metaphors to call into question Boysen, the Flint Alliance, and the local media.

Pro-strike forces employed antitheatrical metaphors to discredit the local media’s coverage of the Flint Alliance’s "loyal workers" campaign. For example, an entry in the *Punch Press* entitled "Motor Line Show" reads:

> Wednesday morning, when we were called back to work in Chevy #4, I was called from my department and sent down on the assembly line. There I found photographers and news reporters all set for the show, ready to take pictures and tell with what enthusiasm the men returned to work. Inquiring around, I found many other men who had been taken from their departments just as I had. During the rest of the day, workers would jokingly ask one another if they had "smiled when his picture was taken." 

A cartoon circulated among autoworkers argued even more pointedly that the media performance of "reporting the facts of the strike" was just that--a performance. In the cartoon, a radio announcer standing before a microphone states, "And it is reported that only a small minority are union--G.M. say’s [sic] we think etc. etc." The cartoon’s caption reads, "Flint’s star reporter givining [sic] an exact report on the strike situation. Oh yeah! It’s always one-sided. Maybe it’s station GMC." 

In a similar manner, pro-strike forces employed handbills and political cartoons to construe George Boysen, 

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241 "Flint’s Star Reporter," cartoon, Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 32.
leader of the Flint Alliance, as a performer bent on duping the public. A handbill circulated among UAW workers depicted Boysen as a medical quack pretending to be a doctor, a medicine show con artist attempting to peddle General Motors "snake oil" to an unsuspecting public. The handbill reads: "'Dr.' G. M. Boysen wishes to tell the public that he has discovered a remedy for all of the ills of the G. M. workers. In fact, he states, it is a real cure-all and, believe it or not, it is none other than 'Sloan's [a GM Vice-President's] liniment.'" 242 A similar argument appears in a cartoon collected by Henry Kraus. 243 The cartoon features a shady figure (identified as Boysen) with a "GM Check" partially exposed in one pocket. In one hand, Boysen holds a large picture of Knudsen, the president of GM, and in the other hand, Boysen holds a pointer. Pointing to the picture of Knudsen, Boysen urges his invisible audience (the viewers): "Now altogether [sic] men, 'We Love Our Boss.'" A caption above the cartoon reads, "The Swan Song of the Flint Alliance." Interestingly, this cartoon echoes the performer-as-spellbinder/hypnotist argument already alluded to in connection with the Gordon Carroll essay. Apparently, both

242 "Don't Miss This," Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 31.

243 "The Swan Song of the Flint Alliance," Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 32.
sides viewed the other side as using performance to cast a spell over the public.

Communal Identity Politics

Cultural performances occurring within social drama contexts such as the Flint auto workers' sitdown strike function not only to instantiate contestation but also to negotiate community. This section analyzes how cultural performances staged by union forces negotiated community, first, by inscribing particular construals of community and, second, by enacting communal relationships in the very process of gathering persons together for a performance event and engaging those persons as either spectators or participants or both.

Inscribed Community

Throughout the strike, back-to-work and union forces circulated decidedly different construals of community. While back-to-work forces tended to determine community inclusion and exclusion geographically, linking community to locale, union forces tended to determine community inclusion and exclusion on the basis of allegiance, linking community to commitment.
GM construed community spatially, citing the local community as its primary reason for refusing the UAW sole collective bargaining rights. According to Knudsen,

Obviously with plants located in 35 separate communities in 14 states with more than 200,000 employes [sic], necessarily operating under a variety of conditions peculiar to the manufacturing of the products in which they are engaged, grievances of individuals or groups of individuals can only be handled locally where the employes [sic] and the plant management are familiar with local conditions as well as with the basic general policies of the corporation concerning employe [sic] relations.244

The construal of community circulated by GM and back-to-work forces determined insider and outsider status largely on the basis of spatiality. As transacted by back-to-work forces, the external articulation of community divided Flint residents, Genesee County residents, and Michigan residents (insiders) from non-Flint residents, non-Genesee County residents, and non-Michigan residents (outsiders). While the particular geographical locale posited as the locus of community sometimes varied, back-to-work forces consistently articulated construals of community that privileged spatiality as a determinant of community inclusion and exclusion.

The internal articulation of community transacted by back-to-work forces divided Flint, Genesee County, and Michigan residents into the great majority who opposed the strike (Us₁) and the radical minority (Us₂) who, because of

244 "Complete Text of Knudsen's Statement" 4.
the provocation of non-Flint, non-Genesee County, and non-
Michigan residents (Them), supported the strike. The
external and internal articulation transacted by back-to-
work forces yielded three populations: a pure Us (Us₁), a
polluted Us (Us₂), and a purely polluted Them.

Throughout the strike, back-to-work forces circulated
symbolic constructions depicting the strike as foreign and
the strikers--particularly union organizers--as outside
invaders. Consider, for example, the recurrence of
importation and invasion motifs in the rhetoric of those
opposed to the strike:

They called a mass meeting of all employees for next
week with the purpose announced, to counteract
invading union organizers.²⁴⁵

Many of them [stay-in strikers and their aides] are
imported.²⁴⁶

Finally we come to the significant spectacle that the
importation of a foreign method of handling labor is
being used to violate the most basic rule of American
trade unionism.²⁴⁷

Even more frequent than symbolic constructions relying on
importation and invasion motifs are symbolic constructions
that conflate the strike and outsiders. The Flint Journal,
for example, circulated reports of "a sit-down promoted by

²⁴⁵ "No Progress Is Made Toward Settlement of
Emphasis added.

²⁴⁶ "Two Issues Here Must Not Be Confused," Flint

²⁴⁷ Basil Walker, "------," New York Times 26 January
outside organizers," of "agitation brought here from the outside," of "out-of-town license plates" at the scene of key labor demonstrations, of "out-of-town leadership and participation," and of local workers "under the influence of outsiders."\(^{248}\)

Union forces responded to the above charges through a series of *tu quoque* arguments that pointed out the use of non-Flint, non-Genessee County, and non-Michigan residents by back-to-work forces. Herbert Harris, for example, maintained that "the [Flint] Alliance's propaganda was fabricated by high-pressure, high-priced, Floyd Williamson, himself an 'outsider' imported from Manhattan."\(^{249}\) The *Flint Auto Worker* reported that the back-to-work forces "do not tell you of General Motors' high-priced 'outside agitators,' the Williamson and the Fucans and the Webbs, who were imported from New York and Detroit and have been operating from the Durant Hotel since the strike began."\(^{250}\) Similarly, in a telegram to the LaFollette committee, Homer Martin argued that "so little bona fide Flint support is there for the Flint Alliance that it has


had to import a professional promoter, a so-called public relations expert from New York, to take executive charge."²⁵¹

Unlike GM and back-to-work forces that employed a spatial construal of community to determine insider and outsider status, UAW forces employed a construal of community centered on allegiance to determine insider and outsider status. According to union forces, whether or not a person could claim membership in the strike community depended not on that person's place on a map but on where that person placed his/her allegiance, whether with the inside strikers or against them. Unlike the spatial construal of community that dominated the rhetoric of back-to-work forces, the dominant view of community circulated by those in support of the strike emphasized shared economic interests, linking the concept community to class and thereby expanding the strike community beyond the contained geographical boundaries posited by back-to-work forces. As transacted by union forces, the external articulation of community separated those in support of the strike (insiders) from those opposed to the strike (outsiders), and the internal articulation of community separated inside strikers (Us₁) from outside strike forces (Us₂).

²⁵¹ Quoted in Stark, "Auto Talks Off" 2.
Cultural performances staged by union forces inscribed images of both the strike community and the back-to-work community. Not surprisingly, images of the back-to-work community inscribed in pro-strike cultural performances are overwhelmingly negative. In a speech at a union rally on January 7, Bill Carney characterized the newly formed Flint Alliance as a "vigilante scab outfit." This characterization of the back-to-work community as comprised of violent strikebreakers received additional amplification in a skit performed for striking workers and union supporters. According to the skit, an automobile accident that hospitalized several Saginaw autoworkers who were on their way to Flint to help with picket duty was far from accidental.

GM, of course, was the center of the back-to-work community, and cultural performances staged by pro-strike forces missed few opportunities to vilify the corporation. The allegorical melodrama *Virtue Rewarded* literally presented the company union as the villain threatening to foreclose the mortgage on the Toilers' home. Other cultural performances staged by union forces inscribed images of GM as a community comprised of persons whose corporate greed overrides concern for workers' children and fair seniority rights policies alike. Martin's speech on

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252 "March on Flint City Jail" 19.

253 "Melodramatic Fact Play" n.p.
January 10, for example, directly linked the profit motive that drives the corporate community and the lack of proper clothing, food, and medical care for strikers' children.\textsuperscript{254} Similarly, a skit apparently written and performed by sitdown strikers inside the plant linked the corporate community's greed to unfair practices involving the revocation of workers' seniority rights when they were shifted from job to job within the plants.\textsuperscript{255} In addition to cultural performances that inscribed images of the back-to-work community, union forces also staged cultural performances that inscribed images of the strike community. According to these cultural performances, the strike community included a significant portion of the Flint population. In a speech delivered at a union rally on January 10, for example, Victor Reuther assured his audience that "throughout this community there is a sincere desire to organize all Flint workers in a strong workers' organization."\textsuperscript{256} While some cultural performances staged by union forces inscribed images of the strike community as including a significant portion of the Flint population, other cultural performances inscribed images of the strike community as a community that transcended geographical boundaries. Roy Reuther, for example,

\textsuperscript{254} "Martin Tells Striking Workers" 7.

\textsuperscript{255} "Scenario for a Skit--Fragment" n.p.

\textsuperscript{256} "Martin Tells Striking Workers" 7.
promised in a speech at Pengelly Hall that "workers in other fields will support our strike to an extent that will force GM into compliance."257 A rally staged three days later once again inscribed an image of the strike community as extending beyond Flint’s boundaries. The rally concluded with a representative from the Studebaker local at South Bend, Indiana, presenting the UAWA a check for $6,000.258

In chapter two, I argued that images of community inscribed in cultural performances may depict a community’s past, present, or future. In the remainder of this section, I analyze a particular type of performance practice that was frequently engaged in by union forces, one that inscribed images of the strike community’s past as indicative of the strike community’s future. I refer to this type of performance practice as communal boasting.

In "Boasting in Anglo-Saxon England: Performance and the Heroic Ethos," Dwight Conquergood explores the cultural performance of boasting, contending that the practice is frequently misconceived, first, as ego-centered and, second, as past-centered. With regard to the first misconception, Conquergood notes that while boasting necessarily entails the first person recounting of one’s own past deeds, boasting depends equally on an other to

257 "March on Flint City Jail" 19.

