

TRAGIC PRACTICE: PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND ACTIVIST THEATRE IN
THE U.S., 2006-2010

by

LINELL AJELLO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York
2012

Tragic Practice: Participatory Democracy and Activist Theatre in the U.S., 2006-2010

© Linell Ajello, 2012

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

March 26, 2012
Date

Chair of the Examining Committee
Jean Graham-Jones
Professor

March 26, 2012
Date

Executive Officer
Jean Graham-Jones
Professor

David Savran
Distinguished Professor

Judith Milhous
Distinguished Professor

Abstract

TRAGIC PRACTICE: PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND ACTIVIST THEATRE
IN THE U.S., 2004-2010

by

LINELL AJELLO

Adviser: Professor Jean Graham-Jones

In this dissertation, I develop a theory of inclusive democratic communication, partly by studying contemporary activist performances such as Poverty Simulation, a role-playing game in which social service and government workers switch places with the poor people who are their clients; and Iraq Veterans Against the War's "Operation First Casualty," in which soldiers perform the drills they have enacted in Iraq in public spaces in the U.S., such as Penn Station. I see these performances as exceptions within national discourse, in which poor people and soldiers are more often represented than represent themselves. In exploring the contributions that performances such as these could make to public perceptions of political and ethical issues, I develop a model of democratic communication based upon inclusion, self-representation, and equal interpretive authority.

I analyze the performances I study as acts of democratic communication even though, in political science, scholarship on democratic communication excludes theatre and other expressive forms. I argue that the ethos and representational practices of liberal humanitarianism that undergird deliberative democracy explain its limits, and so I, following theorists such as Søren Kierkegaard, Walter Benjamin, Cornelius Castoriadis, Vaclav Havel, and others, "pearl dive" to tragedy as a pre-modern model of collective interpretation. I develop a concept of tragic

political discourse, connecting scholarship on tragedy with scholarship on democracy. I draw upon Hannah Arendt's description of political speech and action, placing her values and criteria in dialogue with Jürgen Habermas and a legacy of exclusionary categories in theories of democracy and civic republicanism. Throughout the project, I develop a model of communication in which participants share equal interpretive authority and equal vulnerability to critique. Along with a theory of democratic communicative practice, I develop a model of judgment as processual, hinging upon an awareness of the partialness of one's own understanding.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for support of the The Graduate Center, City University of New York, including the Dissertation Fellowship, Writing Fellowship, and Communication Fellowship.

The Bernard L. Schwartz Communication Institute provided me with collegiality, mentorship, and time to write. I am especially grateful to Dr. Mikhail Gershovitz and Luke Walzer.

My dissertation chair, Professor Jean Graham-Jones, has been generous with her time, insight, and care. She expected more of my work than I did myself, and has coached me to become a more exacting scholar, a more expansive thinker, and a better writer. This dissertation has been a growing process, and as my director she patiently bore many of the growing pains. Professor David Savran's judicious and provocative suggestions and guidance provided inspiration, and in many instances, opened up new paths of exploration that I would not have come upon on my own. Professor Judy Milhous stepped in to read my dissertation during her sabbatical, and nevertheless was generous with her care and insight. I am lucky to have studied under Professor Daniel Gerould. His poetry, wit, flexibility, and attentiveness to historical context have made a deep impression on me, and I hope that his influence on me as a scholar, and person, will only grow with time.

Elisa Legon, Chris Swift, and Gad Guterman, my friends and colleagues in the Theatre Department have been generous with their time, insight, humor, and support.

The friendship of Carly Smith, Suzi Takahashi, and Rebecca Grabiner has sustained me during this project.

My family has shown their love through unwavering support. To the Ajellos: Arnold for his excitement and engagement; Aaron for his seriousness, judiciousness, and sincerity, and for inspiring much of the project in the first place; Edith for teaching me about the mental and emotional work of compassion, and the partialness of understanding.

Sinclair Rankin, my confidant, coach, and champion, was in my corner throughout this process. He has helped me to talk about my scholarship in a way that a non-academic can understand, and by doing this he has helped to grasp the real life resonance of my work.

Contents:

Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: International Activism and Romantic-tragic Self-fashioning: Invisible Children, Rachel Corrie, and Eve Ensler	27
Chapter Two: Soldiers, Scapegoats, and the Tragic Demands of <i>Operation First Casualty</i>	67
Chapter Three: Tragedy and Collective Interpretation: Storytelling Performances by Rubén Martínez and Aaron Hughes.....	106
Chapter Four: Tragic Empathy, Information, and Deliberation: Poverty Simulation.....	133
Conclusion: Towards Solutions, Some Geographic and Historic Comparisons.....	165
Bibliography.....	176

Introduction

In this dissertation, I explore the potential for the theatrical performances of activist groups to influence local, national, and global discourse around several key ethical and political issues: immigration, war, and poverty. I see these performances as exceptions to national discourse, in which people who are the subject of and are affected by political debate, such as the poor, immigrants, and soldiers, are more often represented than represent themselves. I argue that theatre has the capacity to support collective understanding among groups of people, fostering interpretations of issues that vary from the terms and characterizations reiterated in mass media. Yet, theatrical representations of the knowledge and perspectives of these groups face certain pervasive impediments to their circulation and influence in the public sphere. In exploring the contributions that performances could make to public perceptions of political and ethical issues, I develop a model of democratic communication based upon inclusion, self-representation, and equal interpretive authority. I analyze the performances I study as acts of democratic communication even though, in political science, scholarship on democratic communication has tended to exclude theatre and other expressive forms. I turn to tragic theory as a means to further the values of inclusion, equality, and reflectiveness within deliberative democracy, a late-twentieth-century concept focused on inclusive and reflective political communication. I argue that the ethos and representational practices of liberal humanitarianism undergirding deliberative democracy explain its limits, and so I, following thinkers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Vaclav Havel, look to tragedy as a pre-modern model of collective interpretation.¹ I develop a concept of tragic political discourse, connecting

¹ Søren Kierkegaard, "Ancient Tragical Motif as Reflected in the Modern," in *Either/Or* (Princeton: Princeton

scholarship on tragedy with scholarship on democracy. I draw upon Hannah Arendt's description of political speech and action, placing her values and criteria in dialogue with Jürgen Habermas and a legacy of exclusionary categories in theories of democracy and civic republicanism.

Modern tragedy, a tradition that I connect in this dissertation to the bourgeois subject, tends to focus on the experiences of a removed reader, and I argue that this model supports the detached judgment of a subject whose position of privilege remains unquestioned. I oppose this model through a concept of tragic practice dependent upon self representation and reciprocity, and I argue that these criteria have the potential to interrupt and pluralize the recurrent terms, narratives, and characterizations that organize political discourse. In contrast to empathy in modern tragedy and liberal humanism, which I describe as bound to an unchallenged hierarchy, I develop a model of communication in which participants share equal interpretive authority and equal vulnerability to critique. Along with a theory of democratic communicative practice, I construct a model of judgment as processual, hinging upon an awareness of the partialness of one's own understanding.

I begin the project by establishing the historic and conceptual ties between the bourgeois public sphere and its model of an individual in private reflection. In my initial chapter, I reveal the continued presence of this version of a tragic worldview through an analysis of three different performances: a demonstration on behalf of a global charity, a play, and a one-woman staged reading. I define these three performances as reifying and bourgeois tragedy because I find that they discourage multi-faceted understanding of global ethical and political issues by proffering narrow, self-serving perspectives in the guise of worldly responsibility. I argue these performances and their reception are symptoms of a prevailing aspect within a communicative structure in which the tragic emotion of pity is experienced for those who do not have the

capacity to represent themselves on equal terms to a U.S. audience. Characterizing these performances as exalting rather than questioning the audience members' position in relation to those whose sufferings they witness, and drawing comparisons to eighteenth-century literary portrayals of distant places and peoples, I label them romantic-tragic. In contrast, in the following chapters I construct a concept of tragic practice through focusing on the performances of groups that aim to do just the opposite: to foster self-representation, to elicit new interpretations, and to support equal authority to interpret and contribute to ethical and political discourse.

In a secular democracy, the use of the term tragedy often seems to indicate shared meaning among different peoples and beliefs. In ancient Greece, scholars of both democratic culture and theater argue, tragic performances and the collective interpretation they fostered were a key, cultural component of democracy. The ancient model of tragedy has served as a touchstone for writers from Kierkegaard to Havel, who focused on collective responsiveness and responsibility. This sort of approach to tragedy brings a model of judgment and subjectivity—as processual, flawed, and vulnerable—to an understanding of democracy and communication. Modern theory, though, tends to find tragedy in the experiences of special, lone individuals who confront and are destroyed by the timeless cruelty of the world, and world events, such as natural disasters, and suffering that is beyond the witnesses' capacity to prevent or alleviate. Tragedy, in its common contemporary use, could be defined as the overwhelming scale of suffering and destruction as it is perceived by a removed, though very moved, individual. A Lexis Nexus search on September 21, 2011, for U.S. newspapers, radio, and wires using the term “tragedy” in the headline for the last year netted over 3,000 hits, most of which seemed to refer to accidents, violent deaths by a deranged perpetrator, and natural disasters. At this larger scale of national

communication the use of the term “tragedy” in news media indicates that social meaning exists where witnesses are least capable of responding and hold themselves the least ethically responsible. Within a liberal humanist belief system and perspective, tragedy appears in this unpolitical mode.

Kierkegaard and Havel (and other scholars who connect tragedy to democracy or social justice and public reflection) look to ancient Greek tragedy for a counter to their contemporary society’s focus on the solitary individual as the site of reflection and judgment. With modernity, and the rise of the middle class and private life, this model of the individual was intrinsic to conceptions of civic republicanism and democracy, as well as to tragedy as a cultural form. In his study of historical conceptions of the self, Charles Taylor claims that with modernity the individual in private reflection became central within theories of ethical judgment in politics and philosophy.² Theorist of democracy and communication Jürgen Habermas similarly points to the eighteenth-century shift of focus to private, inner life (“an audience-centered subjectivity formed in private”³). Democratic theorist Seyla Benhabib describes the low status of public life during the eighteenth century,⁴ whose development Hannah Arendt, unlike Habermas, lamented (and credited to the rise of novels and a bourgeois class) as destructive to public, political life.⁵

In their study of the shifting definitions of tragedy, M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern find that “the idea of private tragedy arises” with the formation of the middle class, as the “center of gravity of human affairs shifts to private.”⁶ Silk and Stern note the change in stakes from social, political, and historical consequences to an individual’s fall from high status, and a shift to a “level of

² Charles Taylor, Part III “Inwardness” in *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 111-99.

³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 30.

⁴ Seyla Benhabib, “Part I: Modernity, Morality, and Ethical Life,” *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 23-121.

⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture*, ed. Susannah Young-Ah Gottlieb (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 107.

⁶ M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 195.

higher understanding.” “Honor,” in bourgeois tragedy, becomes attached to the suffering hero, but the honor comes from the state of suffering, not from assuming worldly responsibilities that are shared with others.⁷

While tragic theory with and after Friedrich Nietzsche and as recently as Terry Eagleton’s 2002 *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, has based itself on a model of isolated individuals encountering an autonomous work of art, John Jones, Humphrey House, and Kierkegaard, among others, conceive of tragedy as a cultural formation dependent upon, even defined by, collective interpretation.⁸ Political theorists who look at tragedy as a cultural component of democratic politics tend to view tragedies as read, rather than performed. Following Hegel, Cornelius Castoriadis, Peter Euben, Robert Pirro, and Martha Nussbaum conceive of tragedy as philosophy or a mode of inquiry, rather than a collective practice; as something to be read and considered alone rather than engaged with in a crowd of audience members of different views, of different classes.⁹ Instead, I consider a version of tragedy as bound to the social, historic, and economic context of those who participate in forming this public *paideia* in the interpretive competence necessary for democratic communication and judgment.

Liberal humanism, I argue, places a privileged subject in a stable and unquestioned position of judge, and limits the participation and diminishes the authority of others. Habermas

⁷ Ibid, 307.

⁸ Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003); John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962); Humphrey House, *Aristotle’s Poetics: A Course of Eight Lectures* (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1956); and Kierkegaard, “Ancient Tragical Motif as Reflected in the Modern.”

⁹ Cornelius Castoriadis, “The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy,” *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, ed. David Ames Curtis, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 81-123; Peter Euben, *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); J. Peter Euben, John Wallach, and Josiah Ober, eds., *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Peter Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory: The Road Not Taken* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

describes the rise of a “bourgeois public sphere” of the judging democratic subject, contingent with the class-marked and class-defining practice of reading.¹⁰ In this practice, and this model of the judging subject, the plurality of perspectives upon which democracy depends is interiorized and removed. Distance, detachment, and interiority—valorized in so many theories of judgment and democracy—serve to guard against the threat of emotion and the masses, which have an amplificatory effect on each other and overwhelm individual judgment. Both liberal humanism and liberal conceptions of democratic communication take a role in positioning the locus of social meaning in the experience of an individual who observes in private, rather than publicly and collectively. In the world view and belief system of liberal humanism, tragedy as common social significance is located in the exalted emotional response of a privileged, removed, judging subject. Karl Jaspers warned that when a privileged audience views suffering at a remove from public life, the experience carries an “air of grandeur” which fosters an exalted sense of self, rather than a humbling experience in which the self is changed through knowledge and responsibility.¹¹ Following Jasper’s warning, I turn to tragedy as a public and collective practice, in which participants share equal interpretive authority and mutual vulnerability to critique.

In addition to tragedy as a mode of collective interpretation and a model for the judging democratic subject, tragedy as a genre category can designate a performance that concretizes social norms and common terms of discourse, making them available for critique and change. In their 1998 landmark scholarship, Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet argue that tragic theatre placed the city on stage before itself, both instituting and questioning social categories, terms of discourse, values, and institutions.¹² I draw upon theories of tragic performance as a

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

¹¹ Karl Jaspers, *Tragedy is Not Enough* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1952), 28.

¹² Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 185.

means of highlighting the hidden assumptions and exclusions in common terms of discourse. In the chapters ahead, I study the terms of discourse around issues of immigration, war, and poverty, in traditional and new journalism, as well as in popular entertainment. Recurrent narratives and characterizations form immigrants, soldiers, and the poor into mythic figures, a concept I develop in these chapters. These mythic figures are perpetuated by barriers to participation that hinder collective apprehension of many aspects of reality relevant to these issues. The theatrical performances of small groups, in the cases I study in the following chapters, work to counter these dominant narratives and characterizations. Rather than reify hegemonic norms formed through dominance of an elite or a majority, these performances work to reveal them as constructed and contingent rather than essential; therefore I view them through a certain tragic lens.

The physical co-presence of theatre functions as a potential check on mass media representations, and theatre allows organizations to gather around a common identity and cause, to share knowledge with each other, and then to share that knowledge with an outsider audience through performance. By viewing theatre as democratic communication I work against a long history of anti-theatrical prejudice in democratic theory. Deliberative democracy thus far continues this legacy by delimiting what forms of expression are considered appropriate and useful. As theorists aim to protect a newly inclusive public from what they view as its own worst tendencies, they formulate certain barriers to participation. Thus, although theories of democratic participation, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's civic republicanism to Habermas's deliberation, share the goals of fostering inclusivity, fairness, and self-reflection in a republic, a nation of participants, or a polis, they also share a tendency to exclude people by class, gender, and

ethnicity. Theories of democratic participation, then, have at least two uses: the first is to guide participants toward more virtuous, challenging, and beneficial ways of engaging. Secondly, in hindsight, these theories serve as a record for some of the assumptions and exclusions contingent to their historical contexts. To name a few relevant examples: in ancient Greece, common men were required to speak and judge in the pnyx alongside the wealthy, though women, slaves, and the foreign born were prohibited from the pnyx, and the theatre as well. While even as Rousseau intended his criteria for political speech to allow for equal participation across classes, he excluded women and derided theatricality and the theatre as corruptive (and distinctly feminine) means of expression.¹³

A philosophical pillar of democratic theory whose work has influenced both Arendt and Habermas, Rousseau ascribed to the genre of theatre the human qualities most corrupting to a democratic republic of equals, and aligned theatre with female gender. In his more recent iteration of democratic theory's elitism and the public sphere, Habermas returns Rousseau's gender-based delineation to class. In a 2006 article published in *Communication Theory*, Habermas described the qualities of culture or entertainment as corrupting to political discourse, and aligned the blurring of boundaries between rational, political content and personal, dramatic content with the capitalist corruption of the public sphere: "Issues of political discourse become assimilated into and absorbed by the modes and contents of entertainment. Besides personalization, the dramatization of events, the simplification of complex matters, and the vivid

¹³ Rousseau describes reason (for him a male capacity) as the activity that produces the general will and the republic. Its antithesis is passion, which is irrational and selfish. Opinion, then, as the negative corollary to general will, could be understood as mass selfish interest, or amour propre writ large. Rousseau's divisions of positive and negative versions of collective will—general will versus opinion—align with the division between reason and emotion that, again, are contingent upon gendered associations. The logic organizing the social/republic, opinion/general will, emotion/reason binaries into gendered categories becomes more apparent when following these threads through Rousseau's writing on the theatre. See, for example, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Book IV of *On the Social Contract*, in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau The Basic Political Writings*, translated and edited by Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc, 1987), 203. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Letter to D'Alembert," in *Politics and the Arts*, trans. Allan Bloom (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1960), 20.

polarization of conflicts promote civic privatism and a mood of antipolitics.”¹⁴ Craig Calhoun notes Habermas’s claims that “massification led to a lowering of entry requirements, or dumbing down.” Exposure to mass culture is not an education, because this “experience is not cumulative but regressive.”¹⁵ The eighteenth-century bourgeois practice of reading, then discussing the novel in coffee-houses, produced individuals with a “free and saturated interiority” and “audience-oriented subjectivity.”¹⁶ Habermas views this subject as ably suited to democratic questioning. Habermas and other theorists of democracy and culture grant certain textual genres, both theoretical and fictive, the capacity to develop more refined judgment in the people who read them. The categories that determine the kinds of expression considered appropriate for ethical judgment in liberal proceduralism support a hierarchy of political influence and authority.¹⁷ As Stephen Greenblatt remarks in his historical survey of the role of literature in marking the public sphere, literacy has often acted “less as a skill than a status conferred by a skill.”¹⁸ So I turn to tragedy as a counter to this elitism, for its focus on collective interpretation, in which the shared experiences of the audience are the only criteria for entry and judgment, and

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, “Political communication in mass media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research.” *Communication Theory* 16 (2006): 411-26.

¹⁵ As Craig Calhoun notes, Habermas includes Samuel Richardson’s eighteenth-century novel *Pamela* in his analysis, but “excludes penny dreadfuls,” clearly a class-based categorization. Calhoun further observes that Habermas judges centuries by relatively high-brow literary and philosophical examples. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 12 and 29. Craig Calhoun, introduction to *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 31.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁷ Iris Marion Young states that many activists reject deliberation because it proceeds under these prevailing power hierarchies, in which their voices are thwarted by structural design. Young has critiqued Habermas’s requirement of rational criteria for presuming a culture-transcending ethical objectivity while reinforcing a dominant culture of white, upper-class, Western expressivity. Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 57-80.

¹⁸ Tracing the role of literature in the formation of class hierarchies transhistorically, Stephen Greenblatt observes that the criteria for entry into a politically privileged class change as soon as a previously excluded group begins to gain mastery. His argument about the class-delineating role of literature in the public sphere is very similar to Calhoun’s. Stephen Greenblatt, “What is the History of Literature?” *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 466.

collective interpretation across differences of education and class was a key element of tragedy's civic function.¹⁹

For theorists of deliberative democracy, multi-faceted understanding of an issue is a fundamental value, if also an elusive goal. Yet, deliberative democracy deprives itself of true plurality by adhering to a hierarchy of epistemologies and belief systems. Deliberative democracy bases its criteria and procedures on a positivist epistemology and on a liberal value system, and places procedures and values based in liberalism in the position of judge, mediating among various other forms of expression, knowledge, and values, categorized as religion or special interests. Liberal cultural procedures here take the role of ostensibly neutral arbiter, mediating among other, cultured, gendered, and religious forms. In his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas details a method and ethics of democratic interaction, allowing for contingency of authority: the role of interpreter and actor can change. Within Habermas's conception of speech the theoretical approach is "the most conclusive," yet how is a person to navigate the switch from the privileged position of observer to that of an actor?²⁰ Theory, like any genre and medium, carries with it certain boundaries to participation, both in taste and competency. Positioning theory and other text-based practices as transcendent and all-inclusive, Habermas and others (as I explore below) practice a kind of deliberation without presence, a

¹⁹ As with the act of governing in ancient Greek participatory democracy, as Cynthia Farrar argues, the education was in the process of witnessing and judging tragedy. Cynthia Farrar, "Power to the People," in *The Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, eds. Kurt A. Raaflaub, Josiah Ober, and Robert Wallace (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 183. In *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, Mary Whitlock Blundell, Stephen Halliwell, and Jonathan Lear describe Aristotle's tragedy as an education towards the emotional and intellectual character necessary for democratic judgment. Jonathan Lear interprets Aristotle's mimesis as a practice of learning through imitation—the way a child learns to walk. The educational practice of mimeses, then, is a process that begins as part of a human community in early life. Education is experience, nothing but experience is required a priori, and tragedy is a kind of fine-tuning of emotion and intellect for democratic judgment and participation. "Real tragedies are for the already educated and virtuous," he writes, as "Aristotle is concerned with an educative process that ends with tragedy." Jonathan Lear, "Katharsis," in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 322.

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 17.

deliberation in which an elite group of practitioners represents others to themselves and to each other in text.²¹ While scholars of deliberative democracy have critiqued Habermas's categories towards a conception of the public sphere that includes aesthetic, expressive, and dramatic activities and the people who practice them, scholarship on deliberative democracy has gone only so far beyond Habermas's limiting criteria.²²

I suggest tragic practice in this dissertation as a model for democratic deliberation that proceeds without class hierarchy and restriction; in this way I offer an alternative to what I will describe as deliberative democracy's habitual focus on reading, a liberal canon of literature and a class-based practice. Theatre and cultural scholars in their studies of tragedy, as well as political theorists who use tragedy in the context of ancient Greek democracy, point out aspects of tragedy

²¹ Anne Phillips addresses this tendency and argues that policy decisions must be worked out with the presence of others, rather than for them, in "Democracy and Difference," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Selya Benhabib (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1993), 90-102.

²² Iris Marion Young has critiqued Habermas's requirement of rational criteria for presuming a culture-transcending ethical objectivity while reinforcing a dominant culture of white, upper-class, Western expressivity. Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 57-80. See also Alison M. Jagger, "Multicultural Democracy," in *Deliberation, Democracy, and Media*, eds. Simone Chambers and Anne Constatin (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2000), 27-46. Several theorists make reference to events such as policy debates, referendums, and political campaigns, and to songs, poetry, and feminist fiction, but they do not engage in a focused analysis of any of their examples. Alison M. Jagger, Nancy Fraser, Michael Schudson, and others critique Habermas in ways that expand the frame of who and what can be included in what we consider part of participatory democratic practice. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy"; Michael Schudson, "Was there Ever a Public Sphere? If So, When?"; and Mary P. Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 109-42, 143-63, 259-88. Though including aesthetic forms, these political scientists keep to a speech model of communication that is circumscribed by language. Several political theorists have explicated Hannah Arendt's writing in ways that frame aesthetic and expressive activity as political. Lisa Jane Disch and Bonnie Honig's interpretation of Arendt's "action" include aesthetic forms: Disch focuses on storytelling, Honig on "dramaturgical action." Bonnie Honig, "Toward and Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. Bonnie Honig (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1995), 135-66; and Lisa Jane Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). While Dana Villa's focus on "performative agonism" alludes to a theatrical conception of the political, theatre and performance are not a part of his analysis. Dana Villa, "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere," *American Political Science Review* 86, 3 (Sept. 1992): 712-21. Selya Benhabib's *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (2000) disputes Villa's elevation of performance as central to Arendt's philosophy. "Signs and sounds" are shunted to the category of the irrational, apolitical mode of social or private realm. Selya Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000). *The Journal of Public Deliberation*, an online journal with prominent scholars of the concept on its editorial board, features articles on deliberation on a wide variety of topics, from local government to religious beliefs, including internet chat rooms as well as classroom discussion, but the genre is always the same—relatively rational talk, either in person or online, and liberal procedures and values remain the consistent goal and criteria for judging the communication. <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol2/iss1/> (accessed January 13, 2012).

that might serve as a model of communicative practice within democratic pluralism without a mediator, or transcending and stable judging epistemology. Without a stable, mediating epistemology and set of values, tragedy instead initiates critique, even deconstruction, of social-structuring hegemonic norms by setting them against previously excluded or marginalized forms of knowledge and values.

I turn to another influential theorist of political communication, Hannah Arendt, who in contrast to Habermas describes a form of political communication that proceeds without a mediating, privileged method or epistemology. In Arendt's depiction of a public sphere—where the interpretive authority of each actor is equal, and each actor is equally vulnerable to the interpretation of others—political communication is animated by the shifting roles of actor and interpreter, or performer and audience. As judgment in Arendt's political realm proceeds without a stable, mediating epistemology or method (“pagan” or “groundless,” as Dana Villa describes it), no form of expression is excluded.²³ In her review of *The Black Book*, Arendt argued that a consistent and dominant epistemology only recognizes those expressions that conform to its criteria and methods as valid; those with contradicting truths either bend to conform or are rejected.²⁴ David Luban writes: “For Arendt, plurality, the ability of each human being to initiate

²³ Dana Villa, “Postmodernism and the Public Sphere,” 712.

²⁴ In her 1946 review of *The Black Book: The Nazi Crime Against the Jewish People* Arendt declared that “logical consistency” is predicated upon acceptance of a background of shared information of the status quo, hence no one had any ideas under Nazi rules, only versions of Nazi ideas. The only logically consistent argument acceptable within that hegemony was one that already accepted the organization of general rules to particular circumstances. Hannah Arendt, “The Image of Hell,” *Commentary* 2 (1946): 291-95. Linda Zerilli argues that Arendt's concept of natality and democratic judgment involves the ability (and authority) to apply one's own sense of situated reality to change universal categories. Linda M.G. Zerilli, “We Feel Our Freedom: Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt,” *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (April, 2005): 179. In her introduction to the lecture “Action and the Pursuit of Happiness,” Arendt pointedly acknowledged the intellectual norm of establishing credibility through citation, and then explicitly deviated from it in front her audience at the American Political Science Convention by telling a few stories. Hannah Arendt, “Action and the Pursuit of Happiness,” paper for the 1960 meeting of the American Political Science Association, page 1. Accessed on line via The Hannah Arendt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., there titled “Action in the Pursuit of Happinesslp” (Series: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975, n.d.). <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/arendthtml/arendthome.html>, accessed January 13, 2012.

action, implies that participatory democracy is the true form of the polis. Philosopher's programs for society, by contrast, would establish tyrannies of 'truth' which...are as tyrannical as other forms of despotism."²⁵ Openness and moral deference are necessary citizenship virtues, and competence and authority in her model are based not on a single "metadiscourse" but the ability to recognize and respond to others.

By grounding my definition of tragic practice as inclusive, democratic communication in contemporary theatrical performances of activist groups, I aim to connect Arendt's criteria and values to actual contemporary examples. Tragic dramaturgy, according to tragic theorist René Girard's interpretation of *Oedipus*, portrays the destructive impasse of Oedipus's refusal to consider Creon's argument from any perspective but his own. If the destruction in these plays serves as a warning against myopic judgment, their dramaturgy may also implicitly endorse an inclusive form of political communication, similar to the arguments for plural democratic engagement against liberal democratic culture's blinkered viewpoint, made by Iris Marion Young and others.²⁶

Arendt's performative description of the political includes aesthetic and expressive communication, and does not rely on given group identities prior to the public sphere, but rather posits identity as what develops as a product of collective agonism within the public sphere. As tragedies present characters whose sense of authority and sense of their selves are vulnerable and partial, they elicit a sense of self that is key to deliberative democracy. And while Habermas sorts expressive and aesthetic forms into the pre-political realm where identities and values are

²⁵ David Luban, "Hannah Arendt's Theory of Theory," in *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*, eds. Lewis P. and Sandra K. Hinchman (Albany: University of New York Press, 1994), 99. Luban quotes Hannah Arendt's *Between Past and Future*, 256. See also Linda M. G. Zerilli's description of Arendt's politics "without criteria" as "a form of thinking based on proofs." In "We Feel Our Freedom."

²⁶ See Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997), 168. Rather than accept procedural liberalism, with theory as the privileged form of communication mediating others, Alison Jaggar states: "Citizens of a multicultural democracy must learn to speak and be heard across difference and dominance," in *Deliberation, Democracy, and Media*, 29.

formed, Arendt's theatrical conception of politics allows us to see identity formation, and the questioning and critique of identity, as part of political speech. Tragedy, therefore, as defined by Amélie Rorty's Aristotelian scholarship on the tragic subject whose words and deeds are vulnerable to interpretations beyond his or her own, exemplifies the performative subject in Arendt's political sphere.²⁷ Rather than base my analysis on an private individual in reflection, I draw upon a vision of interpretive/authoritative equality and equal vulnerability to critique that appears in Arendt's performative public sphere. In building a model of a publicly judging, and judged, model of the democratic subject, I also draw upon theories of tragedy as a practice of collective interpretation.

The analysis in this dissertation works to counter a prevailing negative view of empathy and theatre in theories of democratic communication, and civic republicanism. The power of empathy to corrupt thought and to turn a republic of rational citizens into a mob explains the special antipathy democratic theory reserves for empathy, and for its alignment of empathy with popular culture, theatre, and co-presence. Alexander Nehamas aligns Plato's devaluing of drama with contemporary academic/high culture's corrupting influence on general public.²⁸ Rousseau linked empathy to theatre and to what he saw as a feminine, narcissistic, sensual, and irrational kind of perception.²⁹ In political theory, empathy is viewed as both the origin of ethics and the corruptor of the republic. This fear of empathy and the mob accounts for the privileging of the remove and solitude of reading. In *On Revolution*, Arendt equates Robespierre's empathy with the poor to violence, hysteria, and the tyranny of mob rule. Empathy, here seen as boundary

²⁷ Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, "The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy," in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Princeton: Princeton University Books, 1992), 1-22. For an analysis of Hannah Arendt's concept of political communication as tragic, see Robert Pirro, *Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Tragedy* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Alexander Nehamas, "Plato's Pop Culture Problem, and Ours," *The New York Times* online, August 10, 2010. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/29/platos-pop-culture-problem-and-ours/> (accessed January 14, 2012).

²⁹ Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Letter to D'Alembert," in *Politics and the Arts*, 18-20; and Susan Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 118.

blurring, corrupts political judgment.³⁰ Yet, Arendt herself argued that “rational” discourse cannot prevent mob thinking and behavior. Selya Benhabib defends Arendt’s performative public sphere from the accusation that it includes empathy by stringently interpreting Arendt’s use of Kant’s term “enlarged thinking” and “representative imagination”: “enlarged thinking is not empathy” but rather a means with which we “grasp the perspectivity of the public world.”³¹ Scholars of participatory democracy have interpreted Kant’s concept of “enlarged thought” towards theorizing how and why deliberators should see things from another’s perspective. Scholars vary on whether and to what degree “enlarged thought” involves actual or imaginary dialogue. Arendt’s concept of the mind “traveling” went both ways; in *The Human Condition* she often seems to conceive of politics in terms of co-presence, while in the later work, *Life of the Mind*, reflection on others’ perspective seems subsumed into her descriptions of thinking.³² There are reasons beyond Arendt’s valuing of Ancient Greece for using tragedy as model practice through which to draw some of her criteria and values. Robert Pirro attempts to ground Arendt’s theatrical metaphors by examining Jaspers’ influence upon her thought. While warning of tragedy’s misuse, Jaspers pointed towards an ideal social role for tragedy as anti-spectatorship, opposite of the “sheer happening.”³³ Rather than instigating self-critique, pity instead often seems to intensify observers’ sense of their own importance and virtue. Here, I see similarities between reifying tragedy and Arendt’s characterization of the Jacobin leaders of the French Revolution, who pitied peasants rather than granting them equal status within and responsibility to the republic.³⁴

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1963), 81.

³¹ Selya Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 190-91.

³² Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973); Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981 [1978]).

³³ Robert Pirro, *Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Tragedy* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

³⁴ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, 59-60.

Deliberative democrats continue to disagree on whether empathy, “enlarged thought,” “perspective taking,” and other terms for considering another’s perspective must take place in actual or imaginary, reflective, interiorized dialogue.³⁵ I examine the Janus face of empathy: as what Benhabib and others refer to as “boundary blurring” self-aggrandizement, and as a perception which incites an identity destabilizing self-reflection in audience members through their perceptions of others.

The problem, I argue, is not that drama, empathy, or personalization (all historically aligned in theories of civic republicanism) corrupt the public sphere. Rather, I argue that stable hierarchies of power, and barriers to participation, corrupt empathy and blinker judgment. Common, contemporary use of the term “tragedy” and common, contemporary representations of poverty frame the suffering of the less fortunate as a spectacle, to be observed, pitied, and judged by a relatively privileged subject. From a secure position of unidirectional communication, empathy for those who are represented, but not present, allows for what Stuart Hall referred to as “the spectacle of the other.”³⁶ Scholarly work on democracy, communication, and culture values a discrete subject (in both examined and assumed ways), capable of inclusive and reflective perception through the solitary remove of reading and writing. The rise of print material and a bourgeois public sphere sets a prevailing template of interiorized judgment rather than democratic communication in co-presence. Whether fictive, documentary, or theoretical, a

³⁵ Martha Nussbaum states that through “imaginary sympathy” a person puts himself in the situation of another. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 73. Linda Zerilli surveys the issue of presence versus “representative imagination” and argues that both Iris Marion Young and Lisa Jane Disch agree “that the idea of enlarged thought must be based in actual dialogue...” In “We Feel Our Freedom,” 176. Sharon Krause argues, “We can imagine the sentiments of others much better if they are able to tell us about them. Regular contestation and debate bring into view the sentiments of marginalized groups, which extends the reach of the imagination and influences the contents of our judgments accordingly.” Sharon Krause, “How Deliberation Feels,” conference paper presented at Law and the Emotions: New Directions in Scholarship, University of California, Berkeley, February 8-9, 2007. 17-18. Accessed online: www.brown.edu/Research/ppw/files/BrownPPW07_paper.doc (accessed January 15, 2012).

³⁶ Stuart Hall, “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 265.

deliberative system that privileges liberal culture and procedures places those with a familiarity and mastery of this form of discourse in the position of detached judge: qualified to dispense pity or condemnation. Empathy in this model responds to a grand experience to which the participants are actually immune. When empathy functions within this unquestioned position of authority and dispensation, it accords with Rousseau's prejudice against empathy and the theatre: flattering the audience and allowing us to perform our own noble identities without questioning our own position.³⁷ Writing on tragedy, Jaspers warned of a potential for more privileged people to experience the suffering of others as an opportunity for their own intellectual and emotional expansion.³⁸ Rather than instigating self-critique, pity instead often seems to intensify observers' sense of their own importance and virtue. Jaspers viewed empathy as dangerous, complicit in a narcissistic, unethical, or apolitical relationship between the self and the world.³⁹ In several aspects, the static and removed position of the bourgeois liberal subject in relation to those-who-are-to-be-pitied confirms scholars' darkest views of the influence of drama and empathy on political perspective. A model of democratic communication centered upon an invulnerable spectator, and its concomitant mode of tragedy, opposes communicative reciprocity, in which no party maintains an unquestioned position of authority. The "order" of political and social status, social ties, and responsibility is reinforced, rather than challenged, in what Raymond Williams described as "reifying" tragedy for a liberal, middle-class audience.⁴⁰ The stable positioning of the judging subject precipitates the framing of the spectacle other; empathy in this system of non-reciprocity remains embedded in individual spectators, rather than forming new political allegiances, or animating collective values and decisions.

³⁷ Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Letter to D'Alembert," in *Politics and the Arts*, 18-20. See also Susan Okin on Rousseau's gendered divisions in *Women in Western Political Thought*, 118.

³⁸ Karl Jaspers, *Tragedy is Not Enough*, 28.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), 6.

This dissertation thus begins with a negative model of empathy as a tragic exaltation of the privileged individual. It ends with an opposing model of tragedy, in which empathy acts as a destabilizing force, challenging participants' conceptions of themselves and others. While I argue for theatrical co-presence, and the theatrical self-representations of small groups, as a counter to current barriers to participation and the resulting perpetuation of mythic figures, I also analyze the productive, destabilizing role of empathy in the performances I study. In the last three chapters, I find that representations of the poor within the U.S. and outsiders such as Africans, Palestinians, Iraqis, and Afghans often frame the experiences of the less fortunate as a spectacle, to be observed, pitied, and judged from a relatively privileged and secure position. Even as mass media dominance becomes more pluralistic and splintered, with the demise of newspapers and the rise of new technologies, what Arjun Appadurai has called "large-scale identities" continue to exist.⁴¹ Our news, political debate, and entertainment feature such protagonists as "immigrants," "soldiers," and "the poor," and these representations are structured by gradations of inclusion and exclusion within national and class identities. Chantal Mouffe terms a zone beyond shared norms and values upon which norms and values depend as liberalism's "constitutive outside."⁴² I understand the limiting and limited consistency of certain characterizations of immigrants, soldiers, and the poor and narratives of immigration, war, and deprivation in terms of the Roland Barthes' concept of myth, the concept of the scapegoat as a figure that reinforces the border between "us" and "them," and the concept of the constitutive outside, following Mouffe, Giorgio Agamben, and Eagleton.

I overlay theories of tragedy and political sociology in which scholars explore the ritualistic dynamics of scapegoats, collective identity, and outsiders in democratic society to

⁴¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 55.

⁴² Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), 21.

understand the co-determinacy of the marginal status of these people and the weight of social meaning their representation carries. William Connolly termed this “identity/difference.”⁴³ Soldier, immigrants, and the poor carry the weight of social meaning, yet exert little influence in their own representation, or the terms of discourse around these issues. I draw upon this scholarship in order to analyze the weight of social meaning these figures carry. Political sociology has frequently mirrored tragic theory when analyzing the role of outsiders and border figures in sustaining a polis; the two areas seem to borrow from and intersect with each other. As Raymond Williams conceives of tragedy as part of a social dynamic, which “directs sameness and difference,” scholars in political sociology, theatre, and classical anthropology have conceived of the self-other schema that undergirds democratic collective identity as endemically tragic.⁴⁴

Carl Schmitt theorized national democracy as reliant upon the existence of an enemy for the formation and maintenance of the common bonds of citizenship.⁴⁵ Because the equality and community of citizenship in a national democracy traverse religious, economic, and cultural difference, Schmitt posits death and the presence of an enemy as the common threat that unifies a nation. Death and the enemy present sufficient difference and necessity to bind an otherwise disparate group of citizens in a nation. In *Inventing the Barbarians*, Edith Hall describes *The Persians* as evidence of the fundamental role of the construction and representations of an other in the creation and sustenance of ancient Greek collectivity.⁴⁶

⁴³ William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

⁴⁴ Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, 28.

⁴⁵ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 26-27.

⁴⁶ Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarians: Greek Self-Definition Through Tragedy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Writing on refugees in *The Origin of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt describes a global system of nations that is structurally dependent upon those it excludes.⁴⁷ Similarly, Agamben describes the polis as dependent upon the categorization of some peoples as outsiders; he portrays this outsider figure as inhabiting a zone beyond the protection of social structures.⁴⁸ Like Agamben, tragic theorists René Girard and Terry Eagleton credit the tragic figure of the scapegoat with the articulation of difference that binds community.⁴⁹ Girard, writing on community's dependence on gradations of inclusion and exclusion for the organization of significance, states that "insufficient difference desymbolizes."⁵⁰ In *Antigone's Claim*, Judith Butler focuses on the limits of language as they reflect social ties and exclusions.⁵¹

As citizens of this country recognize differences among each other, undifferentiated others serve to highlight national identity. I explore the ways that figurations of Africans, Palestinians, Iraqis, Afghans, and Mexican-American immigrants function as the outside against which U.S. national collective identity takes its meaning. By contrast, depictions of these peoples as outsiders support a coherent U.S. identity among different peoples. Unlike the scapegoat figure, this background figuration comes from without and stays without; unlike the scapegoat it does not reinforce the border on the inside, but is the outside upon which the border takes its significance. While Eagleton folds anawim into his definition of scapegoat (often translated as "the faithful remnant"), it may be useful to instead delineate anawim as the flipside of scapegoat: that which remains beyond the borders of the reified. In fact, anawim could be seen as where the

⁴⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 296.

⁴⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 27.

⁴⁹ Eagleton, see especially pages 6 and 279.

⁵⁰ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 62.

⁵¹ Judith Butler *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

scapegoat must go first in order to gain the difference and distance upon which the scapegoat's reintegration depends.⁵²

In this dissertation, I study the use of theatre in supporting self-representation toward the production and circulation of largely unrecognized or unacknowledged narratives, characterizations, and ethical bonds. I also attempt to explain the reasons why, in some aspects, these performances fail to influence the terms of national discourse. So I analyze Poverty Simulation, and the performances of Aaron Hughes, Rubén Martínez, and the Iraq Veterans Against the War, as tragic. I have two aims: to see how these performances create a space for new perspectives, fostering collective interpretation, and to see what the failures of these performances indicate about the damaging limits of discourse in the U.S.

Chapter one explores a few examples of performances that frame political engagement as a tragic exaltation of the individual. I argue that this approach to politics produces a false understanding of a real problem, and promotes misrecognition of others, in service of self-aggrandizement. Invisible Children, a U.S.-based organization that works on behalf of displaced Sudanese and Ugandan child refugees from the Lord's Resistance Army, raises funds by producing demonstrations in which U.S. teenagers enact the trek these refugees make to avoid kidnapping. While successfully galvanizing interest and exhibiting a fair amount of political and financial success, Invisible Children, I argue, has achieved its goals through a kind of identity colonization. In this chapter I also study two recent theatre pieces, *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner's adaptation of the diary of a U.S.-born activist for Palestinian statehood, and Eve Ensler's staged reading of the testimony of a Congolese rape victim. These performances, I argue, portray privileged U.S. protagonists as romantic-tragic

⁵² Eagleton, 277-79.

figures, and function to reify a liberal cultural perspective through the use of Africans and Palestinians as a spectacle “other.”