258 "Martin Tells Striking Workers" 7.
whom one boasts. To this extent, boasting is every bit as communal as it is ego-centered. With regard to the second misconception—that boasting is past-centered—Conquergood notes that, at least in Anglo-Saxon practice, the initial "recalling of past heroism is transmuted into a calling forth of future exploits. Past deeds function within a boast as both signposts and springboards for ever more daring feats of valor." Flint, Michigan, sitdown strikers frequently staged cultural performances that engaged participants in a form of boasting. While structurally and functionally similar to the Anglo-Saxon boasting illuminated by Conquergood, boasting in Flint differed in at least one important aspect. Whereas Anglo-Saxon boasts involved individuals who took turns recounting past deeds of heroism and promising future equivalents, in the Flint sitdown strike, boasts more frequently involved communities of persons who simultaneously recounted past deeds and, on the basis of these, promised/predicted future equivalents. The major difference between the Anglo-Saxon boasting explored by Conquergood and the autoworkers' boasting in the Flint sitdown strike centers on the singular vs. multiple subject that articulates and is articulated by the boasts. In Flint, the performative practice of communal boasting occurred most frequently in

the singing of labor songs. While many of the labor songs popular in the Flint strike involved communal boasting, others did not. Only those labor songs whose lyrics recounted "we-deeds" of the past as indicators of "we-deeds" or a "we-situation" in the future are examples of communal boasting. Accordingly, communal boasting occurred when union forces collectively sang "The Battle of Running Bulls":

Cheer, boys, cheer,  
For we are full of fun.  
Cheer, boys, cheer,  
Old Parker's on the run.  
We had a fight last night,  
And I tell you boys we won.  
We had a hot time in the old town last night.

Tear gas bombs  
Were flying thick and fast.  
The lousy police,  
They knew it couldn't last,  
Because in all their lives  
They never ran so fast  
As in that hot time in the old town last night.

The police are sick.  
Their bodies they are sore.  
I'll bet they never  
Fight us anymore  
Because they learned last night  
That they had quite a chore.  
We had a hot time in the old town last night.

Now this scrap is o'er.  
The boys are sticking fast.  
We'll hold our ground  
And fight here to the last.  
And when this strike is o'er,  
We'll have out contract fast.  
We'll have a hot time in the old town to-nite.\textsuperscript{260}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{260} Fine, \textit{Sit-Down} 8-9.}
The past-"we-action"-as-indication-of-future-"we-situation" evident in "The Battle of Running Bulls" made the singing of this particular labor song an example of communal boasting. By contrast, the singing of "Rock-A-Bye-Baby," another popular labor song in Flint, did not amount to communal boasting:

Rock-a-bye baby, on the tree top,
When you grow up, you'll work in the shop
When you are married, your wife will work too;
So that the rich will have nothing to do.

Hush-a-bye baby, on the tree top,
When you grow old your wages will stop;
When you have spent the little you've saved,
First to the poorhouse, then to the grave.261

"Rock-A-Bye Baby" posits a future situation, but its singing does not qualify as an instance of communal boasting, first, because no past deeds are recounted and, second, because the future situation is projected onto a largely unspecified "you" rather than the communal we that does the singing.

While all labor songs that instantiate communal boasting posit past "we-deeds" as indicative of future "we-deeds," the specificity of the enunciating and enunciated "we" of the communal boast varies considerably from song to song. Some labor songs that instantiate communal boasting—such as "The Battle of Running Bulls" (quoted above)—inscribe highly-defined "we" subject positions. Other

261 "Rock-A-Bye Baby," Mary Heaton Vorse Collection, Box 163, Folder 15: "Flint Sit Down Strike, Press Releases and Leaflets."
labor songs that involve participants in communal boasting, however, inscribe lowly-defined "we" subject positions. "Solidarity Forever," the most popular labor song of the Flint strike and arguably of the entire depression-era labor movement, falls into the latter camp.

It is we who plowed the prairies,
built the cities where they trade;
Dug the mines and built the workshops,
endless miles of railroad laid;
Now we stand outcast and starving, 'mid the wonders we have made.
But the union makes us strong.

They have taken untold millions
that they never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle
not a single wheel could turn;
We can break their haughty power,
gain our freedom when we learn
That the union makes us strong.

In our hands is placed a power
greater than their hoarded gold,
Greater than the might of armies magnified a thousandfold,
We can bring to birth the new world from the ashes of the old,
For the union makes us strong.

While the enunciating and enunciated "we" of "Solidarity Forever" is lowly defined as the laboring class, the enunciating and enunciated "we" of "Battle of Running Bulls" is highly defined as UAWA workers in Flint. While the past deeds boasted about by the lowly defined "we" of "Solidarity Forever" remains largely unspecified ("the wonders that we made"), the past deeds boasted about by the highly defined "we" of "Battle of Running Bulls" are described in much greater detail.
Enacted Community

Numerous accounts of the Flint sitdown maintain that the strike resulted in a heightened sense of solidarity among striking Flint autoworkers, among their families and supporters, and between UAWA autoworkers and union workers in other industries and cities. George Morris, for example, wrote that "the sitdown brings out a good natured relationship among the workers and builds a comradeship and cooperation such as only common interest in battle can do."262 Similarly, Bruce Bliven argued that the sitdown "has brought about a really amazing sense of solidarity and consciousness of their own strength."263 A striker's wife who was a member of the Emergency Brigade reported that, as a result of her involvement in the strike, she had "found a common understanding and unselfishness."264 Louis Adamic described the sitdown as "a social affair."265 And a psychologist writing for the New Masses maintained that the sitdown resulted in "a veritable revolution of personality" in which the pronoun "We" came to replace the pronoun "I."266 It is my contention that cultural performances

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263 Bliven 387.
264 Violett Baggett, letter, Mary Heaton Vorse Collection, Box 109, File: "Sit-Down Strike 1937."
266 Quoted in Fine, Sit-Down 157.
staged by union forces during the strike played a central role in creating the *communitas* referred to in the above passages.

In the previous section, I argued that back-to-work forces tended to externally articulate community on the basis of pre-existing and generally unproblematic spatial boundaries (e.g., city, county, state borders) and to internally articulate community on the basis of allegiance (i.e., support for or opposition to the strike). Conversely, I argued that pro-strike forces tended to externally articulate community on the basis of allegiance and to internally articulate community largely on the basis of a pre-existing but newly problematized spatial boundary, the occupied plants’ borders.

This comparison of how back-to-work and pro-strike forces internally and externally articulated community reveals an interesting ambiguity related to the role of spatial boundaries in negotiating communal inclusion and exclusion. Paradoxically, the pro-strike view of community as centered in shared economic interests that transcend spatial boundaries is realized not by minimizing spatial boundaries but by focusing heightened attention upon the spatial boundary of the occupied plant. While the spatial divisions inherent in the sitdown method kept inside strikers and outside strike forces apart, cultural
performances staged by union forces paradoxically functioned to keep together those kept apart.

Cultural performances staged by union forces kept together those kept apart in two ways: first, by enhancing cohesion among members of one internally articulated portion of the strike community who were isolated from members of other internally articulated portions of the strike community and, second, by providing periodic opportunities for the coming together of internally articulated portions of the strike community that were usually kept separate by the exigencies of the strike situation.

The first of these centers on how cultural performances frequently drew together persons such as sitdown strikers or strikers' families who, because of the sitdown, were kept apart from those with whom they would normally interact. For example, throughout the course of the strike, sitdowners inside the plants were largely kept apart from their wives and children, and wives and children of sitdowners inside the plants were largely kept apart from husbands and fathers. Cultural performances compensated for decreased interactions between strikers and their wives and strikers and their children by increasing interactions among striking workers, among striking workers' wives, and among the children of striking workers. Striking workers saw less of their wives but more of each
other; wives of striking workers saw less of their husbands but more of each other; and the children of strikers saw less of their fathers but more of each other.

Cultural performances that heightened interaction and cohesion within internally articulated portions of the strike community tended to be internally indigenous—that is, they tended to involve performers drawn from one internally articulated portion of a community performing for others drawn from the same internally articulated portion of the community. Examples of this type of performance include: inside strikers performing for other inside strikers at cultural performances during daily strike meetings, entertainment hours, or kangaroo court sessions; strikers' wives, girlfriends or mothers performing for other strikers' wives, girlfriends or mothers at daily Emergency Brigade or Women's Auxiliary meetings; and strikers' children gathering daily at Pengelly Hall at 4 p.m. for the singing of labor songs.

In addition to keeping together the kept apart by enhancing the cohesion among members of internally articulated portions of the strike community, cultural performances staged by union forces also kept together the kept apart by providing periodic opportunities for the coming together of internally articulated portions of the strike community that were usually isolated from one another. Examples of cultural performances that functioned
in this manner include: the Emergency Brigade's performance of labor tableaus for the sitdown strikers at Fisher No. 1, the Union War Veterans' flag-raising ceremonies staged at both Fisher plants, and the children's picket at Fisher No. 1 on January 10.

Cultural performances that provided opportunities for the coming together of internally articulated portions of the strike community usually involved either simultaneous or reciprocal performance. Rather than having one internally articulated portion of the strike community perform for another internally articulated portion of the strike community and then call it quits, most of these cultural performances involved the internally articulated portions of the community either taking turns performing or performing together or both. The January 10 cultural performance that involved the Union War Vets presenting the flag to the sitdowners at Fisher No. 1, the sitdowners' singing of labor songs for Union War Vets, and the combined singing of the "Star Spangled Banner" by Union War Vets and sitdown strikers is an example of a cultural performance that employed both reciprocal and simultaneous performance postures.

Union forces enacted community not only by staging their own cultural performances but also by collectively attempting to "jam" cultural performances staged by their opposition. "Jamming" consists of carrying out behaviors
designed to abort, thwart, or modify the Other's cultural performances. The striking Fisher No. 1 workers' response to Wolcott's reading of Judge Black's injunction marks the best example of jamming the Other's cultural performance. When Wolcott attempted to read the injunction to sitdowners inside Fisher No. 1, the striking workers engaged in jamming performance behaviors, shouting derisive epithets at the sheriff, mocking the text the sheriff attempted to read, and noisily performing their refusal to submit to the authority of the sanctioned performer (the sheriff) or the sanctioned performance text (the injunction). When Wolcott attempted to serve the injunction on the sitdowners inside Fisher No. 2, the striking workers drowned out his reading of the text by singing "Solidarity Forever."