The performances I study in chapters two, three, and four aim to fulfill what Vernant and Vidal-Naquet describe as the role of tragic theatre, placing the city on stage before itself, and questioning social categories, terms of discourse, values, and institutions.⁵³ When groups use theatre to communicate their values and interests, they also express an identity over which they exercise creative control. Viewing mass media as a kind of universalizing cultural object could allow us to see the performances of small groups as vernacular, in a dialogic relationship. These performances offer alternative interpretations of commonly witnessed events, such as the Iraq War, and commonly viewed protagonists, such as immigrants or the poor.

In chapter two, I look at Iraq Veterans Against the War’s 2008 performances of *Operation First Casualty*, in which veterans and active duty soldiers performed the military actions they carried out in Iraq and Afghanistan on the streets of cities in the U.S. Based on the adage that “the first casualty of war is truth,” their performance was an attempt to exert some agency and authority over what they saw as a detached and distorted view of soldiers and the wars. War perhaps most markedly inscribes the difference upon which national identity depends; and soldiers constitute the frontlines of collective identity. Drawing upon analysis of journalistic and fictive depictions of soldiers, I develop an understanding of U.S. soldiers as scapegoats; their lack of authority and great social significance hinders what I describe as the tragic demands of *Operation First Casualty*. Those demands include a recognition of the professional knowledge and experiences of soldiering IVAW members share. During the performance, IVAW members dressed in military fatigues brutalize the volunteer actors who play the roles of Iraqi and Afghani

⁵³ Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 185.

civilians. This, I argue, is an attempt to elicit empathy and solidarity with the people whose country the citizens of the U.S. occupy. As they do this, IVAW works against the soldier's role as scapegoat, of marking the border by venturing outside of it, by instead portraying ethical affiliations between U.S. citizens and the people whose countries they occupy.

Chapter three focuses on two individuals who enact a performative, storytelling form of journalism: Iraq veteran Aaron Hughes and journalist Rubén Martínez. These performances were designed explicitly to intervene in and offer alternatives to mass media framing and exclusions: Martínez's *Border Ballad*, in which he describes his experience of following a Mexican family's two journeys across the border, and Aaron Hughes's stories about his experiences in Iraq and the U.S. This chapter analyzes these performances in terms of the performers' intent to create new terms and frames for contemporary issues with which to engage their audiences; and it also explores the varying degrees of their success in unhinging audience response from what the performers view as given, polarized, and static political categories and identities. Martínez and Hughes attempt to distribute authority beyond pundits, experts, and theorists, inviting their audiences to apply their own experiences and observances towards the critique and adaptation of hegemonic terms of discourse around these issues. Using mass media as a common world of things, held up to inclusive counter-hegemonic interpretation, Martínez and Hughes actually allow for what Habermas called the "lay judgment" of a public,"⁵⁴ or, to my purposes, tragic, collective interpretation.

In chapter four, I focus on Poverty Simulation, a theatre game produced by anti-poverty organizations, during which social welfare professionals and their clients switch roles and act out a scripted "typical week" in the other person's shoes. The game fosters dialogue across class, cultural, and other differences, enabling mutual critique and a recognition of solidarity and

⁵⁴ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 41.

responsibility. By staging a communicative structure that differs from the communicative norms outside the theatre game, Poverty Simulation works against the projection and spectacularizations that deliberation without co-presence (through literature, theory, or journalism) allows. In this chapter, I respond to theorists of political judgment who valorize a liberal canon of literature. I argue that reading can provide the experience of engaging ethically in other peoples' suffering, without the reciprocity that might alter the participants' own concept of themselves and their role in the world. Rather than boundary blurring, I argue that the game maintains an awareness of difference. Poverty Simulation aims to fulfill what theorist of democracy and tragedy Peter Euben describes as theatre's role in justice: inculcating an understanding that one is part of a whole larger one's self, and creating a "unity of difference,"⁵⁵ rather than the spectacle of the other. I conceive of Poverty Simulation as a tragic practice, because it provides a stage and a script that support communication across habitual and hierarchical social boundaries and, by doing so, reveals the damaging and unequal consequences of the contemporary economic and social order. As both actors and audience, the participants in the performance experience and witness the failures of responsibility of both local government and the social order of which they are a part. Poverty Simulation thus most fully portays the values and fulfills many of the criteria I establish for tragic practice, a definition I hone in this dissertation by studying the case studies I have selected in the context of theories of tragedy and democratic deliberation.

As I weave together theories of democratic communication with theories of tragedy, I am influenced by an analytic approach that traverses several disciplines, including theatre and cultural studies as well as political philosophy. A significant conceptual legacy of scholarship

⁵⁵ Euben, 84.

identifies and explains the interdependence of social categories and the structuring of perception and experience, the creation and circulation of representation, and political identity and discourse. In recent political science scholarship, this concept has been referred to as “nomos,” in reference to Schmitt and his influence.⁵⁶ Of course, Michel Foucault’s writing on “the order of things” has also hugely influenced scholarship on the mutual enforcement of epistemic and social categories.⁵⁷ Agamben, whose work I call upon in this dissertation, extends this scholarly trajectory with his theorization of ritual, social order, and political speech and identity.⁵⁸ In the field of theatre studies and the sociology of culture, Williams’s concept of the “structure of feeling” accounts for the role of literature and theatre in both reification of and change within a dominant social order (or hegemony).⁵⁹ Particularly relevant to the work of this dissertation is theatre scholar Daniel Gerould’s work on the mutually creating and reinforcing relationship between a theatrical genre and national identity and discourse. Gerould articulates the coeval nature of melodramatic theatre, a melodramatic worldview, and “a democratic revolution in thought and feeling” in the U.S. during the late eighteenth century.⁶⁰ Similar to Vernant and Vidal-Nacquet’s argument for the role of tragedy in ancient Greece, Gerould writes that

⁵⁶ Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publican Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2003). On June 14, 2011, Royal Holloway, The University of London, hosted a workshop titled “NOMOS: Carl Schmitt and his Interlocutors,” at which participating scholars surveyed and critiqued the influence of Schmitt’s concept on Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and others. Papers presented at this workshop are available in podcast form. See “NOMOS: Carl Schmitt & his Interlocutors,” Backdoor Broadcasting Company, July 14, 2011. <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2011/06/nomos-carl-schmitt-his-interlocutors/> (accessed February 29, 2012).

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things; An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).

⁵⁸ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

⁵⁹ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁶⁰ Daniel C. Gerould, “The Americanization of Melodrama,” in *American Melodrama* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983), 7. Gerould describes the influence of melodrama on national identity as well as its portrayal of “repressed” social truths and “social sores” such as poverty and racism that were “so familiar few actually saw them.” See pages 20-21.

melodrama portrayed and inculcated social order, as well as protested it (most pointedly in the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*).⁶¹

Theatre and genre studies has much to contribute to this discipline-crossing study of social categorization, cultural forms, and political discourse. Because tragedy as a genre already has a legacy of traversing theatre studies and political science, I have drawn from this scholarship in my study of democratic communication and activism. However, as Habermas claims that during the rise of the bourgeois public sphere theatre and politics were both treated with the same “solemnity,” Gerould’s scholarship on melodrama seems promisingly relevant to a further exploration of the historical role of theatrical genres in the development of a democratic subject and its public sphere.⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid, 28.

⁶² Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 34.

Chapter 1:

International Activism and Romantic-tragic Self-fashioning: Invisible Children, Rachel Corrie, and Eve Ensler

Invisible Children is a charity organization dedicated to aiding abducted child soldiers in northern Uganda, as well as children who have left home to avoid abduction. Founded in 2004 by Jason Poole, Laren Russell, and Bobby Bailey, its current focus is funding schools for northern Ugandan children who have been displaced by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In 2003 after graduating from college in Southern California, where they studied filmmaking, the three traveled to Sudan with the intention of shooting a documentary about the troubled area. The result, called *Invisible Children: Rough Cut*, screened in 2005 after which it appeared on Youtube. Since 2004, *Rough Cut* has toured with thirty roadies supporting seven hundred and fifty screenings across the country; these events now continue without a tour, as independent volunteers host screenings in high schools, colleges, and homes. The organization estimates that by June 2009 over 5 million people had seen the film.¹

Rough Cut begins in the style of a video travel diary. As they prepare to leave, the three young men speak of their initial sense of anticipation and dread. However, during their first days in Sudan they are disappointed by the lack of conflict they encounter. They become listless and bored, and film themselves playing tricks on each other, killing a snake, and throwing up. Then, they learn from Acholi leader Jolly Okot that the conflict they sought has moved to northern Uganda. Once the three young men arrive in northern Uganda and meet the displaced boys, the

¹ This information was taken from the Invisible Children Facebook page, under the heading "Exhibition." <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Invisible-Children/10313003972697> (accessed July 9, 2011). *Invisible Children: Rough Cut*, is available on Youtube.com as well as in DVD format. See "Invisible Children (Part 1/6)," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qds5MOCqWnk&feature=related> (accessed November 17, 2010).

film shifts to a more serious, documentary style. The film progresses by moving back and forth between footage of the Ugandan and Sudanese children, depicting the filmmakers' growing friendship with one particularly open and well-spoken boy named Jacob, and background information on the political conflict in the region and Lord's Resistance Army, explained by journalists and local and international activists. Near the end of the film, Jacob cries and asks the filmmakers not to forget him; *Rough Cut* closes with Jason's voiceover explaining that they vowed not to leave Jacob behind, and decided to start an organization to help him—an organization the audience is then urged to join.

Using *Rough Cut* as a key outreach tool, Invisible Children has produced demonstrations in which mostly teenage participants performed the role of the “night commuters” of northern Uganda, reenacting their nocturnal trek away from home at night to avoid LRA kidnapping. Composed of simultaneous demonstrations in different places, “Night Commute” (2006), “Displace Me” (2007), and “The Rescue” (2009), galvanized thousands of (mostly) teenagers and young adults in cities across the U.S., as well as a few cities in Australia and Europe.² Participants marched, slept outside, posted videos of their participation on Facebook and Youtube to draw attention to the issue, and wrote letters to politicians advocating government intervention on behalf of child soldiers and displaced children. The Invisible Children organization framed these demonstrations as a means of drawing the attention of the U.S. government and the international community, and to demand action against the LRA and its leader, Joseph Kony. The participants sought media coverage before the event, then slept in a public place until a celebrity appears to “rescue” them. Invisible Children promotional materials explain celebrities' capacity to “rescue” participants because by simply showing up at the site of

² Invisible Children, Inc. “About Us,” from “Media Kit,” Invisible Children online, March 27, 2009.

the sleepover, they have the capacity to draw media attention to the cause. In some instances, a representative from the office of a local politician (such as Colorado Senator Mark Udall in Denver, and New York Senator Kristen Gillibrand in Albany) arrived in the early morning; in others the respondents were youth culture celebrities such as the actress Kristin Bell and Fall Out Boy lead singer Patrick Stump. Typically the celebrity “rescuer” praised and rallied the participants by describing them as part of a significant and swelling movement. A few politicians pledged to bring a discussion of the kidnapped children to U.S. Congress.³

In measurable ways, Invisible Children (IC) has succeeded in achieving these goals. In response to one of the events, Oprah Winfrey spoke of the situation in northern Uganda on her television show.⁴ The organization’s 2009 financial statement lists its total assets at about two million dollars.⁵ Invisible Children’s recent efforts in northern Uganda have included rebuilding and supporting eleven secondary schools, funded by their Schools for Schools program, in which U.S. students raised money through their Invisible Children high school groups.⁶ The participants’ responses to IC’s outreach efforts (many documented on YouTube) exhibit passionate conviction to the cause and (as I describe later in this chapter) a sense that IC awakened them to a dire situation previously beyond their awareness and concern. Yet a deeper look at *Rough Cut* and IC’s rescue performances, alongside their promotional materials and the

³ See “The Rescue: Los Angeles 2009-With Kristen Bell’s Speech,” Youtube.com, April 25, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9PMJUQRPg8> (accessed November 21, 2010). “The Rescue Invisible Children Albany NY part 1,” Youtube, April 25, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4MWHnOU9g> (accessed November 21, 2010). “The Rescue: Denver-Senator Mark Udall’s Office pledging support to help Invisible Children,” Youtube.com, April 25, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQ2g1CP4bro> (accessed November 21, 2010). For the Albany demonstration, see “The Invisible Children Albany NY part 1,” May 1, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4MWHnOU9g> (accessed July 10, 2011).

⁴ See Oprah.com, “Invisible Children,” April 20, 2011, <http://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/Invisible-Children> (accessed September 26, 2011).

⁵ Considine and Considine, Certified Public Accountants, *Financial Statement, Invisible Children, Inc. Statement of Financial Position, June 30, 2009 and 2008*, http://cloud.invisiblechildren.com/media/financials/ic_2009_financial_statement.pdf (San Diego, CA), 2009.

⁶ Invisible Children, “Rebuilding schools in war-torn northern Uganda with help from people just like you...,” <http://s4s.invisiblechildren.com/overview>, Invisiblechildren.com (accessed September 26, 2011).

videos and other cultural productions of their teenage fans, reveals a troubling aspect of the “awareness” that IC manages to raise. In this chapter I explore several examples of a contemporary approach to activism in which empathic framing of the suffering of others places meaning in the emotional response of the privileged, U.S. individual. Through this analysis, I develop an explanation of the role of tragedy within bourgeois, liberal humanitarianism.

Invisible Children demonstrations and the promotional and documentary materials that surround them depict an innocent young U.S. protagonist against the backdrop of global affairs as a personal journey, a challenge, and an opportunity to take part in a historically and politically significant drama. In this chapter, I describe this frame as romantic-tragic, and argue that IC’s strategies shield teenage participants from the challenging political realities that might enable actual reciprocal, ethical, transnational engagement. Invisible Children’s tactics are notable for a charity organization. But it is not unique in staging a political cause as a romantic and imperial fiction of self-actualization, in which naïve teens venture into an ethically uncharted outside world. The 2006 play *My Name is Rachel Corrie* and Eve Ensler’s 2009 staged reading of “A Teenage Girl’s Guide for Surviving Sex Slavery” (from her book *I Am an Emotional Creature*) were described, both in their critical reception and by the artists’ and producers’ promotions, as addressing a political conflict.⁷ However, both *My Name is Rachel Corrie* and “A Teenage Girl’s Guide” highlight an American individual’s developing selfhood; the real political conflict, in a distant land, served as a backdrop.

⁷ Rachel Corrie, Alan Rickman, and Katharine Viner, *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006). The play was adapted from Rachel Corrie’s journals, which were also published. While in her journals Corrie affirms her bonds with her fellow activists, Palestinian friends, and a Palestinian family with whom she stays, the play leaves out these people who appeared so significant to her. No other characters appear on stage with the actress who plays Corrie. In the play, Corrie makes one, glancing reference to “five other internationals, plus Jehan,” 10. For reference, see the journals: *Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998). “Eve Ensler: Teenage Girls Guide to Surviving Sex Slavery,” at the 92nd Street Y, February 11, 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-Tiad_JQCw&feature=related (accessed November 30, 2011). Eve Ensler, *I Am An Emotional Creature: The Secret Life of Girls Around the World* (New York: Villard, 2010).

My critique of these performances explores the political pitfalls of identification and pity within liberal humanism, and develops an understanding of the nature and role of tragedy within a liberal humanist system modeled on a privileged, removed subject. In this chapter, I describe the coeval relationship of liberal humanism and a bourgeois class in which the private life of the family acts as the locus of value and meaning. In my analysis, I find that these performances center the subjectivity and meaning of the protagonists or participants in private family life, and depict a foreign outside world as both alluring and threatening. The value of the private subject and the family within bourgeois humanism in fact depends upon its contrasting depiction of a chaotic outside world, the zone of indistinction or *anawim* I have described in the introduction. By venturing beyond the realm of family and nation into this zone of undifferentiated others, the protagonists of these performances gain the difference, distance, and distinction that reify familial and national bonds by placing them under a perceived threat. In the performances I study in this chapter, protagonists go through a rite of passage by identifying with people who are suffering and by this act they heroically also place themselves at risk. The concept of the sublime, an experience that both elevates and threatens the self, or elevates the self through exposure to threat, appears to be at work in the character arc that these performances have in common.

In this chapter, I explore how a self-serving mode of empathy works to blur the boundaries between a privileged, Western protagonist and the people whose sufferings they witness. In the romantic-tragic perspective, which I argue is coeval with liberal humanism, foreign lands and peoples are a vehicle to the self-actualization of the protagonists, expanding their sense of themselves and revealing their noble souls. Scholars of democracy and civic

republicanism view empathy as corruptive of judgment because they analyze empathy within a liberal humanist perspective of self and other.

Finally, I focus on a few examples of the use of new media as a tool for what I describe as romantic-tragic self-fashioning. Video editing and Youtube allow Invisible Children and its participants to cut, paste, and embed themselves into a landscape of their own creation, in which they stand with such figures as Hillary Clinton and Gandhi, entering a realm of video edited cyberhistory. By making Youtube videos of themselves as they take part in Invisible Children events, participants create a virtual drama for themselves in which they act on the behalf of others—granting themselves a heroic worldly identity. Analyzing the videos and blog posts of Invisible Children participants, I find that contemporary media can facilitate a self-serving approach to comprehending difficult situations in foreign countries, obscuring complexity. I understand this conflation of the development of a private sense of self with public, political engagement as tragic-romantic, and so in this chapter I look to scholarship on the formation of this worldview, in terms of liberal humanism, the private life of the bourgeois family, and the nature of tragedy in this value system and social context. Empathy in this model responds to a grand experience to which the participants are actually immune. Karl Jaspers warned of tragedy as a privileged class's disposition towards others. Rather than a humbling experience in which the self is changed through knowledge and responsibility, tragedy's "air of grandeur" can foster and exalted sense of self.⁸

While M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern argue that "the idea of private tragedy arises" with the formation of the middle class, as the "center of gravity of human affairs shifts to private,"⁹ more recently, and focusing specifically on the middleclass in the U.S., Robert N. Bellah has described

⁸ Karl Jaspers, *Tragedy is Not Enough* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1952).

⁹ M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 195.

a pervasive culture of expressive and utilitarian individualism that subsumes and limits politics to the contingent needs of what he portrays as a rather isolated self.¹⁰ Within this cultural conception of the relationship between the self and politics, the “isolated self” remains immune to challenge and change, maintaining a stable self-conception and authoritative position. The rite of passage staged by Invisible Children presents political acts of solidarity as a means of self-expression. And the organization encourages its participants to use new media to gain national attention, framing activism as, above all, an intense, movie-like, and exalting experience of self-fashioning. Rather than disrupting what Raymond Williams refers to as the “order” of social ties and social responsibility, Invisible Children’s promotions instead often seem to intensify their participants’ sense of their own importance and virtue.¹¹ Karl Jaspers viewed empathy as dangerous, complicit in a narcissistic, unethical, or apolitical relationship between the self and the world.¹² Invisible Children confirms scholars’ darkest views of the influence of drama and empathy on political perspective.¹³

Gayatri Spivak’s summation of the myth of self-making that uses the third world as a backdrop (“white men save brown women from brown men”) thus appears within the U.S.

¹⁰ Robert N. Bellah, “The Pursuit of Happiness,” and “Culture and Character: The Historical Conversation,” in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 3-27.

¹¹ Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996).

¹² Jaspers, 28.

¹³ Jürgen Habermas’s condemnation of the use of drama in political communication carries with it not only an anti-theatrical bias inherited from the tradition of civic republicanism, but also a bias against empathy. Both have been seen as corruptive to democratic discourse. See Jürgen Habermas, “Political communication in mass media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research,” *Communication Theory* 16 (2006): 411-26. Selya Benhabib distinguishes Kant’s concepts of “enlarged thinking” and “representative imagination,” arguing that “enlarged thinking is not empathy” but rather a means with which we “grasp perspectivality of public world.” Selya Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 190-91. Joan Tronto describes the potential boundary blurring when more privileged peoples empathize with those who are less privileged, or simply different. She refers to this kind of removed and unchallenged interpretation as “ourselves undressed.” Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethics of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 61.

teenage context of *Invisible Children*.¹⁴ The “far away” serves as a projection of one’s inner life, a landscape upon which the journey to independent selfhood is staged. In this chapter, I analyze *Invisible Children*’s rites of passage in the context of the play *My Name is Rachel Corrie* and Eve Ensler’s performed reading, in order to critique these deployments of romantic, tragic heroism—a critique that furthers this dissertation’s thesis of a private mode of tragic grandeur versus what I describe, in the chapters that follow, as tragic practices of reciprocity.

Bourgeois humanitarianism, as Jürgen Habermas and Williams theorize, developed as representations of distant places and people were brought to a private audience.¹⁵ In the eighteenth century, the feelings and thoughts evoked by pictures and descriptions of distant locations and people contributed to the self-fashioning of the bourgeois class, supporting a model of an inner, private self through spectacularizing other places and other peoples. Eighteenth-century material practices in which representations of distant others, in books and newspapers, were instrumental to the production of a humanitarian, bourgeois self, have much in common with the way *Invisible Children*, and charity organizations more generally, portray distant others to potential donors.¹⁶ Habermas describes the way humanitarianism developed historically, through the fictive and journalistic depictions of distant places, people, and events that were available to a bourgeois class. Scholars have traced the historical codependence of industrialization, imperialism, the middle-class, and the concept of humanitarianism. Williams connects the rise of global industrial economy with a model of first world, white, bourgeois

¹⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 302-3.

¹⁵ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 31-56. Raymond Williams, “The Politics of Modernism,” in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (New York: Verso, 1989), 6-7.

¹⁶ I refer to charity here as voluntary donations from one more privileged group to another, as opposed to religious, community, and other groups in which charity has an internal function. See the compilation of historical and theoretical articles on charity in the U.S. (a topic the editor states has received little scholarly attention). *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

individual in relation to othered masses.¹⁷ In her historical analysis of the philosophy of ethics and empathy, Joan Tronto states that “with global economy and commercial society arose concern for distant others.”¹⁸ The interpersonal focus of family life and the material, cultural practices within the family household support the conception of a self in terms of inner and outer realms. The inner realms of the home and private family life are bolstered by contrast with the distant, threatening, exotic outer realms. In the context of U.S. middle-class nuclear family, Joel Pfister refers to the term “yourselfing,”¹⁹ denoting an orientation that views other people and situations as essentially props and backgrounds for the performance of an identity to oneself and to an audience.

Activism as self-fashioning and romantic-tragic rite of passage

The romantic-tragic figure of an adventurous and privileged person who ventures into a threatening, exotic landscape is embodied in Invisible Children’s use of materials by Dan Eldon. A young photographer killed by a mob in Mogadishu in 1993, Eldon has since become a heroic martyr figure. Representations of his life, similar to media portrayals of Rachel Corrie, have focused more on his exceptional inner life than the causes with which he engaged. Eldon’s words appear in the opening frame of *Rough Cut*: “Once one has been to these challenging terrible places, they’re always strangely drawn back... because there is nothing that can compare to seeing the raw reality of the basic human need for survival...it disgusts and inspires.”²⁰ Eldon’s

¹⁷ Raymond Williams, “The Politics of Modernism.”

¹⁸ Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethics of Care* (London: Routledge, 1993), 20.

¹⁹ Joel Pfister, “On Conceptualizing the Cultural History Emotional and Psychological Life in America,” in *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America*, Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 21.

²⁰ “Invisible Children (Part 1/6),” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qds5MQCqWnk&feature=related> (accessed November 17, 2010).

journals, which include both writing and hand-painted photo-collages, have been published and have toured as gallery installations in a manner that foregrounds him as young world traveler and solitary hero, rather than as a journalist or member of a particular community, cause, or vocation. Like Eldon, Rachel Corrie (who died in the Palestinian/Israeli occupied territories) has been remembered more as a martyred young idealistic American than as a member of any collective cause. Eldon, Corrie, and the Congolese victim of sex slavery portrayed by Ensler have been abstracted from the particulars of their political struggles. U.S. interpretations of Corrie and Eldon have turned them into romantic-tragic figures by using foreign conflict and the suffering of others as a backdrop, as political realities that are most threatening in their capacity to kill the ideals of American youth.

Invisible Children depicts the crisis in Uganda and Sudan to an audience of U.S. teenagers as a kind tragic adventure into which the young participants can step, performing the romantic role of transnational heroes. By inviting participants to “step into” the romantic-tragic story Invisible Children stages, the organization enables the experience of engaging ethically in other people’s suffering, without the reciprocity that might alter the participants’ own concept of themselves and their role in the world. With a quality of heightened immediacy of the you-are-there style of a video-diary, *Rough Cut* presents the journey of three protagonists—Laren, Jason, and Bobby—as they set themselves on a path of self-actualization by venturing forth into what they perceive as an unknown and dangerous world. The travelers depict their journey with heroism, bravado, humor, and horror. These are the young adults many teenagers may want to become, describing an adventure out in the world that they may dream of having, once they are old enough to live on their own. Just as the Invisible Children promotions challenge potential participants to “step into the story” by taking part in the demonstrations, the video-diary quality

of *Rough Cut* further allows this audience to project themselves into the journey. As potential participants in the journey, *Rough Cut* viewers are invited to aspire to the sense of self the filmed journey conveys, a sense of self I describe as romantic-tragic. Rather than a vulnerable self, changed through new allegiances, these life stories depict an individual leaving the bonds of the bourgeois, nuclear family to face a threatening world, where the protagonists remains alone, stranded in the zone of indistinction, or what Chantal Mouffe refers to as liberalism's "constitutive outside," a zone beyond shared norms and values upon which norms and values depend.²¹

Invisible Children presents international activism as a means to express a youthful spirit and fulfill youthful desires. In *Rough Cut*, as Bobby, Laren, and Jason prepare for their adventure, they speak as if they are departing for an unknown destination. More significant than the state of the specific country to which they are headed is the dramatic act of leaving itself. A blond woman, indicated in a subtitle as "Bobby's mom," sits in what looks like a suburban living room, praising her son's plans to leave and to "show people how bad it is," and then crying. A young man comes out from behind the camera to hug her. Another teary mother at the airport, "Jason's mom," cries before the frame switches to the map of their journey. After the animated plane lands on the Africa section of the map, the scene shifts, the camera seems to be placed on the ground as several small African children giggle and stare curiously into the frame. The fun and adventure that follow the three filmmakers' arrival make it seem as if by arriving in Sudan and Uganda the boys have returned to childhood, post college, rather than enter the adult world in the U.S.

²¹ Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), 21.

Posts on Invisible Children's website reveal more of sublime depiction of the world and a romantic-tragic subjectivity. A video montage of a man surfing in the Arctic, with background music of majestic, ominous classical cello, was posted in December 2009 with the tag, "The human spirit desires adventure and discovery."²² In another, a Martha Graham quote on the unique individual as a value to the world appears next to a painting of man facing a pack of snarling lions.²³ The schema of a unique and youthful individual who experiences an intense emotional response to an unknown or foreign aspect of the world (one that "disgusts and inspires") has affinities with both romantic tragedy and the concept of the sublime. The sublime, as the limit of human experience (or in more contemporary terms, the most intense or extreme), places different, distant people who suffer in the same category as steep cliffs. Laren, Bobby, and Jason's youthful high jinks and their confrontation with their own mortality are enabled by what they frame as a heroic journey narrative to the experience of the suffering of others. Joseph Addison and other travel writers described the Alps and other distant landscapes as "sublime."²⁴ Kant identified the sublime through its ability to elevate the soul: "overhanging rocks, thunderclouds, and volcanoes...make our resistance of trifling moment in comparison of their might. But, provided our own position is secure, their aspect is all the more attractive for its fearfulness; and we readily call these objects sublime, for they raise the forces of our soul above

²² When I posted a question about why this was on a site about children in Uganda, I received the following reply: "Just learn how to appreciate the world." A reply that seemed to be from a member of the organization read "...our blog is not only what we're doing as an organization, but also what we're inspired by, watching, learning from. Our hope is that by learning from the world together, we can grow as a generation that appreciates the hope in things, the beauty in things, and what exactly is worth fighting for. I hope that makes sense. Maxine, thanks for getting us." When I wrote "thanks for your reply," I received the response, "You totally rock." This furthered my impression that Invisible Children places their political activism in Northern Uganda within the context of a sense of worldly adventure and awe. Invisible Children, Invisible Children blog. <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/?p=3490> (December 16, 2009).

²³ Invisible Children, Invisible Children blog, "Divine dissatisfaction, blessed unrest," <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2010/05/divine-dissatisfaction-blessed-unrest/> (accessed May 18, 2010).

²⁴ See Christopher Hitt, "Ecocriticism and the Long Eighteenth Century," *College Literature* 31, no. 3 (Summer, 2004): 123-47.

the vulgar commonplace...”²⁵ Our twenty-first-century conception of adolescence has much in common with Romantic model of self and world. Adolescence, first categorized in 1890 (by G. Stanley Hall) as a category of human identity and experience, was framed in the same terms as the Romantic style—storm and stress.²⁶ This characterization connects U.S. teenagers to the way Wordsworth, Byron, and Goethe portrayed individuals experiencing extreme emotion, encountering a world that either fulfills or thwarts their potential and their desires. When the family acts as the primary identity-forming community and audience for self-fashioning, leaving the family is a significant rite of passage.

Invisible Children, like *Rachel Corrie*, conflates separation from the nuclear family with the risk of isolation and death. Several scholars have described the way that adolescence, as a self-defining time, is romanticized in terms of a cultural dynamic of self and other that models a solitary hero against the backdrop of a potentially destructive world.²⁷ Michael Oakeshott theorizes the struggle for freedom and self-determination as one that is inherent to youth: “The youth...who is overwhelmed by the limitless invitations of human existence, and to whom, ‘the long littleness of life’ is yet undreamed, calls for the lyric mode.”²⁸ Bellah describes the precariousness and dramatic quality of leaving home: as the family is the center of “energy, mutual devotion, and commitment,” attachments outside the family are viewed as “idiosyncratic

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, “On the modality of the sublime in nature,” in *The Critique of Judgement* (Cosimo Inc.: New York, 1914), 77.

²⁶ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its psychology and its physiology in relation to anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904). Cited in Sharon L. Nichols and Thomas L. Good’s *America’s Teenagers—Myths and Realities: media images, schooling, and the social cost of careless indifference* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 2.

²⁷ Nichols and Good’s book on Americans’ attitudes towards adolescents cites a common claim in a survey of adults that their memories of adolescence are most meaningful. Adolescence is the period of their most “salient episodic events,” events that “define them,” 8.

²⁸ Michael Joseph Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 65.

preference (...) rather than representing a larger sense of purpose in life.”²⁹ According to Bellah’s ethnographic study of middle-class Americans, because commitments outside the nuclear family are not connected to shared values, adolescent explorations are ethically groundless. Bellah claims: “American cultural traditions define personality, achievement, and the purpose of human life in ways that leave the individual suspended in glorious but terrifying isolation.”³⁰ The mission, then, of finding a larger sense of purpose in life outside the family is fraught, “suspended in isolation.” It is no wonder then that references to death and the language of the sublime infuse Laren, Jason, and Bobby’s leave-taking from their families, and no wonder a sleepover can taken on such a dire tone of potential grief and loss. Each of the three young men ends his self-introduction by responding to an off-camera question about what are you most afraid of: they all respond, “death,” repeating the words “death” and “dying” several times.

The conflation of leaving home with the risk of death, and the denial of extra-family bonds, defines the memory of activist Rachel Corrie in the 2005 play *My Name is Rachel Corrie* and the debate surrounding it. The journey of a young woman who left home to join a political community in Palestine took the form of reifying tragedy, in which world events thwart individual freedom of self-determination. *Rachel Corrie* presents what Williams condemns as liberal, middle-class tragedy, in which “the individual, fulfilling himself absolutely, becomes or offers himself as the liberator.” Forces that thwart individual desire are presented as universal and timeless limitations on human beings in general, and this individual desire can never be fulfilled through “settled” human relations and solidarity.³¹

²⁹ Bellah, 5-6.

³⁰ Ibid, 6.

³¹ Williams, 57, 97.

My Name is Rachel Corrie premiered in 2005 at The Royal Court Theatre in London. A U.S. production, in development at the New York Theatre Workshop in 2006, was canceled. In the New York Theatre Workshop production, which followed the original, the entire play took place on a single set, representing Corrie's room. The text is made up of Corrie's diary entries and letters—ranging from surreal writings that describe her mother as a balloon, to a kind of cataloging of faults, interests, characteristics, and dreams. As the play moves along, the content and style of Corrie's writing become less impressionistic and diverse. She homes in on the specifics of the plight of Palestinians, reminding herself and her mother that whatever danger and horror she feels, she is just a visitor. Corrie's writing also becomes more strategic and pragmatic: she coaches her mother on what to say if the press should ask to speak with her, to avoid drawing comparisons between Israeli and Palestinian violence.

In 2006, New York Theatre Workshop's postponement, and eventual cancellation, of *Rachel Corrie* was named an act of censorship by members of the artistic and academic communities, who galvanized themselves into activism on the play's behalf. The debate surrounding *Rachel Corrie* focused less on the Israeli-Palestinian issue itself, however, than on the right of the play's main character to be heard. The issue in question seemed to be more Rachel Corrie herself, rather than the work of playwrights Alan Rickman and Katharine Viner. Perhaps artistic director James C. Nicola made the tactical mistake of engaging in the terms of the debate laid down by the opposition; rather than speaking about the level of the playwright's craft, he spoke of "Rachel's voice." Nicola said, "I thought that this, in the voice of this young, pure, innocent woman, was a very powerful thing to say right now."³² He also remarked, "As we listened to various opinions and read thousands of entries on websites and blogs, we realized we

³² Jesse McKinley, "Theatre Addresses Tension Over Play," *New York Times*, March 16, 2006.

needed to find ways to let Rachel's words rise above the polemics.³³ Elyse Dodgson, international director of London's Royal Court Theatre, articulated a similar view of Corrie's voice as transcendent, with a power to seemingly focus attention beyond the playwright's craft and beyond the Israeli-Palestine problem. Assuring Nicola that there would be no need to check volatile reactions to the play with after-show discussions and contextualizing, Dodgson said that, in London, "the controversy died when people saw that this was a play about a young woman, an idealist."³⁴ Rather than a dramatic engagement in the politics of Israel-Palestine and U.S. involvement, the play text presents individuality as transcending any human bonds and more important than any particular human situation. As I will explore, this is what the play lends itself to, both in terms of the text and the production.

Support of the play focused on constructing Corrie as a heroic and martyred individual, ultimately reifying the primacy of family, class, and national bonds. This interpretation is at odds with the Corrie one comes to know in reading her journals, in which she rigorously questions and challenges these very same bonds. In emails, compiled in a book but absent from the play, Corrie describes not only a questioning of her national and class affiliations, but also a loosening of familial affiliations. She mentions a Palestinian family that has "wholeheartedly adopted" her; her mother's suggestion that Corrie need not be ashamed to come home if war breaks out seems almost detached; and her father writes that he'd "just as well be proud of somebody else's daughter."³⁵ The adamant framing of the play as about an isolated individual's "beautiful voice" reveals a denial of the truly challenging aspects of Corrie's life choices and self-reflection, which placed the supremacy of nuclear family and national attachments in jeopardy. This interpretation

³³ James C. Nicola, statement on New York Theatre Workshop website, March 3, 2006. <http://www.nytw.org/> (accessed March 3, 2006).

³⁴ Philip Weiss, "Too Hot for New York," *The Nation*, April 3, 2006.

³⁵ *Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie*, 37.

of Corrie, enacted through the playwrights' editing of her diaries and the theatre company's reaction to the "censorship," tacks an additional ending to her life story: the farther she strays, the more fervently the drama demands her return. Nicola described Corrie's "pure" and "innocent" voice as the subject of the play and claimed that the editing of her diary into a play separated a "pure voice" to "rise above the polemic" of Israel-Palestine.³⁶ As opposed to an engaged voice, defined by a specific worldly struggle, hers had been shaped to belong to an individual engaged in a struggle for freedom, independence, and self-determination. In this interpretation of the play, the cause is arbitrary; in *Rachel Corrie*, it is about her self-determination *through* a cause, not with one.

Towards the end, the play includes a video of an eyewitness account of Rachel's death. The description is incremental and brutal: Rachel stands up on a mounting hill of dirt and is rolled over, she disappears under the tank. When it rolls back, her face is covered with blood, and she dies soon after in the ambulance.³⁷ The incrementality of the description, Corrie's disappearance into the ground and then her reappearance, follows the arc of martyrdom—Jesus, Antigone—in which the disappearance creates a withheld mystery. (Is she still alive? Where did she go?) Narrowing the focus of the play—to her life and death—abstracts Corrie from her political context and supersedes the situation in the West Bank and the community of people with whom she stood in solidarity. This ending makes it clear that *Rachel Corrie* is indeed "rising above" the Israel-Palestine polemic.

The video account of her death is followed by another video, of a ten-year-old Corrie speaking at a youth organization and pledging to end world hunger "by the year 2000."³⁸ Ending

³⁶ McKinley, "Theater Addresses Tension Over Play."

³⁷ *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, 47.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 52.

with Corrie's pledge to end world hunger six years before the play's premier *Rachel Corrie* maintains an idealist as its consistent and primary subject, in contrast to the particular activism chosen by and contingent upon an individual engaged in a particular community. Corrie is shown at the play's beginning to be so desirous of life's limitlessness that she is "not quite able to cross Spiderman off her list of things she wanted to be,"³⁹ and in her final appearance she speaks of wishing she could cure world hunger by 2000. This frame portrays Corrie as a "pure voice" suspended in childhood. Though the urgency in the play's climax could inspire the audience towards pro-Palestinian activism, the play instead laments the inevitable loss of childhood and its naïve desires. Ending with a video of Corrie as an innocent child, the play portrays the character of Corrie less as someone whose choices are available to the audience, and more as a personified virtue, or an inner quality with which the audience can identify.

Placing meaning in a romantic-tragic figure destroyed by the outside world, the play adopts what Oakeshott would call the lyric mode, and what we could term bourgeois tragedy. Ethical control and political activism are not at stake here, and this is why the play qualifies as Williams' reifying tragedy. Royal Court director Dodgson's reassurance that the controversy died down once people realized this is a play about an idealist seems apt.⁴⁰ In a review of the London production, Charles Spencer wrote, "You don't need to be persuaded of the rightness of her views in order to be moved by her ardor. One leaves the theatre mourning not only Rachel Corrie's death but also the death of the idealism and ardor of one's own distant youth, those far-off days when everything seemed to matter so intensely."⁴¹ The play absorbs the particularity of Corrie's agency and ethics into a general struggle against futility. While Corrie herself wrote that

³⁹ Ibid, 49.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁴¹ Charles Spencer, "Passionate Portrayal of an Insecure Idealist," *The Daily Telegraph*, London, April 4, 2006.

“privilege shatters people from the consequences of their actions,”⁴² the play participates in the loss of the possibility of promoting productive change through new allegiances, either in the world or in one’s self. The controversy surrounding its censorship, exceptionally galvanizing for theatre scholars and practitioners, focused less on politics than on the loss of youthful possibilities and artistic freedom.

Projection versus solidarity

Ken Reshaur explicates Hannah Arendt’s conceptualization of solidarity as an attempt to extend the identity, and with it the influence, of a more powerful group by articulating common values and concerns while recognizing crucial differences.⁴³ Rather than foster what Hannah Arendt described as the structurally, strategically, politically astute and self-aware act of “self-giving,” *Invisible Children* encourages its audience of U.S. youth to participate passionately but without political and ethical self-awareness. Bellah argues that within American expressivism and utilitarianism, solidarity is largely fictive—based upon the projected needs of an individual’s inner life.⁴⁴ Centering social meaning in the private emotional experience of the individual allows the more privileged to mistake their projection for solidarity.

Invisible Children’s performances of and promotions for the night commute draw equivalences between the youthful state of relatively affluent U.S. teenagers and the state of young Africans. Sleeping out in a public park is equated with Ugandans’ experiences, and in inspiring promotional videos for the “Global Night Commute” footage of U.S. teenagers dancing and playing air guitar is intercut with a Ugandan boy playing air guitar in the same song, creating

⁴² *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, 49.

⁴³ Ken Reshaur, “Concepts of Solidarity in the Political Theory of Hannah Arendt,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique* 25, no. 4 (December 1992): 723-36.

⁴⁴ Bellah, 11.

a universal youth of joy, music, and play across cultural, economic, and political difference.⁴⁵ A striking set-piece of the documentary interrupts the close interactions of the three filmmakers with three boys, and depicts the scale and magnitude of this situation: a crane shot that travels through several large rooms of the abandoned building, showing what seems like hundreds of children sleeping very close together on the floor. In an advertisement for the April 2006 “Night Commute,” a pre-teen blond boy wakes up and eats breakfast, staring straight into the camera as his family goes through its morning routine in fast-forward around his calm, open, and still face. The boy joins other young people marching down city streets, until they all reach a park and lie down. The ad ends as the rising camera pans across the wide expanse of a park, filled with closely packed sleeping bodies, replicating the dramatic shot in *Rough Cut* of endangered children sleeping on the bus station floor.⁴⁶

This approach to activism and empathic identification expands the participants’ sense of themselves, rather than supporting reciprocity. The demonstrations imply that by acting in the role of Ugandan children, U.S. children confer their own visibility and value upon the invisible and unvalued. Invisible Children advocates for the solidarity of American children with Northern Ugandan children by aligning them through the common values and concerns of youth, such as fun, exuberance, and attachment to popular music. However, while Invisible Children’s portrayals of these events present certain commonalities between the young Ugandans and U.S. children, they also obscure crucial differences.

A lack of awareness of the reality of others allows for more fulfilling projection of a constitutive other rather than solidarity. Eve Ensler posits a young African woman’s suffering as

⁴⁵ Invisible Children, “Displace Me 2007,” <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/media/videos/detail.php?id=1171733986> (accessed May 10, 2010).