One could argue that if unionists employed jamming on only these two occasions, then it was not really a significant means of enacting community. However, given the overall scarcity of anti-strike cultural performances, the fact that "jamming" can be cited as occurring in two of these performances is in itself significant. Moreover, cultural performances staged by union forces after the conclusion of the strike included scenes depicting striking workers jamming the cultural performances staged by their opposition. At the very least this suggests that the strikers themselves perceived jamming as a significant practice. Consider, for example, the representation of
jamming in the following excerpt from William Titus’ *Sit Down!*:

Worker 1: Quiet! Let the sheriff say his little piece.
Sheriff: I got a little paper here I got to read to you men. I’m only doing my duty and I wish you’d be quiet and listen.
Worker 1: Go ahead, sheriff, we’re listening.
Worker 3: Go ahead, General Motors--*speak*!
Sheriff: Who said that?
Worker 5: Take it easy, sheriff... Read what you got to read.
Sheriff: A temporary injunction naming the International Union of Auto Workers of America and Congress for Industrial Organization defendant and restraining the union and its members from--
Worker 3: There they go! Startin’ to hold us back first thing.
Sheriff: Interfering in any manner with the ingress and egress to--
Worker 1: What the hell’s an egress?
Worker 2: A great big bird.
Worker 4: Another dummy heard from. A egress is a woman.

As the sheriff continues his attempt to serve the injunction, the strikers continue to interfere with the sheriff’s reading. When the sheriff reads that the sit downers are restrained from "interfering in any way with the delivery of merchandise or material to or from said plants," he is interrupted by a worker who coyly protests, "Interfering! Why, sheriff, we’re just sitting." Later in the scene, the striking workers protest the injunction’s use of the phrase "so-called sit-down strike."

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267 William Titus, *Sit Down*, all passages from this text are taken from a typescript located in the Theatre Division of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts branch of the New York Public Library; 1937, n.p.
Sheriff: From continuing to remain in the plant in idleness in a so-called sit-down strike.
Worker: Sheriff! I'm sorry to have to interrupt you--but--well, you're kind of insultin' the boys.... What I want to know is, is this a real sit-down?
Sheriff: Men, I got to read this injunction. Now will you please listen!
Worker 6: Answer the gentleman's question? Sheriff, is this a real sit.
Sheriff: I don't know, boys. Honest, I don't.
Worker 6: Boys, the sheriff don't know if this is a real sit or not.
Worker 5: If it ain't real, mister, I sure been wastin' lot of time.
Sheriff: All right, it's real. Now let me go on. From injuring--
Worker: Not so fast! If this is a real sit we don't want no so-called in that funny paper you're reading, sheriff. Strike it out!
Sheriff: Strike what out?
Worker: That paper says this is a so-called sit--strike out the so-called. This is a real sit.
Sheriff: I'm not at liberty to alter--
Worker: Strike it out!
Sheriff: I told you--
Worker 6: Throw him out!
Sheriff: Wait a minute, wait a minute. I'll cross it out.
Worker 5: Read it like it is.
Sheriff: I haven't got time to.
Voices: Read it!
Sheriff: --in the plant in idleness in a sit-down strike.
Voices: That's better. Go ahead.

Obviously, the representation of the strikers' jamming behaviors in Titus' drama and the actual jamming behaviors engaged in by striking workers are not identical. Despite the claim that Titus' drama was based on interviews and accounts offered by those directly involved in the strike, the degree of verisimilitude between representation and represented cannot be posited with certainty. My contention, however, is merely that the very representation of the jamming behavior--whatever its degree of
verisimilitude—itself signals the importance of this category of behavior in the minds of the strikers.

Implications

A number of conclusions can be posited on the basis of the cultural performances described in this chapter. In this section, I posit three conclusions, attempting in each instance, first, to demonstrate how the Flint sitdown strike warrants drawing the conclusion and, second, to outline the broader implications regarding the relationship among cultural performance, contestation, and community.

First, the Flint sitdown strike suggests that cultural performances staged within a social drama context frequently function as an alternative press of sorts, circulating the opinions of groups denied access to more traditional means of disseminating their points of views. Sitdown strikes in mass production industries are inextricably linked to matters of circulation. Sitdown strikes are the result of perceived inequities in the circulation of capital or in policies related to the circulation of capital. Sitdown strikes attempt to redress these inequities in and related to the circulation of capital by temporarily seizing control of key channels of circulation—most notably, the circulation of raw materials/incipient commodities along the assembly line and
the circulation of persons in and around the plant.
Labor's attempt to freeze the circulation of raw material along the assembly line and to regulate the circulation of persons in and around the plant results in an explosive increase in the frequency and fervor with which pro- and anti-strike forces circulate symbolic constructions.
Cultural performances represent one type of symbolic construction whose circulation tends to increase during sitdown strikes.

In the case of the 1936-1937 Flint auto workers' sitdown strike, while pro-strike forces expended considerable energy staging a variety of types of cultural performances, anti-strike forces tended to rely less heavily on cultural performances as a strategic resource. At least two reasons can be cited for the relative sparsity of anti-strike cultural performances. First, those opposed to the strike tended to have access to other channels of communication through which to present their positions. Albert Maltz, for example, reports that the strikers had "a vicious press to read and a vicious radio to listen to." Similarly, Bruce Bliven reported that "the local newspaper has been 100 percent antistriker 100 percent of the time. The local broadcasting station has given its facilities to practically anybody on the company's side but

has refused to permit the strikers to tell their own story." In addition to the press and radio, antistrike forces also relied on billboards as a medium for propagating their position. A second reason for the relative sparsity of antistrike cultural performances centers on the belief that staging such events heightened the propensity for violence. Flint Alliance spokespersons cited the increased threat of violence as the reason they did not stage parades during the strike.

Unlike General Motors and the Flint Alliance, the union relied heavily on cultural performances as a strategic resource. Throughout the 44-day strike, strikers and strike sympathizers staged a variety of types of cultural performances, including parades, pickets, rallies, concerts, dances, skits, plays, movies, games, sporting events, and kangaroo court sessions. Pro-strike cultural performances were diverse not only in terms of the variety of performance genres employed but also in terms of the ways these cultural performances punctuated the schedule. Cultural performances of the occasional variety--such as the injunction day picket and the evacuation parade--were

269 Bliven 378. Kraus corroborates Bliven’s assessment, noting the bias of the Flint Journal and local radio stations (5, 168).

270 Bliven 378.

staged on special occasions, occurring only once. Cultural performances of the periodic variety—such as car parades and the performance of labor dramas—were staged from time to time, occurring on more than one occasion but not scheduled as a regular part of the daily or weekly calendar. And cultural performances of the ritual variety were staged at regularly scheduled times of the day or week. The latter category included such cultural performances as punching the time clock, nightly concerts at Fisher No. 1, and daily kangaroo court sessions.

In addition to suggesting that cultural performances staged within a social drama context frequently function as a sort of alternative press, the Flint sitdown strike also suggests that appropriation as a mode of effectivity frequently functions to negotiate the tension between continuity and change, maintenance and transformation, the familiar and the unfamiliar. A social drama represents a liminal stage in a social group's existence, a critical rupture between what has been and what is to be. In such a period, uncertainty abounds. This is true not only for those persons who seek to maintain the status quo but also for those persons desirous of change.

In a social drama, those who seek to maintain the status quo cultivate doubt, hoping that persons will view the unknown as less desirable than the known; however, those who seek change hope that persons will view an
unknown future state of affairs as preferable to a known present state of affairs. Persuading persons that the unknown is preferable to the known is basically an exercise in doubt management. Appropriation, I contend, represents a form of doubt management in which the familiar is simultaneously invoked and revoked, maintained and subverted. Appropriation combines the solace of the familiar with the promise of the unfamiliar.

Of the modes of effectivity employed in the cultural performances described in this chapter, appropriation is perhaps the most prevalent. Strike songs appropriated the familiar melodies of popular tunes of the day, adding new lyrics addressing labor issues. *Virtue Rewarded* appropriated the familiar form of the domestic melodrama, inflecting the plot and characters in ways that responded to labor issues. The kangaroo court sessions maintained the basic structures and decision-making processes of the US judicial system, substituting union regulations for local, state, and federal laws. The baseball game staged outside Fisher one maintained the basic rules of the game, substituting a collective and pro-labor form of arbitration for the unilateral decisions of a single umpire. Similarly, the ritual punching of the time clock and the blowing of the factory whistle as the strikers evacuated the plants involved the union’s appropriation of company apparati for their own purposes. In each of these
instances, appropriation negotiated the tension between continuity and change, combining the solace of the familiar with the promise of the unfamiliar.

A third conclusion to be drawn from the Flint sitdown strike centers on the ongoing and processual nature of the social drama. In the conclusion to the previous chapter, I took issue with Cox’s theory of discursive deferral, arguing that the ongoing and processual nature of social dramas is such that deferral occurs not only from performance to discourse about performance or the issues raised in a performance but also from discourse about a performance or the issues it raises to subsequent performances. In making this argument in the previous chapter, I focused exclusively on the ongoing and processual nature of events within the social drama itself. I now want to extend this argument by focusing on cultural performances staged after the conclusion of the social drama’s final phase.

Although The Strike Marches On was the final cultural performance staged within the GM/UAW social drama, it was not the final cultural performance depicting that social drama. At least two subsequent cultural performances took the auto workers’ sitdown strike as their subject matter.

On March 6, approximately three weeks after the conclusion of the sitdown, unionists once again gathered at Pengelly Hall. The evening’s program—"The Union
Revue"—featured a variety of acts, including: "Rhapsody," composed and produced by Carl Wahl; "A Window at Fisher No. 1," a skit written and performed by the Women's Auxiliary of UAW Local 156; "Before and After," a danced version of the sitdown strike choreographed by Edgar Harrison; "Education in the Union," a speech by the education director of Local 156; "The History of Flint in Chalk," a visual arts installation by Olga Mikelson of the Layton School of Art; and "The AC Pluggers," a dance skit performed by "Jenks" Hartung and Nellie Besson. 272 A program note proclaims:

This is a proud moment in our lives. Many of us have dreamed of such a moment for years. At last we are expressing ourselves not only in the shop, on the job, and on the picket line, but also in those things that give color and zest to life. From now on our lives will not be dark and drab. There will be laughter and keen enjoyment of the worthwhile things we've never had. We will . . . develop the talents of ourselves and our children in dramatics, in dancing, singing, art-craft classes and numerous other activities. . . . Tomorrow is ours! Let us all together march on to meet the sun. 273

A program insert asked audience members for their name, address, working hours, age, and whether they were willing to "join educational or recreational activities."