⁴⁶ Invisible Children, “Global Night Commute Commercial,” April 20, 2006. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iHJPuthO7M> (accessed May 10, 2010).

a kind of spectacularized backdrop. In a 2009 reading at Manhattan's 92nd Street Y, Ensler performed a monologue of a woman who narrates her kidnapping, repeated rape, childbirth, and eventual escape. Ensler says the monologue, which is presented in the form of a self-help manual that enumerates ways to survive years of abuse, was taken directly from an interview she conducted. Ensler's book, *I Am an Emotional Creature*, a global compilation of monologues by girls, conflates individual heartbreak and lack of self-esteem in girlhood with systematic, culturally embedded rape—all are part of what Ensler categorizes as the experiences common to young women. In a telling acting choice, Ensler can be seen (in the video of her 2009 performed reading at the 92nd Street Y) speaking with the uptilted accent of a California teenager. She ends the performance with a forceful, rousing feminist adage that “no one can take anything from you unless you let them.”⁴⁷ However, such a feminist call to self-esteem and independence within romantic relationships does not translate cleanly from one cultural and political context to another: many things can be taken, violently, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, whether you let them or not. By using the language of psychological counseling and “self-help,” Ensler's interpretive framework invites more privileged women to empathize with Congolese rape and kidnapping victims by viewing them as exteriorized version of struggles and conflicts they feel within (consensual) relationships, and within themselves.

Rather than recognizing the difference between young U.S. and Congolese women, and creating a solidarity in reciprocal ethical bonds between equals, Ensler's performance absorbs a young Congolese woman's experiences into a portrayal of “universal” female suffering. “Teenage Girl's Guide” also orients its intended audience, of relatively affluent American girls and women, towards perceiving women in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a means to

⁴⁷ “Eve Ensler: Teenage Girls Guide to Surviving Sex Slavery,” at the 92nd Street Y, February 11, 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-Tiad_JQCw&feature=relmfu (accessed April 14, 2012).

conceiving their own girlhood in global, political terms. While feminist scholars have considered the political ethics and efficacy of various methods of applying gender cross-globally, feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty has argued for a feminist praxis that pays attention to context in terms of values and categories, rather than assuming and imposing universals. Mohanty and other feminist scholars, as well as Reshaur, argue that solidarity recognizes structural differences and the asymmetrical nature of the relationship. Within a relationship of solidarity, parties are equally available to critique.⁴⁸ Without this recognition and reciprocity we risk reproducing dominance, viewing others as “ourselves undressed.”⁴⁹ Ensler’s monologue enacts a kind of colonization by an empirical expansion of persona—the U.S. woman absorbing a Congolese woman’s experience into her own inner life. Ensler’s approach characterizes her other performances as well. Writing of the performance of Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues* in Juárez, Clara Eugenia Rojas claims the producers and actors “appropriated the victims’ bodies and the families’ suffering to forward their own political *personas*.”⁵⁰ Rojas claims the Ensler production and the “V Day” march in Juárez demonstrated the categories of who can speak and be heard, and who has the authority and the stage from which to speak.⁵¹ Mohanty prescribes instead a politics of location for practicing solidarity, an awareness of “who produces knowledge about colonized peoples and from what space/location.”⁵²

Rather than politically aware solidarity, the boundary-blurring empathy that “Teenage Girl’s Guide,” Rachel Corrie, and Invisible Children encourage masks political reality, and

⁴⁸ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 13.

⁵⁰ Author’s emphasis, Clara Eugenia Rojas, “The “V-Day” March in Mexico: Appropriation and Misuse of Local Women’s Activism,” *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 2 (Summer, 2005): 218.

⁵¹ In her description of solidarity and positionality, Rojas cites Linda Alcoff’s article “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” *Cultural Critique* 20, no. 5 (1991): 32.

⁵² Mohanty, 45.

replaces political engagement with personal, emotional reactions. A Bard college actress posts her performance of “Teenage Girl’s Guide” online, with a written introduction that explains the context of the monologue, stating that militias who control minerals systematically rape women. “The minerals mined in Congo make their way to our computers, our cell phones and our entertainment devices. And the perpetrators are rarely punished.”⁵³ But the performance that follows this account does not name the perpetrators, or advocate for any specific political action. It does not argue that companies that buy minerals in Uganda in order to manufacture devices are at fault, or urge the audience to boycott a particular product or support a specific bill. The uploaded performance does not dramatize the global situation elliptically referred to in the introduction, but rather it exhibits the actress’s own ability to emote. Responses posted on Jezebel.com to Ensler’s 92nd Street Y video come mostly from women who describe the intensity of their emotional reaction, except for one person who says she has been inspired to get a helicopter and rescue the girls someday.⁵⁴

Efficacy versus awareness: charity as a movement

Invisible Children’s promotional materials have succeeded in evoking intense emotional responses, similar to those prompted by Ensler’s performance, but the organization pragmatically channels the emotions of its audience into monetary donations. Perhaps in response to recent writing on the phenomenon of “compassion fatigue,” Invisible Children formulates new ways to reach individuals as consumers. Their tactics take the place of more traditional charity appeals that rely on pathetic and striking images to arouse empathy, without the interactive component

⁵³ “The Vagina Monologues-A teenage girl’s guide to surviving __Slavery monologue by Nina Dawson.” March 22, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZYoPTeM2LA> (accessed January 28, 2012).

⁵⁴ “Eve Ensler’s New Monologue Will Take Your Breath Away,” Jezebel.com, December 13, 2009. <http://jezebel.com/5153081/eve-enslers-new-monologue-will-take-your-breath-away> (accessed March 29, 2010).

Invisible Children provides.⁵⁵ The Invisible Children website posted a link to a Nicholas Kristof article on “connecting people to causes,” which was published in *Outside Magazine*. Kristof recommends that charities learn from marketing strategies and social psychology to “save the world and influence people.”⁵⁶ He suggests emphasizing hope and focusing on individual narratives, rather than letting too much information depress, overwhelm, and prevent potential donors from taking action. Kristof urges humanitarian organizations to “connect people to important causes” by providing ways to help them feel good about the role they can play in the world.⁵⁷ Following Kristof’s suggestion that charities should adopt the techniques of advertising, Invisible Children marshals their audience’s desire to be moved, to identify as part of an exciting and historically significant generation, and to have fun. The organization’s tactics are effective in raising money, but at the cost of obscuring reality.

This strategy of providing donors with an entertaining experience undergirds the group events that Invisible Children directs and the smaller activities it suggests to its participants. For example, a webpost titled “So you’re having a house party” gives step-by-step directions for how to host a party to screen *Rough Cut* and how to introduce guests to the cause.⁵⁸ Some participants post photographs and descriptions of their “Invisible Children pool party.” Those lucky enough

⁵⁵ See Michael Ignatieff on Western uses of images of suffering in African countries such as Biafra and Ethiopia, in “Is Nothing Sacred? The Ethics of Television,” *Daedalus* 114, no. 4 (Fall, 1985): 57-78. Laura Edmondson describes humanitarian organizations in Uganda as imposing a frame upon the experiences of former LRA soldiers in “Marketing Trauma and the Theatre of War in Northern Uganda.” She argues that this frame, while effective in raising funds from Western sources, is nevertheless ineffective in achieving its purported claim to heal and facilitate a sense of communal trust and support. Rather, she observes Ugandan former abductees turning to their own forms of creativity, collectivity, and joy in the dancing and singing they do away from the staff of the rehabilitation center. Laura Edmondson, “Marketing Tragedy and the Theatre of War in Northern Uganda,” *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 3 (October 2005): 451-74.

⁵⁶ Nicholas D. Kristof, “How to Save the World,” *Outside Magazine*, November 30, 2009, <http://outsideonline.com/outside/culture/200912/nicholas-kristof-philanthropy-advice-1.html?page=1> (accessed November 21, 2011).

⁵⁷ Nicholas Kristof, “How to Save the World.”

⁵⁸ Invisible Children, “So you’re having a house party,” Invisible Children blog, May 24, 2010. <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2010/05/so-youre-having-a-house-party/> (accessed November 18, 2010).

to live in a more glamorous or cosmopolitan city are offered the opportunity to be at the same event as celebrities like Kristen Bell and the actors on the television series “Gossip Girl.” In many of the participant videos posted on Youtube, the crowd resembles an audience at the Lollapalooza music festival, cheering for the camera when a celebrity takes the stage.⁵⁹ Invisible Children’s article about the passing of the LRA disarmament bill in congress describes witnessing the event as “spine tingling,” and is followed by a playlist for a “this bill just passed” dance party.⁶⁰

In his article on the history and tactics of the American Red Cross, Kevin Rozario describes the interdependence of “modern humanitarianism,” charity as marketing, and what he calls sensationalistic mass culture—citing the use of “thrilling” photographs and films of events such as mass slaughter.⁶¹ He writes, “As it turns out, it was only when philanthropy became a marketing venture and when donors began to be treated as consumers who had to be entertained that philanthropy could become a mass phenomenon.”⁶² This framework hails the audience to a certain perspective on ethical and political action, and highlights a structural affiliation between charity and liberal capitalism. Politics in this bourgeois, liberal structure functions in terms of needs and dispensation, without the possibility of restructuring underlying fundamental economic inequalities. Within democratic liberalism, the authority over the decisions about dispensation is relatively static and unquestioned. Because this form of charity’s very existence

⁵⁹ “Chicago’s Displace Me,” Youtube, May 1, 2007.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZG4D4eVc9x0&feature=related> (accessed November 18, 2010).

⁶⁰ Invisible Children, “A ‘This Bill Just Past’ dance-party playlist,” Invisible Children blog. <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2010/05/a-this-bill-just-passed-dance-party-playlist/> (accessed May, 2010).

⁶¹ Kevin Rozario, ““Delicious Horrors”: Mass Culture, The Red Cross, and the Appeal of Modern American Humanitarianism,” *American Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2003): 417-55. Rozario’s article describes the use of vivid descriptions of suffering during World War I in *American Red Cross Magazine*, and the organization’s attempts to make suffering “interesting, exciting, and entertaining.” The Red Cross was also involved in the production of propagandistic war films aimed at encouraging enlistment and investment in liberty bonds. Rozario also refers to a traveling theatre piece that replicated the recent 1906 San Francisco, in miniature. See pages 418, 422, and 431.

⁶² *Ibid*, 418.

depends on the status quo of economic and power hierarchies, it is a reifying practice, as opposed to an engagement that destabilizes economic and authoritative hierarchies. Susan Moeller and Susan Sontag separately approach the question of audience response to media images and place the failure to act ethically within the boundaries of the media and the solitary reader or viewer.⁶³ Sontag argues that reading and looking at depictions of suffering without the willingness or capacity to help amounts to voyeurism.⁶⁴ The failure of readers or viewers to respond ethically is located in the nature of the representation. Given that liberal humanitarianism privileges the individual as an end in itself, it bounds empathy within individual experience. In fact, empathy from this perspective is located within the boundaries of the individual human body, and viewed as a drive. Rozario cites “welfare writer” Lilian Brandt’s conclusion that this emotion “can become fatigued, like the frog’s muscle in an experiment.”⁶⁵

Within this framework, where forms of representation target individual resources of funds and emotional response, the allure of these representations will peak and fall in popularity in the same way that any other product’s popularity will peak and fall. Consumer capitalism and fashion exist in the same system as compassion and “compassion fatigue.” Mass charity in its contemporary secular form asks more affluent subjects to give what to them is surplus to those who have less than needed, to give what they can spare without losing their own economic status. An ethics of charity opposes communicative reciprocity, in which no party maintains an unquestioned position of authority. The stable position of the audience for charity’s performances maintains recipients as an othered spectacle; empathy in this system of non-

⁶³ Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁶⁴ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2003), 42.

⁶⁵ Rozario, 421.

reciprocity remains embedded in individual spectators, rather than forming new political allegiances or animating collective values and decisions.

When empathy functions within this unquestioned position of authority and dispensation, it accords with Jean Jacques Rousseau's prejudice against empathy and theatre: it flatters the audience and allows them to perform out their noble identities without questioning their own position.⁶⁶ Such charity provokes no structural effect; its performances present no information that might destabilize the audience's sense of themselves. A lack of ethical, affiliative bonds limits the perspective on the suffering of foreign others to episodic, discrete events. Defined as extra funds, charity posits the suffering of others in what Williams has described as accident, beyond the boundaries of our responsibility.

Crucial to the fun and excitement that Invisible Children offers to its participant-donors are a sense of grass-roots spontaneity and the attendant coolness of building a youth movement. But the do-it-yourself aesthetic of Invisible Children's promotions is actually highly managed and directed. The "Invisible Children's Training Manual" details exactly how each event in "The Rescue" should proceed, step by step, including how to handle various responses from the crowd, how to elicit a rousing crowd cheer, and how to film it.⁶⁷ In fact, the manual's instructions, like the demonstrations themselves, are largely geared toward video documentation for further promotion. While encouraging participants to use their passion and creativity to reach out to celebrities via YouTube, Invisible Children provides a template of instructions and a demonstration. YouTube and Facebook are used here to facilitate communication among U.S.

⁶⁶ Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Letter to D'Alembert," in *Politics and the Arts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 18-20. See also Susan Okin on Rousseau's gendered divisions in *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 118.

⁶⁷ Invisible Children, "Training Manual: The Rescue. For IC staff, Assistants, Roadies, and City Leaders. Your complete manual for April 22nd to 25th." April 22, 2009. <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/theMovement/resources/browse.php?topic=20> (accessed January 28, 2012).

high school students, not to enable communication between U.S. teenagers and Ugandans or Sudanese, or to connect teenagers to more information about the region beyond the scope of Invisible Children's projects.

The directed, bounded action within a stable order that Invisible Children prescribes supports the romantic-tragic dramaturgy it sets up for its participants (much as Jaspers characterized ego-exalting tragedy as hailing a specific audience of higher status, those capable of dispensing charity and merciful judgment).⁶⁸ Invisible Children places Uganda and foreign aid in a schema that leaves out background, context, and ethical complexity, and thus places its participants in the role of heroes. The emotional intensity of responses replaces and perhaps thwarts more involved political understanding, exploiting the relative lack of worldiness of American youth. For example, Invisible Children emphasizes LRA leader Joseph Kony as the crux of the violent turmoil in Uganda, presenting a complex multidimensional issue through simplistically rendered characters: Kony is the villain; Jacob, the Ugandan boy of *Rough Cut*, is the young innocent victim; and Bobbie, Laren, Jason, and their invited participants are the heroes. While this schema works to galvanize attention and elicit funds, for the young U.S. participants it forecloses engagement. The limited information, personalization, and romantic-tragic theatricality of Invisible Children's performances provide the target market of teenagers with information framed to elicit money and offer an alluring experience of self-fashioning.

The information Invisible Children presents is strategically selective, and has proven to elicit the actions they seek from their participants: raising funds to develop schools as well as promoting the LRA bill. This tactic explains why Invisible Children's website posts links to content ranging from global music videos to Japanese vending machines, yet did not post links to

⁶⁸ Jaspers, 28

any reporting on the failure of the Obama administration-backed 2009 attempt to rout the LRA.⁶⁹ U.S. involvement in Uganda, and Kony's capture, was a demand articulated in Invisible Children's "We Want Obama" campaign, and participants staged performances as pleas for President Obama's attention to their demands.⁷⁰ The campaign, an effort that also petitioned congress to pass the LRA disarmament and Northern Ugandan Recovery Act in May of 2010, voiced demands so broad that they would require U.S. military presence.⁷¹ The issue of sending soldiers, fellow U.S. young people, to military conflict in Uganda does not appear on the blog. Louis Moreno-Ocampo, prosecutor for the International Criminal Court, appears in *Rough Cut*, praising Invisible Children and advocating for Kony's arrest. Comments on Invisible Children's website and on Youtube videos are passionate, describing the shock and indignation people feel that this violence is allowed to continue, and that there hasn't been a media clamor earlier to alert them or a strong and swift government response.⁷² Yet, absent from Invisible Children's materials is the argument that the indictment against Kony prevents him from signing a peace treaty and coming out of hiding, a perspective that holds significant credibility with both regional government officials and the International Criminal Court.⁷³ The website and outreach efforts

⁶⁹ In December, 2009, a U.S. sponsored attempt to capture Kony and members of the LRA resulted in the soldiers fleeing their hiding place, killing approximately 900 people and kidnapping victims who were taken away "on ropes." Jeffrey Gettleman and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Aided a Failed Plan to Route Ugandan Rebels," *The New York Times*, February 6, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/07/world/africa/07congo.html?pagewanted=1> (accessed November 18, 2010).

⁷⁰ Invisible Children, "Campaigns," "We Want Obama," <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/obama> (accessed August 28, 2010).

⁷¹ Invisible Children, "The bill: what you need to know," Invisible Children blog, November 17, 2009. <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2009/11/the-bill-what-you-need-to-know/#more-1282> (accessed November 20, 2010).

⁷² See posts in response to "World Tour 2007: The Invisible Children Update," Youtube, January 22, 2007. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b_hyJOggZQ&feature=channel (accessed November 18, 2010). JasonMoose110: "What needs to happen is the government needs to send in a group of trained soldiers or whatever to kick the dudes ass." See also comments posted to the Invisible Children blog article, "Obama administration eases restrictions on child soldiers," <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2010/11/obama-administration-eases-restrictions-on-child-soldiers/> (accessed November 18, 2010).

⁷³ See "Uganda; Surrender or Face International Force, Museveni Tells Kony," *Africa News*, May 23, 2006. The article states, "Kony's current position is precarious even as his allies in Khartoum now find it difficult to shelter

promote international intervention, but do not support the sustained attention and complex judgment required to comprehend the ramifications of such interventions.

Engaging at a somewhat deeper level of complexity could be paralyzing, and Invisible Children's quick and simple framing of the issue leads to real-world benefits for people in Uganda—building schools, paying mentors, supporting children, and rebuilding communities. But the intensity of an emotional reaction to a dramatic presentation, and information limited by a certain narrative, is inadequate to the task of making decisions on international intervention. The deployment of soldiers in a humanitarian mission could elicit the same intensity of emotional response if Invisible Children chose to show images of the bodies of U.S. soldiers dragged through streets after a failed attempt to deliver aid in Mogadishu. This would entail placing Dan Eldon's story in the context of U.S. involvement in Somalia, but intervention, context, and consequences are issues Invisible Children avoids.

As many people who post their reactions to Invisible Children seem to be compelled by an international issue for the first time, this introduction influences the way young participants understand themselves in relation to global ethics. The filmmakers do not assume the audience knows where Uganda is, and indeed they assume—even rely on—their audience's ignorance of the conflict in Uganda and Sudan. The *Rough Cut* narrator describes the filmmakers' trip to Sudan as one of discovery, suggesting both that the protagonists were formerly unaware of the LRA and that the audience was as well:

None of us knew what we were doing, we'd never made a documentary before—we just opened our eyes wide and tried to capture any stories along our way to Sudan.

him since they are obliged by international law to arrest him. Although Uganda says it is open to dialogue with the LRA, the ICC warrants of arrests for the rebel leader places Kampala in a tricky position. Outgoing Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda, who led the government side during the last round of failed talks with the LRA said the important point was how to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict." See also Jeffrey Gettleman, "U.N. Envoy Meets with Ugandan Rebel," *The New York Times*, November 13, 2008.

We left Kenya and headed out to the country we were going to explore and conquer: Sudan. We came to this country as naïve travelers, but we were determined to face the danger head on and leave as warriors.⁷⁴

That the claim of one of the narrators to have “discovered” the “hidden genocide” in Uganda has any credibility seems itself centuries out of date—before global media. The design of the map imitates 1940s films depicting distant travel, in both a self-consciously “retro” way and an actually necessary one. “Discover” in this instance indicates both a coming-to-consciousness of worldly affairs and an ethical engagement as an adventurous rite-of-passage into a more exciting and meaningful adulthood than that of one’s parents. The worldview that others “disgust and inspire” expressed in the Eldon quote and the introduction to the journey resembles what Edward Said describes as the self-attainment of imperial fiction.⁷⁵ Unhindered by knowledge of the complex reality in northern Uganda, participants can more freely project their own need for a passionate and heroic attachment to a cause.

Political engagement, through Invisible Children, is depicted as a way to join the ranks of those who have influenced history or are otherwise famous. In videos promoting the 2009 demonstration, footage of earlier I.C. demonstrations were interspersed with historical footage of politically significant people—John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi; the collage invited its audience of potential participants a chance to become a significant figure themselves. By standing up for “invisible children” of northern Uganda, the participants, the advertisement implies, will step into the center of the world’s attention. In Youtube videos and online postings, Invisible Children’s participants express eagerness to share the same space as celebrities, under a national gaze. A recent study of U.S. teenagers and their life goals argues that culturally fame is

⁷⁴ “Invisible Children Rough Cut (Part 1/6),” YouTube, June 21, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qds5MQCqWnk&feature=related> (accessed November 17, 2010).

⁷⁵ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 15 and 37.

associated with both a desire for individuality and a need for affiliation and transformation.⁷⁶ Through participation in what Invisible Children portrays as its movement, U.S. teenagers can assume the role of an oppressed or ignored group, righteously and virtuously demanding recognition and change without fundamentally altering the status quo. In a promotional video called “Global Night Commute: A Musical to Believe In” (2006), I.C.’s three founders screen, *Rough Cut* to a crowd by the San Fernando Canyon High School basketball court.⁷⁷ The video begins as the high-school audience watches the documentary’s ending, that close-up of Jacob softly asking to be remembered. After a respectable silence, the three directors begin to speak to the crowd, only to be interrupted by hostile and belligerent questions: “Isn’t this a bit naïve?” and “Why don’t you just go over there and kill this Joseph Kony?” The three producers go into a huddle and discuss how to handle the situation. “They want spectacle,” Laren says. Bobby replies, “We’ll give them what they want.” Then the three of them yell, “Dance!” Laren, Bobby, and Jason break into a tightly choreographed dance, with Michael Jackson-style pops, glides, and freezes; then animated lightning bolts transform audience members into 1980s costumes, and the whole auditorium performs a big dance number. Riffing off “High School Musical,” which opened the year of “Global Night Commute,” the video shows the founders capitulating, “giving the audience what it wants,” when Jacob’s sincere and direct plea fails to garner the desired result.