Audience members were asked to fill out the form, checking the activities they were interested in, and to leave the form at the door as they departed. In addition to the

272 Program for "The Union Revue," Henry Kraus Collection, Box 10, Folder 21: "Flint After the Strike."

273 Program for "The Union Revue" n.p.
activities listed on the form--athletics, dramatics, dancing, artcrafts, choirs, and adult classes--a space was provided for "any other not listed."  

On May 30 and 31, approximately four months after the conclusion of the sitdown strike, the Brookwood Labor Players performed William Titus' Sit Down in Pengelly Hall for members of the very UAW local depicted in the performance. Sit Down, a living newspaper production based on accounts provided by persons who actually engaged in the strike, was a featured part of the summer chautauqua program sponsored by the Brookwood Labor College of Katonah, New York. The 1937 chautauqua

274 Program for "The Union Revue" n.p.


277 The Brookwood Labor College, which opened for classes in September of 1921, first began to experiment with labor drama in the fall of 1925 when an old barn located on the campus was converted into a theatre (Richard Altenbaugh, "Proletarian Drama: An Educational Tool of the American Labor College Movement," Theatre Journal 34 [1982]: 199). In 1932, the college began its summer chautauqua program, and the Brookwood Labor Players, a traveling company, was formed. When the first nine-day, 800 mile tour ended, the Brookwood Players had performed in six northeastern states for an estimated 2,800 persons (Altenbaugh 207). In 1934, the Brookwood Labor Players were divided into three companies that together traveled 4,300 miles through 53 cities, performing before 14,500 persons, and in 1935, the Brookwood chautauqua again
that played in Flint on May 30 and 31 included three "acts": Sit Down, an account of the GM sitdown strike; Lift the Head, an account of one family's conversion to the union; and The Quick and the Dead, an anti-war drama. 278

In the May 15, 1937, issue of the United Auto Worker, Merlin Bishop, the education director of Local 156, billed Sit-Down as "a living document of the turning point in American history made by the courageous men and women of Flint and Detroit, who will be its audience here." 279 Bishop went on to promise that "General Motors workers will witness on the stage the growing union sentiment in the auto industry, the development and success of the new strike technique, and finally the victory of the UAWA, in boasted three companies, this time performing 90 times for an estimated 20,000 persons (Altenbaugh 207).

The nature of the chautauqua programs appears to have varied over the course of the Brookwood Labor Players' history. While their first chautauqua program in 1932 featured a single, longer production, by 1934 the chautauqua program featured a variety of labor entertainments, including: "patter" by an emcee, the singing of "battle songs of labor" both by the players themselves and by the audiences, a ventriloquist act, a puppet play, mass recitations akin to choral readings, and the performance of brief skits and plays ("Brookwood Chautauqua," Brookwood Collection, Folder 24, n.p.).


which they all participated."\(^{280}\) The following weeks' issue of the United Auto Worker continued the hype, contending that "every auto worker is talking about going to this outstanding event" and urging readers to "see yourself and the Women's Brigade in action during the Battle of Bulls Run in Flint!"\(^{281}\) Similarly, the Flint Auto Worker billed the production as "a strong play, a true portrayal of conditions in the auto industry which forced the revolt of the auto workers."\(^{282}\)

A typescript of Sit Down located at the Lincoln Center Branch of the New York City Public library indicates the broad outlines of the performance witnessed by Flint residents. The issuing of the injunction by Judge Black and the sheriff's thwarted reading of that injunction are among the many strike events that make their way into the production.

Judge Black's decision to issue an injunction is depicted in the following fashion. In a blackout, the loudspeaker announces: "January 2nd. The struggle enters a new phase. General Motors launches its strike breaking program in the private chambers of Judge

\(^{280}\) "Locals Sponsor Brookwood Players" n.p.

\(^{281}\) "Brookwood Labor Players Present Sit-Down," United Auto Worker 22 May 1937: n.p., clipping in Joe Brown Collection, Box 14, Folder: "Labor in Literature--Drama."

The lights fade up to reveal a GM lawyer and Judge Black.

Lawyer: We’ve got to get those men out of Fisher 1 and 2, your Honor! It’s costing the company millions, and every cent is coming right out of the stockholders’ pockets!

Black: What’s that? Whose pocket?

Lawyer: The stockholders’! People just like yourself.

Black: Is that so. I’ll give you an injunction.

Lawyer: Right! Make it cover everything! Why they’re going so far as to burn the company coal. Stockholders’ coal!

Black: Stockholders’ coal, you say?

Lawyer: Stockholders’ coal!

Black: We’ll stop that! Why that’s vandalism!

Stockholder’s coal! That’s what you said?

Lawyer: That’s what I said, your Honor! Why it might even be your own coal!

Black: What do you mean might be! Stockholders’ coal, you said? I’m a stockholder! Sir, I’ll give you an injunction that’ll make a mob of iron men get up and walk.

As the scene goes to black, a single voice sings: "When they tie a can to a union man, sit down! Sit down! When they give him a sack, they’ll take him back, Sit down! Sit Down!" The lights come up on a group of sitdown strikers who join in the chorus: "Sit down, just take a seat. Sit down and rest your feet. Sit down you’ve got ’em beat. Sit down! Sit down!" After completing the chorus, the sheriff arrives to read the injunction. As the sheriff attempts to read Judge Black’s injunction, he is repeatedly interrupted by the striking workers who ultimately force him to change the text of Judge Black’s injunction. The sheriff finally finishes reading the injunction whereupon the workers sing a reprise of their
earlier song as the lights fade to black: "Sit down, just take a seat. Sit down and rest your feet. Sit down you’ve got 'em beat. Sit down! Sit down!" This basic pattern of employing a loudspeaker in a blackout, using a labor song from the strike as a bridge into a strike scene, playing the strike scene, and then returning to the labor song as the stage goes black and the loudspeaker segues into the next scene continues throughout the production.

In the final scene, a crowd of union men and women gather on stage. A woman from the crowd steps out and addresses the audience: "You’ve heard GM! We’ve won! We did it! We’ve won a victory that will read like song, like poetry in the histories to be written!" A man from the crowd joins the woman at the foot of the stage: "We’re only beginning! We’re only getting started. We been takin' ahold of this great big beautiful land of ours and shakin' it till it rattles--and every workin' man and woman in this country is lookin' right straight at our eyes." As the crowd on stage begins to hum "Solidarity Forever," the speaker continues: "Stop and listen and you can hear 'em now! Get to beatin' on a brake drum! Get to singin'. Stand up men and keep on marchin'! We the people are the power! Sing!" And as the speaker finished this line, the crowd humming "Solidarity" reached the chorus, breaking into full voice: "Solidarity forever!
Solidarity forever! Solidarity forever! The union makes us strong!"

In Process, Performance, and Pilgrimage, Turner contends that the social drama functions "as the empirical unit of social process from which has been derived, and is constantly being derived, the various genres of cultural performance." The Flint sitdown strike corroborates Turner's thesis. Throughout the social drama, union forces staged numerous cultural performances, and after the social drama's conclusion, union forces continued to stage cultural performances, representing in dramatic form the social drama through which they had just passed.

The point I want to emphasize here is that the ongoing and processual nature of the social drama does not end with the social drama's conclusion. I argued in chapter one that cultural performances leak, that what happens on the stage spills over into the house, the lobby, the streets, and the more encompassing cultural context. On the basis of the Flint autoworkers' strike, I am now prepared to argue--as Turner already has argued--that social dramas leak also, that the conflict that gives rise to a social drama does not disappear once the social drama has concluded. Instead, this conflict gets represented in subsequent cultural performances. From the

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victor’s perspective, the representation of the social drama in subsequent cultural performances functions in a manner akin to the displaying of a trophy. A trophy won but not displayed invites amnesia; a trophy won and prominently displayed invites remembrance.
Throughout this study I have argued that cultural performances, especially during social dramas but during other times as well, instantiate contestation among competing interests and, in so doing, negotiate community. I began this study by positing three contentions regarding the relationship among cultural performance, contestation, and community. My goals in this chapter are: (1) to review these contentions, assessing the extent to which these claims have been developed; (2) to evaluate the agonistic framework for analysis proposed in chapter two and deployed in chapters three and four; and (3) to suggest directions for future research.

Contention One: Performance represents an inherently contestatory practice in which change is averted, is fomented, is represented, and occurs. Contestation is the struggle among individuals and groups endowed with variable amounts of power to secure their aims and pursue their interests. Contestation occurs between agents endowed with infinitely variable and constantly fluctuating gradations of power rather than between powerful and powerless agents. Accordingly, performance contestation consists of the tactical deployment of...
performance practices either to maintain the status quo or to bring about some desired change.

Because performances agitating for social change tend to name the social formations they challenge, their status as contestatory practices is usually overt; however, because performances sustaining the status quo tend not to name the alternative social formations they oppose, their status as contestatory practices is usually covert. Performances that explicitly or implicitly perpetuate the status quo are engaged in the realization of a particular political agenda just as performances that explicitly or implicitly challenge the status quo are engaged in the realization of another political agenda. Performances attempting to maintain the status quo tend to present themselves as objects of contemplation rather than forums of contestation; however, the apparent lack of a political agenda should not be mistaken for an actual absence of a political agenda. While the politics of performances agitating for change tend to be more obvious than the politics of performances aimed at maintaining the status quo, both types of performances are equally political, equally engaged in the struggle to realize a particular agenda.

Throughout this study my focus has been on cultural performances occurring within social dramas. That these particular cultural performances instantiate contestation
is not surprising. After all, a social drama is itself an
aharmonic episode characterized by antagonism among
competing factions within a community. Accordingly, all
of the cultural performances examined in this study have
been overtly political.

Given this, it would be more prudent on my part to
claim that cultural performances occurring within social
drama contexts are inherently contestatory rather than
that cultural performances per se are inherently
contestatory. While I am willing perhaps to concede that
this study has only documented the former claim and not
the latter, I nevertheless am convinced, first, that all
cultural performances are either hegemonic or resistant
and, second, that performances—whether hegemonic or
resistant—remain inherently contestatory, inherently
engaged in societal formation and reformation.

Once we recognize that the status quo does not
passively maintain itself but is instead actively
maintained by social agents whose interests are served by
status quo relations of power, then the inherently
contestatory nature of performance becomes obvious.
Performances that attempt to maintain the status quo are
not non-oppositional; rather, they oppose those who oppose
status quo values and relations and power.

That all cultural performances and not just cultural
performances occurring within a social drama context are
contestatory can be illustrated by exploring two performance projects currently underway at St. Lawrence University. One of my departmental colleagues is currently in the midst of rehearsals for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although the director has "re-scened" the Shakespeare text, placing it in a Celtic (almost New Age) setting, the reverence for "The Master" is writ large. In fact, the decision to "do Shakespeare" was motivated largely by a perceived need to engage students in the performance of "The Classics."

Another of my departmental colleagues, however, is currently teaching a class entitled "Performance and Popular Culture" and is about to begin a round of performances in which he has challenged his students to "remove Shakespeare from his pedestal by treating the bard irreverently and making him your [the student's] own." As a pedagogical counterpoint to the high culture, mainstage production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the pop culture pedagogue is preparing a performance of his own entitled "The Mom and Pop Culture Shakespeare Buffet: It's Good for You."

My purpose in introducing these performances is not to evaluate them. Indeed, given that both projects are in the early stages of the rehearsal process, evaluating them would necessarily be premature. Rather, my purpose is merely to suggest that while neither occurs within a
social drama setting, both are contestatory. The mainstage production, it seems to me, represents an attempt to validate Shakespeare's contemporary position at the center of the canon, at the apex of high culture. The pop culture performance of a Shakespeare menu, on the other hand, represents an attempt to remind theatre connoisseurs that Shakespeare's drama was not the center of Elizabethan haute couture but rather quite literally was located at the very margins of the city, in the realm of lepers, bear-baiting, and prostitutes. While the mainstage production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* implicitly argues for the canonical bardic genius and against the non-canonical hack, the "Mom and Pop Culture Shakespeare Buffet" explicitly argues for the popular but geographically marginalized playwright and against the marginalized but intellectually popular bard. While the contestation of the latter project may be more explicit than the former, contestation--whether implicit or explicit--remains contestation. Both performance projects engage in contestation, and neither is more contestatory than the other.

Contention two: community and contestation stand in an interdependent rather than oppositional relationship to one another. Far from being oppositional social forces, community and contestation are intimate bedfellows, with each one incessantly producing and reproducing the other.
even as it produces and reproduces itself. Community and contestation are flipsides of the same social process, as distinct yet indivisible from one another as the front and back sides of a sheet of paper.

In chapters three and four of this study I explored the ways in which the breach of a rule or social convention ushers in conflict and leads to the taking of sides. While the ensuing conflict threatens the continued existence of the original social formation or community, the breach does not result in the total dissolution of community but in the restructuring of the original community into communities. Moreover, in most instances, the contestation ushered in by the social drama results not in a diminishing of the intensity of the bond persons feel toward the community or communities with which they ally themselves but in a heightening of this intensity.

That contestation and community are interdependent rather than oppositional becomes especially apparent when we remember that the concept "community" is itself contested. Gillian Rose reminds us of this when she argues that "'community' is a key word, and struggles over its meaning reveal much about the social, political, economic, and cultural power relations of specific times and places."¹ Similarly, David Procter argues that

"community is a rhetorically contested and emergent process, a phenomena continually in flux." Contestation occurs within communities; contestation occurs between communities; and contestation occurs over "community."

Contention three: A dialectical relationship exists between performance and community whereby communities not only produce but are produced by performances. Performances produce communities by externally and internally articulating them. Performances externally articulate community by constructing, maintaining, reinforcing, or renegotiating the boundary between community and Other, insider and outsider, "us" and "them." Performances internally articulate community by constructing, maintaining, reinforcing, or renegotiating the relationships among a community's members. Performances transact the internal and external articulation of community, first, by putting into circulation particular construals of community and, second, by enacting communal relationships in the very process of gathering persons together for a performance event, engaging those persons either as actors in or audience members for the performance, and dispersing those persons after the performance event has concluded.

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I do not want to appear guilty of the "Columbus complex" (claiming to discover what has already been discovered) with regard to the cultural performance-community dialectic. As noted in chapter one, numerous critics and theorists have argued that culture shapes performance and performance shapes culture. I perceive my contribution in this area as twofold. First, by positing and pursuing the dialectic at the microscopic level of community rather than the more macroscopic level of culture, I achieve a specificity sometimes lacking in earlier explorations of the dialectic. Second, the agonistic framework proposed in chapter two redresses the absence in contemporary scholarship of an analytical framework for examining the particular ways in which the dialectic gets played out in a specific performance or group of performances.

All critical-analytical perspectives are partial, foregrounding some aspects of the object of investigation and occluding others, and the agonistic framework I proposed in this study is no exception. Like every other perspective, it exacts a price, concealing even as it reveals. Assessing the agonistic framework proposed in chapter two and deployed in chapters three and four is next order of business of this chapter.

When I designed the agonistic framework, I intended it to fix the investigator's attention on the performance
complex or some part of it as a site of struggle wherein competing parties attempted either to maintain or reform the social formation. While I believe the framework accomplishes this fundamental objective, having now employed it to analyze cultural performances staged during two social dramas, I also recognize a few potential problem areas.

When I designed the framework, one of my hopes was that the framework would serve to elucidate the relationship among the primary, secondary, and tertiary practices that together comprise what I refer to as the performance complex. Primary practices include performance practices themselves; secondary practices include those practices by which persons make sense of, evaluate, and talk about performances; and tertiary practices include those practices by which the very concept performance is constructed and maintained. Having employed the framework in the present study, I now recognize two things: first, the categories themselves are fundamentally slippery, with what gets viewed as primary and secondary performance practices depending upon the tertiary practices employed to arrive at a definition of performance; second, while the agonistic framework is most useful in illuminating primary performance practices and somewhat useful in illuminating tertiary practices, it
tends to employ rather than illuminate secondary performance practices.

Despite the above concerns, the agonistic framework proposed and employed in this study does meet its primary objective: it focuses the investigator's attention on the performance complex or some part of it as a site where contestation occurs and where social agents negotiate community. Employing the agonistic framework foregrounds two basic questions: How does the contestation transacted in a cultural performance function to maintain or subvert existing social relations? How do cultural performances participate in communal identity politics?

In the opening chapter of this study, I argued that while performance studies scholars have adopted an increasingly political view of performance during the past two decades, we nevertheless have stopped short of embracing a view of performance as inherently political, inherently contestatory. What distinguishes the agonistic view of performance that I have employed throughout this study is not so much the direction in which it moves our understanding of performance but the explicitness with which and degree to which it focuses on performance as inherently political, as necessarily a site of contestation wherein communities with different and often competing interests vie with one another. The analytical framework proposed in this study, rooted as it is in an
agonistic view of performance as simultaneously and inherently divisive and communal, promises a number of advances for performance studies scholarship.

First, by shifting the ground from performance as aesthetic communication to performance as sociopolitical act, the framework proposed in this study works against the biases of an evaluative view of culture. While a view of performance as aesthetic communication does not necessarily entail adopting an evaluative view of culture, the very use of the term "aesthetic," I contend, channels inquiry along lines that tend ultimately to fuel an evaluative view of culture. When critics apply the term "aesthetic" to a phenomenon, more often than not they do so in order to valorize it, elevate it, lift it out of the realm of the mundane, the everyday, the ordinary. Whether the critics intend to or not, this separation of aesthetic and non-aesthetic phenomena perpetuates the evaluative view of culture. The agonistic view of performance advanced in this study does not deny that performances may possess aesthetic qualities, but it does not view performance exclusively or even primarily as an aesthetic phenomenon. Furthermore, it suggests that aesthetic qualities are not so much universally given and agreed upon as culturally relative and contested.

Second, the agonistic framework aims at detailed description rather than moralizing prescription. Just as
the agonistic framework denies the existence of any universally accepted aesthetic qualities, so also it denies the legitimacy of maintaining that a dialogical relationship between performer and role represents a universally ideal performance stance. Rather than beginning with a moral imperative and investigating whether a given performance or group of performances conforms to that dictum, the agonistic framework investigates how performances embody moral imperatives and how performances that enact conflicting and sometimes mutually exclusive moral imperatives compete with one another.

Third, the agonistic view of performance avoids the tendency to view performance as representing conflict rather than engaged in conflict. The framework for analyzing performance advanced in this study recognizes that performances leak, and, as a result, that which is inscribed in performances—including conflict—does not remain on the stage but rather seeps into the house, into the lobby, into the streets, and into the more encompassing culture in which the performance occurs.

Fourth, the analytical framework proposed in this study simultaneously essentializes and particularizes performance contestation. Unlike some strains of contemporary performance scholarship that view only performances that work against the grain of the status quo
as contestatory, the agonistic view of performance recognizes that the status quo does not passively maintain itself but instead is actively maintained by agents whose interests are served by the status quo distribution of power. By arguing that ideological performances oppose the redistribution of power and that resistant performances oppose the retrenchment of status quo relations of power, the analytical framework proposed in this study essentializes performance contestation: all performances are inherently contestatory.

In the essentially anti-essentialist world of contemporary critical theory, arguing that anything has an essence is the metaphorical equivalent of wearing a "Kick Me" sign. Essentializing, most theorists contend, erases difference, sacrificing the particular in favor of the general. While I confess that I have on numerous occasions smugly and gleefully written "essentialism" in the margins of other people's discourses as if the one word said it all and no further elaboration were necessary, I am beginning to recognize that identifying an essence does not necessarily deny difference.

To argue that performance is essentially contestatory does not mean that all performances transact their contestation in the same way, toward the same end, or with the same effects. The analytical framework proposed in this study is grounded in the assumption that all
performances are contestatory, but it is aimed at particularizing performance contestation by offering scholars a topoi to guide their analyses of specific performance practices.

It is no longer sufficient, I contend, for performance scholars to maintain that all performances are shaped by and shape social contexts. Instead, we need to engage in micro-analyses geared toward uncovering the specific modalities through which the culture-performance dialectic operates in particular performances. The framework proposed in this study for analyzing how performances instantiate contestation and negotiate community represents a useful starting point in this process.

The foregoing study suggests a variety of avenues for future research. One issue that warrants future attention centers on whether conflict among competing factions in a social drama should itself be interpreted not as a sign of the dissolution of community but of community’s existence. Put differently, is the intensity of the disagreement itself a sign of a more fundamental agreement--namely, agreement over the significance of the disagreement? In social dramas, while competing factions frequently disagree intensely, the very intensity of this disagreement testifies to the fact that the factions agree that that over which they are feuding
is significant, is worthy of the time and energy spent engaging in the dispute. To what extent is this fundamental agreement to disagree a sign of community?