Invisible Children’s coupling of the experience of being part of a video with political engagement has proven successful: young people follow their lead, joining in by making their own versions of the organization’s videos, taking part in marches, and organizing other

⁷⁶ Nichols and Good, *America’s Teenagers: Myths and Realities*, 59, 62, and 69.

⁷⁷ Invisible Children, “Invisible Children Global Night Commute Musical,” YouTube, April 25, 2006. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWACLKaOC08> (accessed May 12, 2010).

activities.⁷⁸ The appeal of such stage-managed crowd galvanization tells us something about what Invisible Children's audience of participants does indeed want. Recently, performances in public space that have been choreographed to resemble spontaneous acts of galvanization have exerted a strong appeal. The act of seizing public space for performance resonates with cultural memories of past political acts; this style of performance brings an air of significance and collectivity.⁷⁹ Invisible Children frames the events it produces as part of a "movement" (promos even use the term "revolution"), enticing its audience with the excitement of being part of this experience of historical change and at the center of media attention.⁸⁰

Invisible Children invites audiences to "step into the story," presenting participation in its events as akin to entering a movie. The title *Rough Cut* implies that this movie is unfinished: Laren, Bobby, and Jason are waiting for you to enter and finish it with them. In fact, the experience of being on film or video dominates Invisible Children participants' activities. For the "We Want Obama" campaign, participants posted videos of performances they created. Invisible Children called for a "video blitz" in order to draw attention to the issue and exert pressure on Obama to support the LRA disarmament bill. In one, girls dance in t-shirts and tight black shorts to Michael Jackson's "Earth Song" and its repeated chorus of "What about us?" The choreography consists of high kicks, followed by quick collapses into a crouch, and long stretched-out hands. At the end, the girls run, then stop suddenly in groups facing forward,

⁷⁸ "Peace, Love, and Cake," December 29, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et-5C1tib50> (accessed November 17, 2010).

⁷⁹ I am thinking here of the "flash mob" phenomenon. For example, T-Mobile applied the "flash mob" model to an advertisement framed as a spontaneous crowd dance in London's Liverpool Street Station. See "The T-Mobile Dance," Youtube.com, January 16, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ3d3KigPQM> (accessed November 18, 2010).

⁸⁰ Invisible Children, "The Official Rescue Plan." Youtube, March 27, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvAkYUeBJ-I> (accessed November 18, 2010).

aligning the letters on their t-shirts into the words: “We,” “Want,” and “Obama.”⁸¹ This and another dance video by the same group of young women, dancing to the Beatle’s “Revolution” in a junked car lot, were singled out by the Invisible Children blog for special mention and posted on the organization’s website.⁸²

Many participant efforts are directed at gaining the attention of a celebrity. For the Global Night Commute in 2009, those in cities that were not “rescued” by a celebrity were joined by participants from other cities in a “road trip.” The sleep-outs continued, gathering more participants, until a celebrity appeared. Chicago was the last to be rescued, and the largest Invisible Children gathering created a dance number to the tune of U2’s “Pride (In the Name of Love),” singing “In the name of love, Oprah come and rescue us.”⁸³ It worked: Oprah came out from her studio to address the crowd and then invited Bobby, Laren, and Jacob on the show to describe the cause and ask for donations. An argument made by one little boy in a video appeal to Will.i.am to come to the rescue, that “if this was America and children were abducted, it’d be all over the news,” echoes a motif of solidarity from the organization’s promotions: “Are our lives worth one of theirs?”⁸⁴

Pointing out the unequal value of U.S. and Ugandan children is an astute and strategic way to direct parental concern, a nationally shared value, towards the care of children outside the U.S. Yet many of these performances display an intra-national call for attention from U.S. youths on their own behalf to cultural and governmental leaders, cast as parental figures. Appearing in

⁸¹ “We want Obama Blitz,” Youtube, October, 16, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PO3oQOH2TDw> (accessed January 28, 2012).

⁸² “Junkyard,” YouTube, December 14, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tnkf0IRIDv8&feature=related> (accessed January 28, 2012).

⁸³ “Oprah Rescue Us- Chicago Rescue,” Youtube, April 30, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MC0hBf6wtI&playnext=1&list=PL3209EC4FF725FD78&index=6> (accessed November 18, 2010).

⁸⁴ “Will.i.am, Come to the rescue,” YouTube, April 15, 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_Wh177152g&feature=channel (accessed January 28, 2012).

what Augusto Boal calls “aesthetic space,” formed by the theatricality (or film-editing style) and by the gaze of a crowd, allows teenagers to shift from one, intimate identity-constructing audience to a mass one, from the loving gaze of parents to the adoring gaze of fame, or an imaginary audience.⁸⁵ In his study of fame and childhood development, Orville Gilbert Brim connects fame to the need to belong. Brim describes children’s and young adults’ tendency to understand fame as taking care of all their needs—an extension of the state of childhood in which the care of basic needs are all dependent on the attentive and adoring gaze of a mother.⁸⁶ As its teenage participants prepares to leave behind the audience of the nuclear family, *Invisible Children* offers a vision of their next step into the attention of a larger, mass mediated audience that can function like an extended, virtual parent.

Framing itself as a movement, *Invisible Children* borrows its approach from post-1960s social groups that have worked within, rather than tried to alter, prevailing economic relations with the tools of marketing. Groups such as Act-Up and Queer Nation were, David Savran describes, “the product of a mediatized and commodified culture,” and he characterizes their self-representation and outreach as “slick, quick, anarchic, transgressive, and ironic.”⁸⁷ Savran describes Act-Up and Queer Nation as “middle-class social movements,” focused on performing identity on a national stage. Like the activist groups Savran describes, *Invisible Children* participants define themselves as an identity group within the U.S. and demand recognition within their own U.S. middleclass context.

As Philip Auslander rather thoroughly argues in *Liveness*, the influence of any medium is multidirectional. Thus film representations of events affect the perception and production of

⁸⁵ Augusto Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Politics to Make Performance* (London: Routledge, 1998), 72-73.

⁸⁶ Orville Gilbert Brim, *Look At Me! The Fame from Childhood to Death* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 8.

⁸⁷ David Savran, *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 280-81.

events outside film. During the demonstrations, being filmed for videos that will appear on the web provides a significant element of excitement and sense of significance. Participants are directed by filmmakers on cranes to jump all together and to stand in solemn crowds holding signs that read: “I am displaced because they are displaced.” This footage is later edited with swelling music, victim testimony, and the rousing words of Robert Kennedy: “Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.”⁸⁸ The availability and accessibility of video tools allow participants to suffuse quotidian situations with the heightened aura of music videos and pastiche film sequences. In a video to “spread the word about the longest running war in Africa,” a group of high school students film themselves milling about and then freezing during what appears to be recess, set to the background music of U2’s “Where the Streets Have No Name.”⁸⁹

Stylistically, *Invisible Children* tries to have it both ways, employing an ironic, irreverent tone to present a sincere message. When Jason first appears and introduces himself in *Rough Cut*, he gives his name, then calls off the frame that there is a red light and he thinks that the camera is out of tape. The skillful, witty editing of everyday behavior (Jason is shown checking his hair in a mirror in the middle of a monologue, a light bulb appears over Laren’s head when has a bright idea) has the kind of insouciant roughness and jocular bravura of the “Jackass” television series and films, and of Guy Ritchie’s films, which present hyper-masculine characters in flashy, gritty adventures.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *Invisible Children*, “Displace Me 2007,”

<http://www.invisiblechildren.com/media/videos/detail.php?id=1171733986> (accessed November 20, 2010).

⁸⁹ “We Want Obama Video Blitz,” Youtube, October 1, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdxIRnz922A> (accessed November 18, 2010).

⁹⁰ Guy Ritchie’s *Snatch* (2000) and (1998) feature exaggeratedly eccentric male characters, and have a cinemagraphic style that one reviewer described as “an explosion of graphics and jump cuts.” See Elvis Mitchell,

Invisible Children models a way to have a good time and then directs that experience. In one instance, the organization seems to combine idealism with almost cynical sophistication, as they invite participants to become a part of history. The YouTube announcement of the 2009 “official rescue plan” centers around the bold-lettered explanation that “Media, Moguls, and Money” are the source of power. Therefore getting the attention of these three is the surest and canniest way to make a real impact:

Our culture is determined by three forces: money, media, moguls. It’s a fact: money makes the world go 'round. The media decides what stories in the world are worth telling. And moguls compete for the attention of the media. Which makes them both money. And this cycle repeats itself over and over again. Defining and redefining our priorities. The truth is: they need us. And when the masses take action, they have to take action. And the story is rewritten.⁹¹

The plan’s narrative is accompanied by soaring, ominous orchestral music similar to many movie previews before giving way to the dire and insistent voices of Beyoncé and Jay-Z’s “Pray.” After a collage of scratchy newsreel-style footage (a clip of Martin Luther King, Jr., is followed by a clip of a cartoonish 1950s television actor in a thick mustache), the camera pans a group of teenagers in Invisible Children t-shirts, gazing upwards in rigid lines. That the shot

“Man, All They Wanted Was to Go Buy a Trailer,” *The New York Times*, January 19, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/19/movies/film-review-man-all-they-wanted-was-to-go-buy-a-trailer.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (accessed November 12, 2011). *Rough Cut* mimics Guy Ritchie’s style: freezing the frame as a person speaks, and superimposing a comic drawing or phrase. *Snatch*, directed by Guy Ritchie (2000; Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures Corporation). *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, directed by Guy Ritchie (1998; Santa Monica: Summit Entertainment). “Jackass” began as a television show and ran on MTV from 2000 to 2002, after which several films were released. Both films and television shows feature Johnny Knoxville and several other men performing pranks, such as trying to kiss a swan or running golf carts into sculptures in a mini-golf course. *Rough Cut*’s scenes of vomiting and pulling a snake out of a hole especially seem to be influenced by “Jackass.” See James Parker, “The Jackass Effect,” *The Atlantic*, August 30, 2010, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/10/the-jackass-effect/8215/> (accessed November 13, 2011).

⁹¹ Invisible Children, “The Official Rescue Plan,” YouTube, March 27, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvAkYUeBJ-I&feature=related> (accessed May 20, 2010).

mimics *Triumph of the Will* may go unnoticed by its younger audience.⁹² However, the style, in the way that Fredric Jameson describes “style” as a contemporary means of perceiving history, signals to the future participants that taking part in *The Rescue* will place them within the realm of historic significance.⁹³ The experience of appearing in a video, stylishly edited with rousing music, is a contemporary version of the experience of being a subject of history. Invisible Children materials do not borrow the tactics so much as sample the style of historical documentaries of social movements, mixed with music video, film, and advertising motifs. Conveying both dire sincerity and hip insouciance, they invite teenagers to be a part of the same kind of actions in which “a slave is freed. A vote is counted. A wall is torn down. A revolution begins,” with a stylistic appeal that other charity organizations lack.⁹⁴ In this way, the participants’ experience and sense of themselves in relation to northern Ugandans fulfill Jaspers’ warnings of the self-exalting pleasures of witnessing the tragedy of others, and exemplify Williams’ concept of a social order in which more privileged people witness suffering without political and pragmatic responsibility.

Conclusion:

Invisible Children and its participants avail themselves of a recurrent strain of self-absorptive political orientation, using video-editing techniques to insert their audience into a

⁹² Invisible Children’s documentary videos of “Rescues” alternate high aerial views that swoop over crowds with close-ups of individuals and small groups, the camera pointing slightly upwards from their chests. While Leni Riefenstahl’s film has been influential, the retro style of some of Invisible Children’s videos makes this similarity seem even more pronounced. For an analysis of Riefenstahl’s cinematography, see Stuart Liebman, “Triumph of the Will,” *Cineaste* 4, no. 27 (Fall 2002): 46.

⁹³ Fredric Jameson, “Nostalgia for the Present,” in *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 279-96.

⁹⁴ Invisible Children, “The Official Rescue Plan.” Youtube, March 27, 2009.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvAkYUeBJ-I> (accessed November 18, 2010).

Save the Children, a U.S.-based international aid organization begun in 1932, seeks charity donations partly through “sponsorship,” in which individual donors choose a child and country. See Savethechildren.org. World Vision, begun in the 1950’s, is another international aid organization that seeks donations in a similar way. See Worldvision.org.

postmodern pastiche of political-historic images. This employment of relatively new styles and techniques in fact furthers a romantic-tragic, bourgeois liberal style of humanitarianism. In this orientation of self and world, public life exists to enable the flourishing of a young Western individual. When the experience of political participation and global solidarity is produced by techniques that allow one to “step into the story” or the movie, culturally coming of age may entail realizing that believing in the possibility that one could be a part of historical, political change is immature and naïve. *Invisible Children*, *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, and Ensler’s *Teenage Girl’s Guide* raise empathy for others on terms that ultimately fulfill desires of a U.S. audience to see themselves as more idealistic and innocent. What scholars writing on the fluctuations of charitable involvement, such as Moeller, Sontag, and Brandt do not consider is whether compassion fatigue is not a failure, due to an improperly attuned set of depictions, but rather a learned response. Our adult failure to connect more complex worldly political understanding with action may account for part of our romantic framing of youthful political engagement, conflating political engagement with adventure and hubris, which contrasts with the more quotidian continuous responsibility of paying mortgages and supporting a family. In a 2007 *The New York Times* essay, Rick Perlstein, who attended college during the Civil Rights Movement, asks why college students aren’t leading a movement of the political avant-garde.⁹⁵ What Perlstein fails to examine is the fact that he sees a political movement seeking structural changes as a project appropriate for young people, one they will leave behind as they reach adulthood. The failures of the 1960’s are aligned with the loss of youth and its potential. Maturity, then, is defined as the realization that our responsibility and our agency are far more limited. Within Williams’s “order” of responsibility, the fatiguing of a fundamentally human

⁹⁵ Rick Perlstein, “What’s the Matter With College? *New York Times* Essay Contest,” *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/marketing/collegeessay/> (accessed May 10, 2010).

response to repeated crises in distant lands seems less of a failure and more of a cultural coming of age. In this sense, the performances of Ensler, Corrie, and the U.S. side of *Invisible Children* enact the tragedy of youthful, unworldly potential encountering “the long littleness of life.”⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Oakeshott, 65.

Chapter Two:

Soldiers, Scapegoats, and the Tragic Demands of *Operation First Casualty*

Iraq Veterans Against the War is an activist group made up of veterans and active duty members of the U.S. military. Begun in 2004 when a few founding members met at a Vets for Peace conference (an organization of older veterans, chiefly of the Vietnam war), IVAW advocates for veterans' rights, for reparations for the Iraqi and Afghani people, and for the immediate end of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹ IVAW now has about two thousand members.² In 2008, IVAW produced *Operation First Casualty*, a piece of guerilla theatre staged on streets and in parks in US cities, in which members performed actions that they had carried out as they patrolled Iraq and Afghanistan. Each action was a distinct scene: for example, in "Suspicious Person," members tracked and apprehended one or several suspects in a crowd; in "Riot," they surrounded and attempted to control a group of protesters. In a production during the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, IVAW members and volunteers moved across a large section of the city, and in this case scenes were performed as instances within a larger operation as the group fanned out, regrouped, and then charged down the streets. Between 2007 and 2009, IVAW chapters in several states—including New York, Connecticut, Washington, and California—produced these performances with the goal of bringing the war home not only by displaying the brutality of military operations, but by putting U.S. citizens in the position of Iraqi civilians.

A few founding members conceived of *Operation First Casualty* after a march from Mobile, Alabama to New Orleans, Mississippi, intended to draw a connection between post-

¹ IVAW.org, "History of IVAW," <http://www.ivaw.org/about/history> (accessed June 7, 2011).

² Email correspondence, Amadee Braxton, Director of Development, IVAW, June 14, 2011.

Katrina poverty and suffering and the amount of money spent in U.S. occupied countries. The march received some international coverage (the British newspaper *The Guardian* printed a story, and a reporter from Al Jazeera English interviewed IVAW members in Mobile)³ but no national coverage, and this intensified group members' shock at realizing, upon returning from war, that their sense of the reality of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan seemed strangely discrete.⁴ Alienated and frustrated by the gap between their knowledge and experiences of the war and public awareness,⁵ IVAW gathered at Busboys and Poets Café in Washington, D.C.⁶ to brainstorm about ways to “break through” the gap between Americans' experience in their daily lives, and the reality of war.⁷ Aaron Hughes, a founding member, described the conversation:

We were looking for some way to break through the disconnect between what was happening in Iraq and the U.S. culture's idea of what was going on and how distant it was... is there a way we can bring what's going on in the war, bring our experiences to the media. We came up with the idea to patrol a city during rush hour—a patrol into CNN's headquarters, or the belly of Fox news, take it to them and do it in their plazas. Bringing the truth of occupation to the daily spaces here.⁸

³ Inigo Gilmore and Teresa Smith, “If You Start Looking at Them as Humans, Then How You Gonna Kill Them” *The Guardian*, March 28, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/mar/29/usa.iraq> (accessed October 18, 2011). The article mentions the presence of a reporter from the Washington, D.C. bureau of Al Jazeera English.

⁴ See Matt Mabe, “One of Us,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, August, 2009. http://www.cjr.org/feature/one_of_us.php (accessed February 13, 2010). In a blog entry for the *New York Times* Online's “Home Fires” series, Erik Malstrom contrasted his parents' and grandparents' sense of Vietnam and World War II as the “defining events” of their lives with the “negligible effect” of the current wars on his friends and family. Malstrom writes: “At the conclusion of my training, I leave behind this tiny minority of Americans who bear the burden of these two conflicts. Arriving home and changing out of my uniform, I rejoin the vast majority of the population who go about their lives untouched.” Erik Malstrom, “The Two Worlds of the Citizen Soldier,” the *New York Times*, February 6, 2010. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/06/the-two-worlds-of-the-citizen-soldier/> (accessed June 14, 2011).

⁵ Personal interview, Aaron Hughes, founding member of IVAW, November 13, 2007. Personal interview, Geoff Millard, November 6, 2011. Personal interview, Adam Kokesh, November 13, 2007.

⁶ Busboys and Poets is a café and “community gathering place” owned by Iraqi American Anas Shallal, that has hosted several IVAW events. Millard and Hughes both mentioned Shallal's Iraqi background and his support of their organization in their interviews.

⁷ Personal interview, Millard, November 6, 2007.

⁸ Personal interview, Aaron Hughes, November 13, 2007.

Geoff Millard, another founding member, tells what he says has become a favorite part of IVAW's origin story. As they discussed Hughes's proposal, someone asked what they would do with their weapons if they were going to "patrol" a part of the city. To demonstrate his answer, Hughes did something common to his fellow soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan—he stood up, held his hands as if he was holding a gun, and yelled "Halt," and then, "Get the fuck down."⁹ Millard describes the crowded, noisy bar as immediately going still and quiet, a beer tap pouring over a pint glass while the bartender froze. In this moment, the founding members realized that their skills and the use of force they had employed in Iraq could also "stop people in the tracks of their daily life" in the U.S.¹⁰ The group staged the initial *Operation First Casualty* on the National Mall in D.C. in 2007, on the eve of the fifth anniversary of the Iraq invasion. Soon after, a video was posted on the organization's website and on YouTube, with a short description of the performance as a way of "bringing the reality of the occupation home."¹¹ This piece of theatre was crucial to the group's formation and mobilization: through it, members repurposed the skills and values they'd learned in the military toward their own goals, and realized their capacity to become a viable organization. The performance galvanized a collective identity for IVAW, one with which members could identify and in which they could participate.

In this way, theatrical performance enabled IVAW members to exert agency over the representation of their own identity as soldiers, presenting a perspective on soldiering lacking both in journalistic coverage of the wars, and in fictive representations of war and soldiers. In opposition to the dominant trope of the soldier as a heroic or pathetic individual, which focuses on a persona, the work of IVAW focuses on soldiering as a profession. In opposition to

⁹ Personal interview, Aaron Hughes, November 13, 2007. Personal interview, Geoff Millard, November 6, 2007.

¹⁰ Personal interview, Aaron Hughes, November 13, 2007.

¹¹ Iraq Veterans Against the War, "Operation First Casualty 1—Washington DC," posted June 22, 2007. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QY-azB55ds&feature=related> (accessed June 21, 2011).

representations of war that excerpt violent events from daily life, IVAW portrays military culture as one of habitual brutality. At the same time, in places such as downtown Denver and New York's Penn Station, *Operation First Casualty* placed an audience of American bystanders in positions akin to those of Iraqis and Afghans, in an attempt to engage empathy for, and enable solidarity with, the people whose countries the U.S. occupies.