A second issue that warrants additional attention centers on training for cultural performances. Throughout this study, I have explored the relationship among cultural performance, contestation, and community, examining how cultural performances such as parades, pickets, and demonstrations instantiate contestation and negotiate community. For the most part, I have taken for granted that when a particular population needed or desired a cultural performance, performers possessing the necessary skills to carry out the performance event were already on hand, ready to put their talents to use. Future research might profitably focus on how a community trains non-actors to fulfill the varied roles required by that community’s cultural performances. Or, to put the issue in the form of a question that is in keeping with my argument that performance is essentially contestatory, what forms of training do communities use to maintain a combat-ready army of potential performers? Given the expanded view of performance that characterizes contemporary performance studies scholarship, this question takes on particular significance.

A third area that remains to be explored centers on the applicability of the analytical framework proposed in
this study to non-social drama cultural performances. I am confident that the framework can be employed usefully to analyze any overtly rhetorical cultural performance. Thus, rhetorical critics might profitably employ it to analyze rhetorical acts and artifacts ranging from a Congressional session to a State House dinner, from an Inauguration Day celebration to funeral procession, from an acceptance speech at the Academy Awards to a resignation speech at the White House. While the agonistic framework is perhaps easiest to apply to overtly political cultural performances, it can also, I believe, reveal important insights about the sociocultural work of less overtly political performances--performances such as a circus, a Broadway musical, a beauty contest, a sorority tea, and a fraternity smoker. Ascertaining the general applicability of the analytical framework I have proposed will have to await future studies.

My work on this project began years ago when I asked myself a hypothetical question: How would the world be different if all the cultural performances that have ever occurred had never occurred? I was certain then and remain certain now, first, that the world would be fundamentally different and, second, that this difference would be much more than a mere matter of aesthetics, much more than a matter of fewer objects of pleasurable contemplation. Cultural performances, I contend, do not
just happen. Instead, they make things happen that would not have happened in that way, to that extent, in that place, at that time, or among those persons had the cultural performances not occurred. This is the work of performance.


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"Unemployed Groups Mobilize for March on State Capitol." Trenton Evening Times 27 April 1936: 2.


---. Telegram to Henry Kraus. Henry Kraus Collection, Box 9, Folder 14. Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State U.


Two children, a boy and a girl, wearing tattered clothing walk along the sidewalk. Like beasts of burden, they drag behind them a rickety cart containing a few pieces of kindling. They pass the entry to a shop in which a man--apparently the shopkeeper--stands, watching them. Stopping before a display window marked "Tailor," the lad picks up a piece of kindling and tosses it into the cart. Neither child notices the finery in the shop window or the discrepancy between the wares on display and the wear of their own garments. They pull the cart, passing the door of another shop in which another man--again, apparently the shopkeeper--stands, watching them. They stop before a display window marked "Toys," and the lad picks up another piece of kindling and tosses it into the cart. The children pull the cart past the door of yet another shop in which yet another man--again, apparently the shopkeeper--stands, watching them. Again, they stop before a shop window. But wait! What's this? The lad does not move to the kindling on the sidewalk but instead runs to the window marked "Market." Joined by his co-worker, the two stare at the sweets and lick their lips until, unable to control themselves any longer, they begin to lick the glass. Having watched this unbridled display
of desire, the shopkeeper disappears inside the doorway, and the children, stomachs stuffed with imaginary sweets, move to the kindling and load it on the cart. At the exact moment the hungry waifs disappear around the corner, the grocer reappears with a cupcake in each hand. "Where are they?" he asks himself. "Where did those children go?" The other shopkeepers join the grocer. "Poor little children," says one. "I know where they live," says another. Slow dissolve.

Stopping before a shelter in obvious need of repairs, the children unload a few pieces of wood and pass through the door with their burden. Inside, a gaunt woman--apparently their mother--bestows a kiss on each child, announcing that supper is ready. The children take their places at the table, and the woman serves each a cup of steaming liquid and a hard piece of bread, apparently edible only after having been submerged in the liquid. After gathering and eating every crumb that has fallen on the table, the lad announces in a plaintive voice, "I'm still hungry, Mom." Mom wrings her hands in her apron and begins to cry, but her still hungry son, sensing his mistake, comforts her with false words: "Oh, that's all right; I was only fooling." Smiles all around.

And now it is bedtime. As the children change out of their tattered street clothes and into their tattered bed clothes, the young lad, the man of the house--for
apparently, there is no father--begins to sing: "I'll see you somewhere in Dreamland, somewhere in Dreamland tonight. Over a bridge made of moon beams, we'll find a cloud with silver lining." And now his sister picks up the dreamy melody: "Each little star is a castle, shining a welcome so bright. Dreams will come true for me and you, somewhere in Dreamland tonight." As voices of unknown origin pick up the song, blankets more holey than whole are raised to chins, eyes are closed, and Mom turns off the light. Momentary blackness.

Light returns as the music crescendos, and, suddenly, the children are in a world where all laws--even the law of gravity--are suspended. Somersaulting ethereally heavenward as they leave economic reality far behind them, the children float through gates marked "Dreamland" into an Other world where tailored clothes grow on trees and are there for the shaking, where streets made of chocolate bars run past ice cream cone fields and rivers of syrup, where drums and dolls and trucks and trains lie waiting to be played with. Ah, Dreamland! A wonderful world into which to escape! But, alas, escape into Dreamland is only temporary.

"Time to get up," says mother. "Get up, children." With the return of morning comes the return of economic reality. Or does it? For what is this? Is the table that last night was so barren this morning so laden with
food? The children, unwilling to believe their eyes, rush into the adjoining room where they see not only food and clothes and toys but the three shopkeepers of the day before. "All for us?" asks the incredulous lad of the men. "Yes, for you," the charitable shopkeepers respond. "All for us?" asks the incredulous lass. "Yes, for you," the compassionate capitalists respond, and as the grateful children settle down to eat and as the picture slowly begins to fade, voices from somewhere--Dreamland itself perhaps--sing, "I'll see you somewhere in Dreamland, Somewhere in Dreamland tonight."¹

September 3, 1929. Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. Garnet Carter boards a train for Miami, Florida to install the first miniature golf course after having, earlier that year, patented putt-putt.² It is probable that as he boards the train, he has no inkling that by the end of the following year, putt-putt will be the sixth largest industry in the nation, frequently threatening to overtake its closest competitor, the movie industry.³

¹ Max Fleischer, "Somewhere in Dreamland," Fleischer Folio (videotape).
² Frederick Lewis Allen, Since Yesterday (New York: Bantam, 1961) 15.
1930. At the Caliente course in Los Angeles, players navigate their way through greens bordering on sunken gardens, culminating their round of Tom Thumb golf at a hole featuring a castle built atop a natural geyser that spews steam 100 feet into the air. To further enhance the effect, the plume of vapor is illuminated by an array of colored lights. At the Coconut Grove course in Kansas City, pee wee golfers practice their putting in a converted ballroom replete with cliffs, waterfalls, and real palm trees. In addition to the real palm trees, the beams supporting the ceiling (painted blue to simulate the sky) are costumed as palm trees. At the Wild West course in Pasadena, California, players move past mule skinner wagons and cacti. At a course in Hewes Park outside Los Angeles, players place straw sandals over their street shoes as they putt their way through Chinese pagodas and dragons while being serenaded by an eight piece band that floats through the course on junks. One course, planned by a California woman who owned land that included a graveyard, was never built. The local zoning board refused to allow the woman to install the course which would have incorporated the tombstones as hazards. Even when not actually playing, putt-putt enthusiasts can nevertheless still work on their game by reading pointers published in *Miniature Green*
While millions are clearly addicted to the game, others display a disdain for the pastime, likening it to "the mechanical sideshows you wander into at Coney Island." One need not look far for the roots of this sideshow analogy. After all, putt-putt courses frequently book special attractions to bring in players. One proprietor reports that hiring beautiful young women to play through the evening, as well as handsome male "Greeters," resulted in a 25 per cent increase in business. Other proprietors hire the Singers, four midgets who play a round of pee wee golf while curious spectators watch, cheer, and snap photographs. Another special attraction proprietors book is Billy Pilgrim, an armless and legless man who overcomes physiological obstacles as well as the obstacles of the course itself.

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5 Garfinkel and Reidelbach 32.

6 All publicity stunts recounted are drawn from Garfinkel and Reidelbach 44.
By the end of 1930, putt-putt’s phenomenal success is such that it is played indoors as well as outdoors,\(^7\) during the day as well as late into the night,\(^8\) and by the working as well as the monied class.\(^9\) The Kankakee News publishes a cartoon in which eight men (Railroads, Steel, Autos, Utilities, Banking, Electric, Oil, and Radio) gather around a boy sitting at a table marked "Big Business." While the men wear business suits, the boy sports golf attire, carrying a club over one shoulder. On the table, the boy has placed business reports revealing $125 million in investments yielding $30 million dollars in monthly earnings.\(^10\) Miniature golf has become big business.

\(^7\) Interestingly, theatres that went dark because of the depression and because of the challenge of Tom Thumb golf for scarce recreation dollars were among the spaces converted into indoor putt-putt palaces. "Musicians thrown out of work by the mechanical talkies, and even some of the more desperate of unemployed actors, might find work on the links or as caddies in a pleasantly familiar atmosphere." Quote from "Golf Takes Cover," New York Times 23 July 1930: 20; The transformation of theatre spaces into putt-putt palaces was also noted in "Miniature Golf for Empty Theatres," New York Times 22 July 1930: 6.


\(^9\) One Hollywood screenwriter commented, "Who would have believed that the Royal and Ancient Game of Golf, the sniftiest game of all time, should become epidemic not only with the bourgeoisie, but the proletariat as well?" Quoted in Garfinkel and Reidelbach 40.

\(^10\) Reprinted in Garfinkel and Reidelbach 32.
One possible reading of Max Fleischer's "Somewhere in Dreamland" construes the film as evidence supporting the Hollywood-as-escape-hatch argument. Read in this light, the film, through the mechanism of the children's fantastic voyage into Dreamland, opens up a subject position for the viewer in which he/she is invited to vicariously engage in the wish fulfillment world of chocolate bar streets and ice cream cone fields.

An equally plausible reading of Fleischer's text, however, construes the film as evidence repudiating the Hollywood-as-escape-hatch thesis. To the extent that the escape into Dreamland is self-consciously thematized within the film as a form of escape, the subject position opened up for the viewer invites him or her not to vicariously experience the Dreamland into which the children escape but instead to reflect upon the children's escape into Dreamland.

Yet another reading of the film's relationship to the question of cinematic escape during the Depression remains possible. According to this interpretation, the subject position opened up for the viewer invites him or her neither to vicariously experience the Dreamland into which the children escape nor to reflect upon the children's escape into Dreamland. Instead, the subject position opened up invites the viewer to vicariously experience the children's escapist return from Dreamland into a Dreamland-
squared that is identified as real. It is, after all, in this unreal "real" world that the ultimate ideological maneuver occurs vis-a-vis the representation of conscientious capitalists who right real economic wrongs through charity. In the final analysis, "Somewhere in Dreamland" posits two unequal worlds: an unreal fantasy world (Marxism) devoid of private property where chocolate streets and ice cream cone fields belonging to no one are there for all to enjoy, and a privileged real world (capitalism) replete with private property where pain and privation exist but ultimately are overcome through charity. Itself a capitalist product, "Somewhere in Dreamland" markets capitalism as the antidote for its own poison by explicitly representing free enterprise as dealing with the poverty it is only implicitly represented as having caused.

The issues of escape and engagement prove no less problematic in the case of putt-putt golf. A number of possible explanations for miniature golf's immense popularity during the early years of the depression are possible. One possible explanation is that miniature golf allowed the labor segment of the population (who did not have access to private country clubs and could not have afforded the expensive and extensive paraphernalia golf requires even had they had this access) to vicariously engage in a sport like that which previously had been the
exclusive domain of their employers. Thus, the poor, at least momentarily, were allowed to imagine themselves as wealthy. While this explanation perhaps partially explains the popularity of miniature golf, the fact that extravagant in-door putt-putt palaces catering to the wealthy flourished alongside the less auspicious corner lot variety mitigates against embracing this explanation whole heartedly.

I find greater explanatory force in an account of the putt-putt craze that focuses less upon the similarities between regulation and miniature golf and more upon the differences. For example, in regulation golf, the course is too large to be taken in at single glance, and the end is not in sight from the beginning. In miniature golf, on the contrary, the full dimensions of the playing field remain visible at all times and the end is in sight even at the outset. Americans, sunk in the midst of a economic blight whose end was not easily conceivable despite the reassuring words of politicians, may have found a certain modicum of solace in a game whose parameters were so clearly marked.

A second difference between regulation and miniature golf, however, goes even further in demonstrating that what initially appears as a recreational diversion instead is intimately engaged with the very crisis from which it presumably offers escape. The skillful player of
regulation golf avoids the sand traps, trees, and bodies of water that dot the golf course; indeed, the ability to avoid all obstacles and thus to efficiently navigate one's way through the course functions as the measuring stick of a regulation golfer's skill. While obstacles are to be avoided in regulation golf, they become the *sin qua non* of miniature golf, and the skillful putt-putt player does not avoid the obstacles--indeed, they cannot be avoided--but instead encounters and successfully overcomes them. Miniature golf may have offered a diversion from the adversity of the depression but the particular nature of this diversion was such that overcoming adversities came to be viewed as the very source of the fun to be had.
One way to begin making sense of the variety of definitions of ideology is by distinguishing between neutral and critical construals of the concept. When construed neutrally, ideology is conceived either as a science of ideas or as a set of beliefs or assumptions possessed by an individual or group.

Although today critical construals of ideology dominate, when the term was introduced by the French rationalist philosopher Destutt de Tracy, ideology was construed in a neutral rather than critical fashion. Tracy used the term *ideologie* to describe what he perceived as a newly emergent "science of ideas" as distinct from an older metaphysics. Tracy's science was rooted in three related assumptions: that humans cannot know things in themselves, that human knowledge is limited to ideas of things, and that sensation of a thing mediates between knowledge of that thing and the thing itself. In contrast to various later conceptions of ideology that oppose it to science, in Tracy's version, ideology was conceived not only as a science but, moreover, as the foundational science upon which all others were based. If ideology is the study of how ideas are formed and of the faculties involved in this formation, and if science is a
particular system of ideas about the nature and functioning of the universe, then ideology is a prerequisite for explaining scientific explanation. Tracy employed the term ideology to designate both ideas and the science that accounts for those ideas, and this use of the term to designate multiple referents, when coupled with Tracy's view of the science of ideology as both descriptive and prescriptive (capable of identifying and correcting lapses in thinking), accounts, at least in part, for subsequent imprecision in deploying the term.¹

The neutral construals of ideology that followed Tracy tend to shift the focus away from the epistemological orientation of a "science of ideas" and toward a more overtly sociological orientation. This shift is characterized primarily by the replacement of class or social group membership for sensory perception as the basis of ideas. With this transition, we move from the realm of a universal and ahistorical ideology to the realm of a socialist ideology and a proletarian ideology and a feminist ideology and so forth. Ideology here is construed as the set of beliefs or assumptions possessed

by a specific class or social group. Exemplary theorists of this particular construal of ideology include Lenin and Lukacs. Though the shift from Tracy’s construal of ideology to these latter construals of ideology involves a shift from ideology to ideologies, in both instances there is no outside to ideology. In the latter construal, for example, while an other may possess an ideology other than one’s own, no one is outside of ideology.

When construed as a critical concept, ideology is conceived as the negative counterpart of a more ideal Other. The first critical construal of ideology appeared shortly after and at least partially in response to Tracy’s neutral construal of the concept. Although Napoleon Bonaparte was an honorary member of the Institut de France of which Tracy was a member, when educators at that institution began to champion republican reforms, Napoleon quickly denounced them, using as his primary term of renunciation "ideologue" and, in essence, ushering in what can perhaps best be termed the perjorative turn in the conception of ideology. In an 1812 address, Napoleon charged that

It is to the doctrine of the ideologues--to this diffuse metaphysics, which in a contrived manner seeks to find the primary causes and on which this foundation would erect the legislation of peoples, instead of adapting the laws to a knowledge of the human heart and of the lessons of history--to which
one must attribute all misfortunes which have befallen our beautiful France.\textsuperscript{2}

A significant reversal in the history of ideology occurs in this passage, for whereas Tracy divorced ideology from metaphysics, Napoleon marries the two. This conjoining of ideology and metaphysics, moreover, ushers in what has proven one of the most persistent construals of ideology, a construal summed up in the equation: ideology = abstract/impractical theory as opposed to practical action. Thus, with Napoleon, ideology is construed as the crime of intellectuals, and if ideology involves praxis at all, then it is only the impractical—that is to say, theoretical—praxis of an ivory tower coterie so distanced from the real—that is to say, practical—world of politics that it is not even capable of recognizing this debilitating distance.

The next major transition in the history of critical construals of ideology is associated with Marx and Engels who employ the term in a variety of places and in a variety of ways. Numerous theorists—including Balibar, Lefebvre, Ricouer, Thompson, and Williams\textsuperscript{3}—have explored

\textsuperscript{2} Quoted in Williams, Marxism 56.

this vacillation, and their explanation of it is almost as
varied as the variance they attempt to describe. All the
above theorists, however, identify at least two uses of
ideology in Marx and Engels. These are: (a) a view of
ideology as false consciousness rooted in illusory
beliefs, and (b) a view of ideology as a system of beliefs
and assumptions possessed by a particular class. In what
follows, I shall be concerned exclusively with ideology as
it is construed by Marx and Engels in The German Ideology.

When Marx and Engels construe ideology as false
consciousness rooted in illusory belief, their language
tends to be figurative. Accordingly, in analyzing this
construal, I begin by citing a few exemplary passages and
then turn to analysis of the tropes employed in those
passages. Marx and Engels open the "Preface" to The
German Ideology in the following manner:

Hitherto, men have constantly made up for
themselves false conceptions about themselves, about
what they are and what they ought to be. They have
arranged their relationships according to their ideas
of God, of normal man, etc. The phantoms of their
brains have gained mastery over them. They, the
creators, have bowed down before their creatures.
Let us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas,
dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they
are pining away.  

Although the term "ideology" appears nowhere in this
passage, the vocabulary employed is strikingly similar to
that which will reappear in later passages where

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4 Karl Marx and Friedrick Engels, The German Ideology
"ideology" is overtly designated. The first appearance of "ideology" occurs fourteen pages into the text in the often quoted passage, "In all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura."\(^5\)

In the paragraph following the introduction of the camera obscura metaphor, Marx and Engels distinguish the ideological project of the "young Hegelians" from their own project, a critique aimed at unmasking ideology:

We do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimes of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics and all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence.\(^6\)

The dominant trope in each of these passages is metaphor, and, taken together, the metaphors employed reveal three dimensions of Marx and Engels' construal of ideology as false consciousness: that the essence of ideology is its departure from material reality; that the primary operations of ideology are distortion, deformation, mutation, and inversion; and that ultimately the effect of

\(^5\) Marx and Engels 14.

\(^6\) Marx and Engels 14.
ideology is the establishment of a relationship of domination.

That the essence of ideology is its departure from material reality is established primarily in two metaphors, "phantoms of the brains" and "chimeras." A phantom is a shadowy, immaterial form, an apparition, a delusion, a thing existing only in the imagination. Similarly, a chimera is either an imaginary creature from Greek legend or a wild fancy.

That the primary operations of ideology are distortion, mutation, and inversion is established in many of the metaphors Marx and Engels employ. For example, when they write of "ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process," the vehicle "echoes" implies distortion. The echo metaphor, however, is particularly interesting to the extent that it complicates the metaphors suggesting immateriality by granting to ideology a material reality, but a material reality characterized by distortion. While both the initial sound and the resultant echo really exist, the reality of the latter is a distortion of the former. Moving from the sound/echo relationship of the vehicle to the real life-processes/ideological life-processes of the tenor results in a view of ideology as a secondary distortion of a more primary and undistorted reality.
Similar work is carried out by the metaphor "sublimates of their material life-process," but here distortion is inflected more particularly as a mutation associated with the dubious procedures of alchemy. Of this metaphor, Ricouer notes, "The sublimate is what evaporates in some chemical processes (more those of alchemy than chemistry); it is a deposit at the upper part of the vessel." Thus, ideology represents a mutated residue of reality ("a deposit"), a residue formed in the human brain ("at the upper part of the vessel").

In addition to mutation and distortion, the slightly different operations of inversion and reversal are also suggested by the metaphors Marx and Engels employ. While the most obvious of these metaphors is the comparison of ideology to a camera obscura, the creator-creation-creature metaphor in the opening lines of the "Preface" is rife with reversals. In the opening passage, a variety of dualities are proposed: creators/creations, humans/animals, and master/mastered. The phantom metaphor already described serves as the point of departure for the creator-creation-creature metaphor. The immaterial phantoms are the creation of those who see them, but the human maker-master loses mastery over the creature made and bows down before it. The human being becomes the beast of burden; the yoking master becomes the yoked

7 Ricouer 79.
slave. It is in this passage, with the reference to "mastery," to "bowing down," and to the "yoke" that ideology and domination are conjoined.