As a group of people with first-hand experience in these two wars, IVAW could be assumed to have a fair amount of authority. Yet while *Operation First Casualty* consolidated the group's identity and goals, and briefly and intensely captured bystanders' attention, these and other efforts by IVAW have had little effect on the common national portrayals of these wars and the soldiers they employ; the organization's influence on national dialogue has been quite limited. For this reason, IVAW's *Operation First Casualty* provides a valuable test case for understanding both the productivity of theatre in deliberative democracy, and the kinds of tragic dynamics that can disable that success—particularly when it comes to overdetermined figures like the soldier. In this chapter I analyze IVAW's performance to explore soldiers' lack of agency and influence in the public sphere, and, at the same time, the weight of social significance carried by the soldier as a figure. In the news industry, soldiers' testimonies are commonly included as an experiential, personal, and emotional supplement to the terms of discourse set by journalists, pundits, Pentagon officials, and other people who are conferred the status of experts. Soldiers are featured in various forms of entertainment, from video games to films, and, in this area as well, actual soldiers have little influence. While many different genres and forms of media make up the large-scale identity or mythic figure of the U.S. soldier, a survey of a range of sources of representations of soldiers finds certain constants in the depictions of

soldiers: bravery, heroism, martyrdom, masculinity, family, and competence in the workforce.¹² The soldier, as a scapegoat figure, reifies binding social norms by venturing into the realm of other or the enemy. I argue that national social and institutional forces maintain the figure of the soldier as a key structuring myth, granting soldiers a high level of authenticity, but a small amount of authority.

Understanding this crucial distinction between authenticity and authority means grappling with the role of performance, and tragedy in particular, in constituting the public sphere and determining the limits of inclusion. Theorists of varied iterations of inclusive democracy—deliberative, associational, and participatory democracy—base their models of a vibrant, inclusive political sphere on the interaction of distinct group values and perspectives. Performance can play a key role in the formation and development of groups: founding members of IVAW see *Operation First Casualty* as significant for its role in the growth of the organization. In the years that followed, IVAW also became a platform for shared knowledge, forming what Jeffrey C. Isaac has, in his interpretation of Hannah Arendt's concept of small, deliberative groups, called elite publics.¹³ IVAW provides a center for shared knowledge and a platform for an alternative representation of the soldier, one that both unites the group and fosters adaptation, critique, and change of that collective identity. The performances of *Operation First Casualty* articulate identities and ethical bonds that are influenced by national discourse and national governmental decisions without the recognition and inclusion inherent to democratic values. This matters because multi-faceted understanding of an issue is a fundamental value, if

¹² Melissa T. Brown, "Gender, Military Recruiting, and the Iraq War," (paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA (August 27-30, 2008). Roger Stahl, "Why We 'Support the Troops': Rhetorical Evolutions," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 533-70. Ian Roderick, "Bare life of the virtuous shadow warrior: The use of silhouette in military training advertisements," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 23, no. 1 (February 2009): 77-91.

¹³ Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Oases in the Desert: Hannah Arendt on Democratic Politics," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 1 (March, 1994): 157.

also an elusive goal, in the ideals of deliberative democracy.¹⁴ Yet theories of deliberative democracy tend to relegate dramatic expression to a supplemental position. The more physically detached and abstracted use of “imaginative empathy” or “representative imagination,” which this field of study valorizes over the physical co-presence of theatre, lacks not only the immediacy of *Operation First Casualty*, but also its capacity to reorient empathy, eliciting the inclusion of previously excluded perspectives into reflection and judgment. A close look at IVAW suggests that performance can effectively portray the occlusions inherent to the common terms and identity bonds upon which democratic discourse relies. To understand why such performances fail to influence national and international discourse, I turn to theories of the role of tragedy in democratic communication and arguments that tragic theatre placed the city on stage before itself, questioning social categories, terms of discourse, values, and institutions.¹⁵

Through theories of tragedy, I examine soldiers’ authority and their capacity to affect national debate by countering the perpetuation of certain tropes of the soldier that sustain a

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas’s model views the aesthetic activities of groups as corrupting to political discourse, yet this discourse is reliant upon and animated by the values these groups produce. Paul Hirst’s 1993 essay on his concept of “associational democracy” relies on the interaction of distinct group values and perspectives; this presumes groups whose internal maintenance is not liable to the norms and ethics of deliberation or inclusion as the collective political sphere. Paul Hirst, “Associational Democracy,” in *Prospects for Democracy: east, west, north, south*, ed. David Held, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 112-16. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson’s *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (2004) widens Habermas’s criteria in order to include different styles of discourse and the excluded groups who practice them. Guttmann and Thompson’s more involved and detailed criteria and definitions for deliberative democracy include justification, accountability, and reciprocity. These three terms all rely on communication that is understandable and available to all, and the ability of all to question and receive an answer to decisions. Without these three criteria, Gutmann and Thompson argue, deliberation and decision treat other people as objects, making them subject to decisions they have no capacity to effect. Here, the political sphere is only as legitimate as it is inclusive. “Deliberative democracy is dynamic,” Guttmann and Thompson state, seemingly relying on the dynamic interaction of varied values, formed in groups with their own internal deliberative, inclusive/exclusive norms. Amy Gutmann, and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 111. Writing on “empowered” participatory democracy in 2003, Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright described Oregon’s health care debate, which included the testimony and opinions of patients, as one example in which the inclusion of previously excluded forms of expression in political deliberation revealed the extent to which the restrictions of forms of expression had previously excluded not only people, but also information. Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (London: Verso, 2003), 3-5.

¹⁵ Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 185.

national bond. This bond, as the IVAW performances reveal, depends on excluding potentially redemptive solidarities with the Iraqi and Afghani people, as well as with the “third country nationals” who work in support staff positions for the military. I argue for the soldier-scapegoat’s position as a border figure, performing what Raymond Williams termed tragedy’s role of directing sameness and difference in several key social areas.¹⁶ I turn to a tragedy as a model for highlighting common assumptions that unite a polis and enable debate, while at the same time revealing their limitations and exclusions. If Oedipus is, as classical anthropologists Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet argue, a stand-in for the polis, IVAW takes the position of Teiresias, the messenger whose message cannot be received because it cannot be absorbed into the current debate without changing the terms, and thereby transforming our collective self-understanding.¹⁷ In their effort to reorient empathy towards new solidarities, to place their experiences against depoliticized assumptions, and to advocate for unacknowledged ethical affiliations, I understand IVAW’s efforts as tragic in more than one sense.

Myths, as Roland Barthes defined them, are “depoliticized speech”—shared tropes, common assumptions, and characterizations that enable and delimit dialogue within a culture.¹⁸ Recruitment advertisements surround the soldier with an aura of national, historic, moral significance, even as they promise a training that delivers decisiveness and the capacity for self-determination. Pride, family, a place in history, masculinity, rites of passage: these elements recur in ads as well as films.¹⁹ Military training and service, then, offers potential recruits a

¹⁶ Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), 28.

¹⁷ Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 185.

¹⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 11 and 128.

¹⁹ From 2000 to the present, U.S. military recruitment advertising has presented a historic framework, in its television advertisement, the longer videos used by recruitment officers, and in its websites. This framework articulates themes of masculinity and heroism, and posits the potential recruit as part of a historic continuum. In a personal interview in December 2005, Captain Glen McCartan, in the market research office of the U.S. Marines in

chance to step into a meaningful story. While initially drawn to the mythic image of the soldier, however, once in active duty soldiers encounter a great difference between their prior sense of what it meant to be a soldier and the way in which enlisting would actually change their lives. Because civilians rarely if ever hear about this difference, the power of the myth can keep soldiers from voicing their experiences once they return.

The myth of the soldier is reiterated not only in the theatres of the national media and popular culture, but also in the theatricality of training. Over the course of my research, several

Garden City, New Jersey, said that the Marines had changed their website “on advisement from an ad agency” and on their “research of the target market.” The website gave more information, in order to look like a historic, informational site, in order to “get kids in touch with more information to break down the fear of getting in touch with a recruiter.” See the current Marines website at <http://www.marines.mil/Pages/Default.aspx> and “A Commitment to Our Nation Since 1775,” http://www.marines.com/main/index/winning_battles/history (accessed June 14, 2011). The website looks similar to PBS websites that link to historic documentaries and are framed as classroom tools. For example, see “The Civil War: A Film by Ken Burns,” <http://www.pbs.org/civilwar/> (accessed June 14, 2011). The Marine advertisement, “Elite Warrior,” begins with sepia-toned footage of soldiers raising a flag, and continues with video and still photographs, and from varying historical periods, edited in a similar way to Ken Burn’s civil war documentary for PBS. The ad begins with Peter Coyote’s solemn voiceover: “From the halls of Montezuma, to the shores of Tripoli...” Coyote’s narration is interrupted by what sounds like a 1950s radio announcer who says, “These are the men, I think, who secured our nation. In this, I think, is glory.” The ad then turns to contemporary scenes of soldiers standing in formation and in dress uniform, jets taking off, and soldiers in combat, as another voiceover says: “The Marines have always been there.” The advertisement “Such As Regiments” follows the style of a historic documentary, with written dates and names displayed over historic photographs, illustrations, and film clips. It describes the formation of the Marines (“In 1775 a few young Americans got together, and they were called Marines”), is followed by a description of the character of these men (“every man who has worn the uniform from 1775 to today”), and proceeds with descriptions of “sweaty fellas going along to fight” along with photographs of male soldiers. The ad invites potential recruits to join in this noble, masculine legacy. (“The same tradition...is carried on today...as drill instructors teach determination and commitment.” “That noble inheritance of tradition and honor. All the battle and glory that Marines have handed down on the battlefields of American history is still very much alive today.”) “Films Videos & Commercials,” “General,” “Elite,” and “Such as Regiments,” *Marines: The Few The Proud*, 2008, DVD.

The U.S. Army’s “Generations” ad, in the “Army of One” campaign similarly describes the act of joining the military as taking place in a historic continuum of masculinity and heroism. The first line in the ad is, “Every generation has its heroes—this one is no different.” “Generations (30 seconds). MGP,” The U.S. Army, 2003, DVD. Melissa Brown writes that twenty-first-century military advertising also portrays members of the military as more competent than their non-military peers in a variety of occupations. Melissa T. Brown, “Gender, Military Recruiting, and the Iraq War.” The “Army Strong” series especially emphasized job competence.

In terms of family pride, commercials for the Marines and the Army regularly feature scenes of proud fathers, weeping wives, and returning soldiers embracing children. See the “Coming Home” segments in the “Army of One” series. See also the “Today’s Military” series, in which a son sits a mother or father down to tell them about his decision to enter the military. The talk is framed as a shift in authority in the parent-child relationship, and a gesture of adulthood. In “Car,” a mother and father respond to their son’s announcement that he is joining the military with awe and pride: “I’m scared, but impressed.” “He’s going away to do something important.” U.S. Army, 2006, DVD. I thank Captain Glen McCartan of the market research office of the U.S. Marines in Garden City, New Jersey, who sent me DVDs of both Army and Marines advertisements in December 2005.

IVAW members referred to the warfare training in Germany, during which recruits act in combat simulations, as their favorite military experience. One IVAW member spoke about his desire since childhood to “play the hero, carrying the lady up the hill,” and this training allowed them to enact the heroic roles they had seen, over and over, in films.²⁰ IVAW members speak of their disillusionment with the U.S. military in Iraq, and describe how their expectations of building schools and laying electrical pipe came into stark contrast with their actual roles. *Operation First Casualty* allows them to use their skills and training collectively, but with their own values and in service to their own mission. With *Operation First Casualty*, they not only take advantage of the significance of soldier figure, but they also employ the skills of soldiering, granting themselves the imaginative, collective heroism and shared moral mission that they had in Germany towards their own ends. Presenting their own perspectives on soldiering, against common assumptions, their performance challenges audiences to re-interpret, and re-politicize, the myth of the soldier figure. In *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, Terry Eagleton makes the case that tragedy involves “the projection of personal and collective values which are potentially or actually put in jeopardy by the course of dramatic action.” With *Operation First Casualty*, IVAW provokes the audience to share in the sense of the jeopardized values they experienced as soldiers.²¹

Finally, I come to understand the soldier as a tragic figure through the social, institutional, and economic limits to his or her self-determination. Military recruitment advertisements portray training and service as a process of transformation into decisive and distinguished individuals.²²

²⁰ Geoff Millard, personal interview, November 6, 2007. This training and its influence also came up during an IVAW meeting at the Veterans for Peace National Convention, University of Maryland College Park, MD. August 8, 2009.

²¹ Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 6.

²² An Army advertisement, “Special Forces,” begins with the phrase, “The passage is intense,” and proceeds to describe the changes that occur during training. U.S. Army, 2003, DVD. The following phrase appears across a page

What this implies is that the ads target feelings of indecisiveness, anonymity, lack of agency, and insignificance in young people, the potential recruits. David Graeber has argued that the military appeals to those who wish to connect themselves to an altruistic and meaningful cause, but lack the status or access to elite education that would lead to work as a human rights lawyer, for example.²³ That the very elite is the only population not represented in military service supports and furthers Graeber's argument: those with the resources to attain a position of political and ethical influence by other means do not join the military.²⁴ Raymond Williams wrote on the primacy of the individual and tragic drama's reliance on a struggle for the individual for freedom and self-determination: "To genuine tragic action it is essential that the principal of individual freedom and independence, or at least that of self-determination, the will to find in the self the free cause and source of the personal act and its consequence, should already be aroused."²⁵ Military advertising compels potential recruits with the prospect of committing this sort of identity-defining tragic action. Yet, soldiers and veterans may find the military's promise of self-determination and social and political agency to be false. Despite coverage of the war wounds, post-traumatic stress, unemployment, domestic abuse, addiction, and homelessness connected to military service, for many potential recruits the allure of the social significance of the soldier

of a large, glossy Marines recruitment: "Would-be Marines, standing shoulder to shoulder, seeking to break their bindings and remake themselves ramrod straight and razor sharp. They see their destiny among the elite, but first they must understand the things that have defined them are the obstacles that cage them." Marines, *The few, the proud*, 2006, DVD.

²³ David Graeber, "An Army of Altruists: on the alienated right to do good," *Harpers Magazine* (January 2007): 31-38.

²⁴ During a radio interview, Robert Pottinger, fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, states that while the military reflects U.S. demographics in terms of race and class, "the people who are missing or least represented -- and there's a significant consequence in their not being there -- is the absolute most privileged Americans. So kids coming -- really, the top percent, kids coming from the top 20 to 40 percent of schools, kids who go on to have a lot of influence in government, in our culture, in the financial sector, but who don't have any connection through their families or through their own experiences to the military." The Diane Rehm Show, "Costs of War, Sacrifices by the Few," NPR.org, March 7, 2011, <http://thedianerehmshow.org/shows/2011-03-07/costs-wars-sacrifices-few>, transcript (accessed June 14, 2011).

²⁵ Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, 33.

holds sway. As I will develop further on, these awful consequences could be understood as a key part of the soldier's social significance as a tragic scapegoat.

Redeploying the Soldier Myth

IVAW's use of the physical immediacy of theatre, relative to news media and film, for example, makes it a potentially effective and appropriate check to dominant and habitual perceptual framings of soldiers and the wars in the larger and more dominant wheels of the "machine of communication."²⁶ As I survey representations of soldiers in fictive and journalistic representations, I find that the dominance of certain characterizations and narratives of soldiers deflects different perspectives, preventing them from fully entering public debate. One might think that the suffusion of images of soldiers and war in various forms of media—including videos, films, and commercials— might make it impossible for rigid characterizations and narratives to remain dominant. Yet Christina Knopf argues that this spectacularization actually creates a barrier to our ability to grasp the reality of these wars and their consequences, both for soldiers and civilians, even those in our midst.²⁷ In some ways the frequent, brief news coverage of violent events distances and numbs their audience. The Pew Foundation's survey of Iraq and Afghanistan war coverage has found a pervasively narrow focus on "crisis and crime."²⁸ A 2007 study of U.S. coverage of the Iraq war claims that through the repetitive reporting of violent

²⁶ Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 11-12.

²⁷ Christina M. Knopf, "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, or Sailor? Military Identity as Influence in the Public Sphere," paper presented at the National Communication Association Conference, February, 2011, during the working session, "Making Connections/Breaking Bonds: Identity and the Public Sphere." As a participant in the working session, I was provided with a copy of Professor Knopf's paper.

²⁸ "Overview," in "The Portrait from Iraq—How the Press Has Covered the Events on the Ground," and "Embedded Reporters: What are Americans Getting." Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, published December 19, 2007, and available online at <http://www.journalism.org/node/8996> (accessed September 12, 2009).

events we are “numbing ourselves to death.”²⁹ With *Operation First Casualty*, IVAW sought to “break through” this perceptual barrier not with more poignant or violent images, but rather by interrupting a regime of attention that categorizes daily life from news coverage.

IVAW’s decision to demonstrate in public as soldiers, both in their uniforms and behavior, was both a canny and an ideological choice. The air of authenticity that surrounds “real” soldiers in a context in which representations of soldiers are so prevalent confers special benefits: attention, respect, and even a kind of awe.³⁰ IVAW’s appearance as active duty soldiers, not only in uniform but with very short haircuts, contrasts with Vietnam veterans, who appeared on the National Mall in long hair and threw their medals on the steps.³¹ This reflects the values of many members, whose protests aim to hold the military and the government to the ideals that initially inspired them to serve the country.³² Members of IVAW very much identify as soldiers and are adamant about their solidarity with active duty soldiers. When performing in public (and in the rehearsals and gathering afterwards), they had an evident heightened status: people were drawn to look at them and even carefully expressed respect and gratitude. But observers also kept their distance. Bystanders and volunteers spoke of the skill, risks, stakes, and moral cause of the work of soldiering done on their behalf or representing them. Bystanders to *Operation First*

²⁹ Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Embedded Reporters: What are Americans Getting.” See also Iraq reporter Sarah Stillman’s response to a question about the lack of coverage of global labor issues in Iraq and Afghanistan: “It’s hard enough to get readers to be willing to engage the issues facing U.S. troops; perhaps it’s war fatigue?” “Ask The Author Live: Sarah Stillman on Foreign Workers in the U.S. Military,” in *The New Yorker* online, May 30, 2011, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/ask/2011/05/foreign-workers-iraq-afghanistan-sarah-stillman.html#ixzz1ObUWx56N> (accessed June 14, 2011).

³⁰ I made this observation while following IVAW and speaking with bystanders during the performance of “Operation First Casualty,” at the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado, August 27, 2008.

³¹ See the documentary of the role of soldiers and veterans in the Vietnam protest movement, *Sir! No Sir!* Directed by David Zeiger, Los Angeles: Displaced Films, 2005, DVD.

³² Baz Kershaw describes Vietnam veteran protesters who painted their faces white as “turn(ing) Washington streets into a metaphor” and “bypassing the rational.” Kershaw views the choice to appear with whitened faces as meant to indicate ghostliness. I see the dramaturgy of *Operation First Casualty* in contrast to this, in the organization’s choice to appear almost exactly the way they did at work. Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999), 103.

Casualty in Denver expressed exhilaration at seeing in real life what they were used to seeing on the small or big screen. Police in Denver were very respectful, even asking IVAW members if they could be any help during the demonstration. IVAW members seemed to absorb and respond positively to this visibility and the attention and respect it brought, this granting of special significance. Local news crews do tend to show up to *Operation First Casualty*, though the coverage has been brief, focusing on the event more as a thrilling novelty and giving cursory attention to the message or the organization.³³ However, the status and attention surrounding “real” soldiers are partly conferred by the fact that they appear as actual examples of what we more commonly experience in different forms of representation—fictive and journalistic. Appearing in uniform, IVAW members prompt a host of prior associations, perhaps limiting their audience’s interpretations of the performance’s presentation of the reality of soldiering.

In some ways, IVAW members themselves seem to enjoy presenting the more heroic aspects of these actions, and *Operation First Casualty* seems to elicit both pride and shame in its actor-participants. The performance allows them to appear in public embodying such qualities as the masculinity, strength, and heroism that drew these people to join the military; in this sense, as with the mock combat in Germany, soldiers have the experience of stepping into the myth, acting out the heroic role of movies and television. They display the physical discipline and coordination of soldiering, an aspect that, in this context, appears highly theatrical. Before the demonstration in Washington, D.C., IVAW rehearsed a drill called “suspicious person” in which

³³ A search on the database Lexis Nexis in June 2011, using the terms “Operation First Casualty,” and “IVAW” returned three articles from local newspapers, each about 600 words in length. *The Washington Post* featured a video of *Operation First Casualty* in Washington, D.C. including description of the aim of the performance and the overall goals of IVAW. However, the paper included no contextualization for the video. “Operation First Casualty,” *The Washington Post*, on March 19, 2007 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/video/2007/03/19/VI2007031901446.html>). A notable exception to the low level of attention newspapers gave to the event is the news channel Democracy Now; see, for example, “Iraq Veterans Against the War Lead Thousands in Protest March to Democratic Convention,” *Democracynow.org*, August 28, 2008, video, http://www.democracynow.org/2008/8/28/iraq_veterans_against_the_war_lead (accessed June 16, 2011).

they surveyed a suspect at a distance, then crept up and surrounded him or her. At times they held still and crouched, then split off and dispersed silently into the landscape of Cuernavaca Park (just outside downtown Denver), before suddenly regrouping to attack. Their movements were graceful and precise, with the coordinated, aesthetic pleasure of a dance. The rehearsal for the drill seemed to galvanize a vibrant camaraderie, engagement, and focus for the IVAW members. It is also clearly a thrill, at times a romantic one, for members to be the center of heightened attention. One IVAW member, crouched at the front of a thirty-person formation of soldiers as they waited to charge across the street, winked and smiled at a female pedestrian waiting to cross at the traffic light. As the performance ended, founding member Garrett Reppenhagen ran into a crowd of volunteers who had supported the production, found his girlfriend among them, and swept her into a back-arching kiss.