To summarize, Marx and Engels' construal of ideology as false consciousness involves perceiving an illusory and inverted image without realizing that the image being perceived has been inverted. The ultimate effect of the failure to recognize this inversion is the putting into operation of a relationship of domination. In this particular construal of ideology, the ultimate source of domination remains unclear. While it is clear from the metaphors employed that the source of the domination is the "imagination" of those dominated, that which causes this imagination to begin its enslaving operation is not overtly stated, and the result is that the domination appears to be a matter internal to individuals. Moreover, there appears to exist not ideologies but only an ideological process whose uniform functioning is the performance of a captivating sleight-of-hand trick in which the real is replaced by the illusory and in which real or actual motives (i.e., true consciousness) are replaced by imagined or apparent ones (i.e., false consciousness). According to this ideology-equals-false-consciousness construal, ideology functions as a perfect(ly distorting) theatre of the mind in which illusion masquerades as actuality for an audience that
does not even perceive itself as attending the theatre and, accordingly, need not suspend its disbelief in order for the show to cast its enchanting and enchaining spell.

The second construal of ideology proffered by Marx and Engels ties ideology to beliefs bearing the impress of and serving the interests of a particular class. This take on ideology, stated without recourse to figurative language, is articulated later in *The German Ideology* than the construal of ideology as false or illusory consciousness.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships expressed as ideas.\(^8\)

Ideology results from a failure to recognize the relationship between material and intellectual dominance, and when this relationship is overlooked, the ideas of the dominant class are perceived by those dominated either as pure (serving no particular class interest) or they are misrecognized as serving one’s own interests.

Before comparing the construals of ideology set forth by Marx and Engels with that set forth by Napoleon, it

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\(^8\) Marx and Engels 39.
should be noted that while the view of ideology as false consciousness rooted in illusory beliefs and the view of ideology as a set of beliefs bearing the impress of and serving the interest of a particular class are distinct, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In many respects, the second construal functions to specify the nature of the illusion that characterizes the first construal: ideology is false consciousness rooted in the illusory belief that the production, evaluation, circulation, and effects of ideas are detached from material interests and serve all persons equally.

Comparing the construals of ideology set forth by Marx and Engels with that of Napoleon reveals interesting similarities and differences. Both Napoleon and Marx and Engels employ ideology perjoratively; however, while Napoleon deploys the concept against those advocating change, Marx and Engels deploy the concept against those forces opposing change. Moreover, while Napoleon locates ideology in intellectuals, Marx and Engels locate ideology in a more broadly defined sector of the population. A final distinction between Napoleon's and Marx and Engels' construal of ideology focuses on the relationship between theory and ideology. While for Napoleon ideology is theory divorced from practical, political reality, for Marx and Engels ideology is not so much theory itself as a
phenomenon for theory to account for and for praxis to overcome.

Unlike Marx and Engels who offer multiple construals of ideology without ever precisely defining the term, Althusser posits a single construal of ideology and offers a concise definition. "Ideology," he writes, "is a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."9

One way to begin unpacking this definition is by distinguishing between repressive and ideological state apparatuses. While repressive and ideological state apparatuses share the same goal--namely, insuring the reproduction of the conditions of production--they part company with regard to their means of achieving this goal. Repressive state apparatuses (RSAs) such as police departments and court systems achieve their effect either by actual recourse to violence or by the threat of violence. Ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) such as churches and schools achieve their effect by hegemonic consent. Of the two, Althusser argues that the latter are the more important, since "no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological

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Thus, while ISAs function as primary means of perpetuating patterns of dominance, RSAs function as secondary means that can be deployed when the failure of ISAs makes recourse to force necessary. Put differently, while RSAs repress resistant subjects, ISAs produce consenting subjects.

Having distinguished RSAs and ISAs, we can now return to Althusser's definition: "Ideology is a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." According to this definition, ideology does not represent the real conditions of existence but instead represents an individual's imagined relation to those real conditions of existence. Thus, unlike Marx and Engels who viewed ideology as a distortion of the real, for Althusser, ideology does not distort the real because it does not represent the real. Rather, ideology represents an image of individuals' positions in relation to the real.

One concept central to Althusser's theory of ideology fails to appear in his definition because it is not a component part of ideology per se but rather the very product of ideology as such. This concept is the "subject." Put simply, ideology transforms individuals into subjects, and it does so through a process Althusser describes as "interpellation" or "hailing."

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10 Althusser 146.
Interpellation or hailing . . . can be imagined along the lines of the most common everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!" Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized the hail was "really" addressed to him, and that it was really him who was hailed.11

According to Althusser, the discourses of the ISAs contain references that hail or invite persons to see themselves as among those spoken to by the discourses, and this identification of the self as spoken to heightens the individual's impulse to define him/herself in terms congruent with the image of the individual as set forth in the ISAs discourses.12 Thus, for Althusser, ideology consists of real representations of imaginary relational positions whose function is to construct subjects.

Althusser's construal of ideology represents both an extension of and departure from Marx and Engels' construals of ideology. Althusser's version of ideology can be viewed as an extension of Marx and Engels' first construal of ideology (false consciousness) insofar as the distinction between the "imaginary" and the "real" approximates the earlier distinction between "illusion" and "reality" and between "false consciousness" and "true consciousness." Althusser's thoughts on ideology also

11 Althusser 174.

12 John Mowitt, foreword, Discerning the Subject, by Paul Smith (Minneapolis: UP of Minnesota, 1988) xiv.
accord with Marx and Engels' second construal of ideology (ideas of dominant class = dominant ideas) to the extent that Althusser makes ideology and ISAs of primary importance in the reproduction of the conditions of production. Althusser most dramatically parts company with Marx and Engels, first, when he insists that ideology consists of more than "shadowy apparitions" and "phantoms of the mind" but instead has a concrete material existence and, second, when in theorizing ideology he distinguishes between individuals and subjects.

In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz articulates a conception of ideology as a "cultural system," reversing the perjorative turn in ideology that began with Napoleon and continued through Marx and Engels, as well as Althusser. Geertz begins by positing the existence of two basic approaches to the study of ideology. The first approach--the "interest theory"--starts from the assumption that "men pursue power," and from this basic assumption goes on to view ideology as a weapon deployed in a universal struggle for advantage. The second approach--the "strain theory"--starts from the assumption that "men flee anxiety," and from this basic assumption goes on to view ideology as both a symptom of and remedy

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13 Althusser 165.
for "chronic sociopsychological disequilibrium." From Geertz's vantage, the interest theory lacks a developed theory of motivation, offering in its place an "unduly Machiavellian view" that "reduces ideology to tactics and strategies." The appeal of the strain theory, though greater for Geertz than that of the interest theory, suffers from too cursory a treatment of "the autonomous process of symbolic formation," a process Geertz sees as the link "between the causes of ideology and its effects."

In place of the interest and strain theories of ideology, Geertz offers a symbolic theory, viewing ideologies essentially as "systems of interacting symbols, as patterns of interworking meaning." While this move is reminiscent of the neutral footing on which Tracy initially placed ideology, Geertz's symbolic theory of ideology departs from Tracy's science of ideas in so far as the latter was concerned with the nature of conception while the former limits himself to the more narrow field of the symbols through which conception occurs and upon which conception depends. Ideology concerns that which

15 Geertz 202-203.
16 Geertz 207.
17 Geertz 212.
is socially determined rather than naturally given, and "what is socially determined," Geertz notes, "is not the nature of conception but the vehicles of conception." These vehicles of conception are the symbol systems employed within a particular culture.

While Geertz locates ideology in the realm of the symbolic, not all symbolic activity is ideological. Science, for example, communicates its findings via symbolic systems, but Geertz, nevertheless, contrasts ideology and science:

Science names the structure of situations in such a way that the attitude contained toward them is one of disinterestedness. Its style is restrained, spare, resolutely analytic; by shunning the semantic devices that most effectively formulate moral sentiment, it seeks to maximize intellectual clarity. But ideology names the structure of situations in such a way that the attitude contained toward them is one of commitment. Its style is ornate, vivid, deliberately suggestive: by objectifying moral sentiment through the same devices science shuns, it seeks to motivate action.

Geertz ultimately arrives at a theory of ideology remarkably similar to the interest theories he initially dismissed as "unduly Machiavellian" insofar as they "reduce ideology to tactics and strategies." After all, the difference between science and ideology, Geertz contends, is the difference between symbols geared toward a disinterested attitude and symbols geared toward a

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18 Geertz 212.

19 Geertz 230-31.
committed attitude--that is, an attitude in the service of a particular interest. The various construals of ideology presented in this chapter are summarized in Figure B.1.
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<td>metaphysics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Napoleon</td>
<td>abstract/impractical theory</td>
<td>practical action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marx and Engels I</td>
<td>false consciousness/ illusory beliefs</td>
<td>Reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marx and Engels II</td>
<td>ideas of ruling class = ruling ideas</td>
<td>ideas of dominated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Althusser</td>
<td>representation of the imaginary relations of individuals to the real conditions of their existence</td>
<td>science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geertz</td>
<td>system of interacting symbols inducing an attitude of commitment</td>
<td>science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure C.1
Summary of Competing Construals of Ideology
Kirk W. Fuoss, currently an assistant professor in the Department of Speech and Theatre at St. Lawrence University, was granted a B.S. in Education by Baylor University in 1983 and an M.A. in Speech Communication by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1986.

Since 1985, Mr. Fuoss has presented numerous papers and performances at professional conferences. His publications include: "A Performance-Centered Approach for Teaching a Course in Social Movements" (co-authored with Randall Hill); "'OUT ART': Reducing Homophobia on College Campuses Through Artistic Intervention" (co-authored with Cindy Kistenberg and Lawrence Rosenfeld; and "A Portrait of the Adolescent as a Young Gay: The Politics of Male Homosexuality in Young Adult Fiction." In addition, his investigation of the Workers Alliance of America's seizure of the New Jersey State Assembly will appear in a collection of essays entitled Performance and History: Interdisciplinary Approaches.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Kirk W. Fuoss

Major Field: Speech Communication

Title of Dissertation: Performance and Organized Labor in Depression America: Community and Contestation

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Mary Frances Hackett

Barbara Gorman

Amy McLeod

Stanley King

Date of Examination:

17 March 1993