Despite the message of brutality and suffering in *Operation First Casualty*, its performers enjoy publicly embodying this socially significant role. Tragedy, famously, combines the presentation of supposedly agonizing realities with thrilling entertainment. David Hume and Stephen Halliwell explain the thrill of tragic theatre in its enabling of the witnessing of painful events at a safe distance. Tragic theatre allows both an emotional reaction and a reflection upon the emotion and its implications.³⁴ Indeed, the bystanders I spoke with seemed to witness the performance on two levels: they described feelings of apprehension and indignation, even as they had a dim awareness it was a kind of theatre. The majority of them somewhat breathlessly expressed a combination awe, curiosity, unease, and—after the initial disorientation—admiration: “Good for them.”

³⁴ David Hume, “On Tragedy,” in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, Volume 3, edited by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, 1882), 258. Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 222.

Bystanders reported their own initial reactions of fear and awe, but watching other people who might be shocked and made afraid by *Operation First Casualty* actors brings out a different, more empathic and protective reaction. In scenes such as “Suspicious Person” and “Riot,” IVAW members bark orders, charge by pedestrians, and generally exert extreme, brutal, and indiscriminating force on a remarkably large area. When actors gathered for their first charge into downtown Denver, approaching the 16th Street Mall as people in business attire walked with cups of coffee at the beginning of their day, I saw the people in the plaza about to be borne down upon and felt afraid for them. A group of thirty- or forty-year-old men carrying suitcases, walking briskly and calmly down the street, stopped in their tracks, looking around disoriented as the plaza was transformed for a second from the site of their familiar, everyday commute to someplace strange and a bit threatening. I spoke with four different groups of bystanders— an older man, a group of women on their way to work, a woman with daughter in a stroller, and two men on their lunch break— who also described wanting to warn and protect someone in the crowd about to be overtaken by the soldiers. In these cases, the switched roles—fellow Denver commuters became Iraqi suspects, and television viewers became bystanders to actions that felt brutally real—elicited empathy towards *Operation First Casualty*’s goal of “bringing the reality of the occupation home.”

Operation First Casualty provoked empathy as part of understanding another facet of the war: the experience of Iraqis. As the performance directed empathy towards the recipients of U.S. soldiers’ aggressive and humiliating acts, it upset the hierarchy of empathy that places Americans above foreigners, and especially foreigners in an occupied country. (One clear instance of this hierarchy is the format of news reports of deathly incidents, in which the number of Americans killed is typically the first piece of information.) In turn, the performance revealed

soldiers in a different light, bringing a part of themselves and their experience home, a part about which they may feel shame--exposing behaviors that members have not shared even with family and friends.

Even those people who are a part of the small percentage of the U.S. population living with soldiers may have a very partial and distant understanding of certain realities of soldiering. Tammara Rosenleaf, who grew up with a father and uncle who were both Vietnam veterans, says she remembered the effects of post-traumatic stress syndrome on her father and uncle well enough to recognize them in her husband, who has toured Iraq. Rosenleaf lives at Fort Hood, Texas, where her close friends are other soldiers and their families. As a member of Military Families Speak Out, she has worked closely with active duty soldiers as well as veterans. Yet despite even such extensive exposure Rosenleaf described her participation in *Operation First Casualty* as eye opening, and said that when the action began the people she knew were transformed, almost unrecognizable. Rosenleaf participated as a volunteer for IVAW, playing the role of an Iraqi civilian, and said she saw a “switch” go off when the patrol began.³⁵ Members of IVAW say they do go into a sort of combat mode of heightened guardedness and aggression in response to a sense of pressure and potential imminent danger. They describe experiencing shame and even pain at the reintroduction of some thoughts and feelings about their time in Iraq. Because of this, the organization holds counseling sessions after each performance.

In *Operation First Casualty*, performance seems to elicit behaviors that might stay hidden if the soldiers were, for example, merely recounting stories of what they have done. Volunteers who act the part of Iraqi civilians all wear large white t-shirts to distinguish them from bystanders, so that IVAW members know which people they should and should not target.

³⁵ Personal interview, Tammara Rosenleaf, April 15, 2007.

Yet because the soldiers are not entirely acting, as Rosenleaf noted, some members lose control, even as they maintain the control needed to execute procedures with the level of precision and coordination common practice for them in Iraq or Afghanistan. In Washington, D.C., soldiers targeted one volunteer civilian (a man who was also the organization’s lawyer) as a “suspicious person” and demanded that he get out of his car. When the volunteer hesitated, they yanked him out of the car roughly, hurting his arm. Rosenleaf described the soldiers throwing the man’s things—his Blackberry, folders of papers from his job as a lawyer—out of his car and onto the street. She said when she saw them “coming over the hill” at a run, they looked at her not only as a stranger, but as the enemy, and she was immediately frightened of them and horrified at their behavior. She too was hurt by an IAW member, who restrained her by pressing the sole of his boot onto the side of her neck while he zip-tied her hands.³⁶ Along with a different understanding of her husband and close friends, Rosenleaf spoke about empathy for Iraqis:

I have never had a lack of empathy for the people of Iraq, but after participating in it, I had a greater understanding. Part of it was putting us in the shoes...it was easy for us, we knew those guys, we knew they would go back to being the people that we love. We knew they’d be a little bit hairy, they [the soldiers] were a little bit dicey [...] I thought, you know, I know these guys, they are not really going to hurt me. But imagine not knowing—they’re scared, you’re scared. And someone might be shooting at them.³⁷

The performance layers scenes of Iraqis interrupted in their daily lives and homes—scenes that after eight years of war are an unremarkable part of the American news media landscape—onto the incidents of daily lives in the U.S.: our commutes, lunch breaks, and conversations. In this way, the performance induces a sense of shock that is missing from that landscape: the shock Iraqis must have felt at the Iraq occupation, with its pervasive interruptions of daily life.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

A video from one of the early events opens with a scene familiar to any New Yorker: people walking by the Penn Station building on Thirty-fifth Street and Eighth Avenue, many talking on their cell phones.³⁸ Garrett Reppenhegen, first in a single line of uniformed soldiers, breaks into the crowd at a run, holding his arms as if carrying a rifle. His movements are startlingly direct, swift, and domineering, and he yells “You get down” in a voice that is jarringly unfamiliar in this context: it is the voice of trained soldiers, and it evokes a particular and seemingly visceral reaction from the crowd of people, who freeze. The line of IVAW members in combat fatigues sweeps in and fans out into the crowd, holding their arms in the rifle position and pointing them in all directions. The camera pans to show volunteers—previously planted in the crowd—lying face down on the cement, with their hands zip-tied behind their back and their heads covered with white hoods. The crowd of commuters looks stunned and confused, and stands very still. During the time that the soldiers return the volunteer “suspects” to standing, a high, thin scream can be heard above the soldiers’ loud, low commands. In the video, it is unclear who is screaming or even where the sound is coming from. The sound is similar to scenes shown on Al Jazeera of Iraq women screaming and fainting as soldiers raid their houses, or as they watch soldiers push their husbands and relatives to the ground.³⁹

In contrast to representations on television, newspapers, and the internet, *Operation First Casualty*’s restaging of the soldiering that occurs in Iraq and Afghanistan in American spaces gives its bystander-audience an understanding of the responsibility one would feel towards fellow-citizens—neighbors, friends, coworkers—if they were abruptly set upon by soldiers.

³⁸ “Operation First Casualty,” Iraq Veterans Against the War, Youtube video, June 5, 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdXY3Y4q_Ds&feature=related “GIs Take Manhattan: Operation First Casualty,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BabrfOC0cbM> (accessed June 16, 2011).

³⁹ Al Jazeera footage of U.S. soldiers raiding homes, charging crowds, and zip-tying people on the street in Iraq can be seen in the documentary *Control Room*. Directed by Jehane Noujaim (New York: Magnolia Pictures, 2004), DVD.

Witnessing the performance can evoke a desire to intervene and, perhaps more importantly, a sense of having that ethical responsibility thwarted. This sense of thwarted responsibility contrasts with the much more passive inability to respond to an immediate circumstance inherent in watching news coverage.⁴⁰

Besides triggering the sense of responsibility to intervene when violence is perpetrated right in front of you, the performance also portrays responsibility in terms of particular relationships, concretizing an ethical issue and, in yet another way, bringing it “home.” IVAW members, in their rehearsals before the event, direct volunteers to put themselves in an “as if” approach to the performance, to imagine what they would do if this were happening to *them*, rather than to try to act as an Iraqi or Afghani. In a video of the performance at Penn Station, the crowd activity quiets down after the “suspects” are all zip-tied and hooded, and a man some distance from the “suspects” lying face down can be heard saying, “That’s my father,” and then, “Dad, are you alright?” The shouts, wails, and questions played during war footage slip to the background of audience perception because they are in a language many Americans do not understand. A non-Arabic-speaking viewer can make little distinction between a curse, a wordless wail, and “Dad, are you okay?” (“Baba, inta zain?”).⁴¹ The ethical charge of this listening, when the voices are in English, feels quite different than that of news spectatorship, in which the normative response is to perhaps feel pity, while fulfilling one’s duty to be informed. Though Americans may take for granted the ethical bonds among people in Iraq and Afghanistan, this assumption exists on a general, abstracted level. The bonds of responsibility and empathy people experience in their personal lives are highly particular. *Operation First Casualty* stages an immediate violation of

⁴⁰ Hans-Thies Lehmann describes the “perceptual conditioning” of media habits, blaming television for a loss of ability to experience and respond beyond a level of “information.” Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2006), 89.

⁴¹ I thank Borzou Daragahi and Said Rifai for this Iraqi-inflected Arabic translation.

shared ethical standards in the daily lives of Americans, and features Americans calling for help, to elicit values and concerns common among American, Iraqi, and Afghani peoples.⁴²

Articulating common values and concerns while recognizing crucial differences, *Operation First Casualty* forms a gesture of solidarity. As Ken Reshaur argues in regard to the Danish act of solidarity with German Jews in Holland, solidarity can be a structurally, strategically, politically aware, and self-aware act of “self-giving,” as it attempts to extend the identity, and with it the influence, of a more powerful group.⁴³

Articulating solidarity with Iraqis entails the recognition of an ethical bond that soldiers’ conduct and the military culture in Iraq violates. Yet the performance also explicates this violation, revealing it to be different than what Americans could reasonably assume, given the conventional imagery of war. Empathy for “others” exposes the flip side of soldier’s duties: rather than protecting us from a potential enemy, in *Operation First Casualty* they are seen as degrading and brutalizing people who are like Americans’ fellow citizens and neighbors. Rosenleaf and IVAW members describe their awakening to a sense of habitually breaking ethical bonds with Iraqis. Stephen Halliwell writes that in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* the pity the soldier Neotlemus feels for the enemy Philoctetes leads the audience to question their own ethical denials.⁴⁴ IVAW’s portrayal of their own empathy with Iraqis reveals, for a moment, the tragic position occupied by the soldier: the questioning of assumed values and ethical ties to fellow Americans overall aligns with Neotlemus’s tenuous, lonely reflections on his military and social responsibilities.

⁴² IVAW, IVAW.org, “Veterans to Travel to Iraq for Labor Conference,” March 4, 2009, <http://ivawarchive.org/files/Press%20Release%20-%20Iraqi%20Labor%20Conference.pdf> (accessed June 12, 2011).

⁴³ Ken Reshaur, “Concepts of Solidarity in the Political Theory of Hannah Arendt,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique* 25, no. 4 (December 1992): 723-36.

⁴⁴ Stephen Halliwell, “Tragic Pity: Aristotle and Beyond,” in *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 207-33.

Rather than portraying soldiers' violence against Iraqis and Afghans as either an individual's heroic response to a potential threat, or an untoward and unprovoked act of barbarity—both of which are exceptions in the actual theatre of war—*Operation First Casualty* reveals the soldiers' experience of the habitual brutality of the culture of soldiering as a profession. Potentially this could enable a transition from the guilt of individual soldiers to that of the military culture as a whole, but also from the military population to a more collective national guilt.

Operation First Casualty's empathetic efforts attempt to extend solidarity with and beyond the Iraqi people as well. IVAW also makes explicitly pragmatic efforts towards solidarity. One of IVAW's three goals, along with withdrawal from Iraq and full benefits for veterans is: "Reparations for the human and structural damages suffered in Iraq so that the peoples there might regain their right to self-determination."⁴⁵ In addition to supporting Iraqi control over their national resources and labor and human rights for Iraqis, IVAW members speak out against the treatment of "third-country nationals," international workers exploited by private contractors for the U.S. military, and employed as support staff.⁴⁶ In March 2009, IVAW sent a delegation to the First International Labor Conference in Edris, Iraq, joining representatives from the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions (IFOU) and the Electrical Utility Workers Union.⁴⁷ The conference focused on the issues of privatization and labor laws.⁴⁸ Aaron Hughes's presence at the conference served as a public show of support for Iraqi labor unions and against U.S.

⁴⁵ IVAW website, "Home/About," IVAW.org, <http://www.ivaw.org/about> (accessed June 12, 2011).

⁴⁶ See Sarah Stillman, "The Invisible Army," *The New Yorker* online, (June 6, 2011), http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/06/06/110606fa_fact_stillman, (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁴⁷ U.S. Labor Against the War, "IVAW Attends First Iraqi Labor Conference—Iraqi Unions Announce New Federation," March 2007, <http://www.uslaboragainstawar.org/article.php?id=18661> (accessed June 15, 2011).

⁴⁸ In June 2007 Faleh Abood Umara, general secretary of the Federation of Oil Union, and Hashmeya Mushin Hussein, the female head of Electrical Utility Workers Union, spoke in several cities as part of a press tour on troop withdrawal. Speaking against a law regulating the oil industry, which the U.S. saw as "a benchmark of progress," Umara said the law "does not benefit the Iraqi people. It emphasizes or confirms American hegemony over Iraqi oil fields." Transport Workers Local 100, "Iraqi Leaders Take on Bush and Big Oil," *Communique* (July/August 2007). See Matthew Harwood, "Pinkertons at the CPA," *Washington Monthly* online, April 2005, <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2005/0504.harwood.html> (accessed June 16, 2011).

government-influenced privatization, but during his presentation he also apologized for his role in “dehumanization” of Iraqis, described how his views had changed during and since his active duty, and then said that he could not ask for forgiveness. As he began to cry, a man stood up from the audience and came towards him. Hughes said he was nervous that the man might condemn him or hit him, but instead he held out his arms to embrace him, saying, “You do not have to ask for forgiveness, it is given.”⁴⁹ While Hughes describes this event in terms of its personal significance, it could also be seen as a public diplomatic performance: he was, after all, serving as a delegate. Although Reuters covered one of these events, the article was not picked up by major papers.⁵⁰ The only coverage it received was from union newsletters and Democracy Now, an independent internet-based news show that identifies as progressive.⁵¹ Both social and institutional forces exert greater influence in framing soldiers and war than do veterans and active duty soldiers. In what follows, I explore the creation and sustenance of the soldier figure in terms of institutional functioning and social demands, turning the lens of tragedy and democratic discourse from the relatively tiny Greek polis to a national media landscape.

The soldier figure and the national imaginary

For Americans, the distance of war allows for a forceful interplay between a density of representation and national, social myth. Walter Lippman described journalism as creating “pictures in the head,” representations of distant people and events that work as intermediaries

⁴⁹ Aaron Hughes, telephone interview, March 15, 2010. See also Aaron Hughes, “Iraq Trip Report Back: Humbling,” *The Veteran* 9, no. 21 (Spring 2009). <http://uslaboragainstar.org/article.php?id=19378> (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁵⁰ Claudia Parsons, “Iraqi union leader urges opposition to oil law,” *Reuters*, June 18, 2007.

⁵¹ See the program from The International Labor Conference, “A Better World Can Be Made By Workers,” Nationwide Electricity Federation, General Federation of Workers Councils and Unions, Erbil, Iraq, (February 2009), <http://www.workersliberty.org/system/files/erbilconf.pdf> (accessed July 27, 2011).

between an audience and distant events in the “machinery of human communication.”⁵² As of 2007, in most areas of the country the percentage of military recruits relative to the population as a whole is under one percent. Fewer than this number serve or will serve active duty in Iraq or Afghanistan.⁵³ With the relatively small exception of those who serve and their families and friends, the immediate experience and consequences of war remain distant. Therefore, the majority of people in the U.S. hear about the Iraq and Afghanistan war exclusively through news media, without the check of personal experience. This ratio of first-person experience to the transmission and circulation of representations of the soldier and the war makes the media imaginary, constituted by multiple iterations, more forceful and resistant to adaptation from soldiers themselves. Lippman’s term for the images and narratives, “symbols of public opinion,” connotes the incommensurate relationship between distant realities and their representations.⁵⁴ As such a symbol, war plays a key role in the continuity of U.S. national, familial, and gender identity. Through the representation of war, a national polis and its myths are reframed and reinvested: the figure of the soldier acts as a lynchpin to what I view as somewhat intractable identity categories in the social imaginary. As I use Barthes’s concept of myth to describe the perpetuation of certain qualities in the representation of the large-scale issue, events, and characters of current wars,⁵⁵ I see his definition in the context of Cornelius Castoriadis’s

⁵² Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 11-12.

⁵³ The highest percentage of recruits in the U.S. is in the Southwest, where it is about 1.3 percent. Sheana Watkins and James Sherk, “Who Serves in the U.S. Military? The Demographics of Enlisted Troops and Officers,” The Heritage Foundation, Leadership for America website, August 21, 2008. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2008/08/who-serves-in-the-us-military-the-demographics-of-enlisted-troops-and-officers> (accessed June 14, 2011).

⁵⁴ Lippman, 12.

⁵⁵ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 11 and 128.

adaptation of Jacques Lacan's concept of the social imaginary—a field of symbols available to limited change while also grounded in a somewhat sturdy social order.⁵⁶

Agency in the creation and circulation of representations of war is consolidated by the authority of news media, pundits, and politicians, and by the greater economic and technological resources available to larger organizations. The aesthetic tools on display in the military's television and movie recruitment ads, as well as in big budget movies, video games, and major cable and television networks, capture and keep audience attention on a completely different scale than *Operation First Casualty* and other IVAW outreach efforts.⁵⁷ In a crowded field of representations of war and soldiers, the relevance and force of a performance is not the only factor in its ability to capture attention and gain influence. In terms of the entertainment business, scholarship on the representation of soldiers in film finds that these fictive figures act as a synecdoche of the popular, national opinion of the government and the war. While in some ways a national polis puts itself on stage (or film) and communicates with itself through fictive representations of soldiers and the war, there are barriers and limits to who can contribute, and the influence their contributions can have. As I briefly survey scholarship on popular film representations of wars in the U.S., I find that these films appear to represent a larger range of perspectives than they are capable of reflecting. Yet, war films exert such a strong influence in

⁵⁶ Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987). Similarly, Arjun Appadurai brings some of these ideas to his study of a symbolic field of global media in available to selective use and adaptation by individuals and groups, as possible elements in the formation of identity and community. See also Appadurai's description of multivalent contributors in which national and global media function as a kind of universal channel both available to and deflective of change from smaller forces Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 55.

⁵⁷ In terms of the ability to capture and keep attention, video games engage audiences on perhaps an even more absorptive level than television and film. For example, the "first-person shooter" genre of video game, which includes *Doom* and *Halo*, and games that mimic war films and war documentaries, such as *Marines: Modern Urban Combat*, the *Call of Duty* and *Medal of Honor* series. Video games such as *VSB2* have also been developed with the specific goal of training soldiers. See Thomas Lyn, "Shooting game gives a taste of real combat," *The International Herald Tribune*, May 3, 2011. Interactive video has also been used to help soldiers overcome PTSD, making training for soldiering and recovery from soldiering (in order to perhaps return to soldiering) a potential digital closed loop. See Amanda Schaffer, "Not a Game: Simulation to Lessen War Trauma," the *New York Times* online, August 28, 2007. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/28/health/28game.html> (accessed July 19, 2011).

the formation of the soldier figure that they can appear to reflect and include a greater range of perspectives and experience than they actually do. For this reason, IVAW's representations of themselves as soldiers and of the experiences of soldiering are at a significant disadvantage in terms of capturing attention and affecting public perception.

During World War II, opposing views on government and the war placed the soldier figure at two poles: the hero in pro-war films, and the victim in anti-war films. More than the experiences and perspectives of actual soldiers, these films represented the views of the government or anti-war organizations such as the National Council for the Prevention of War, as directors of both pro- and anti-war films worked in league with either the government or pacifist organizations.⁵⁸ According to John Whiteclay Chambers, in the same era that *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1938)⁵⁹ presented soldiering as the "heroic adventure" of an imperial nation against an uncivilized enemy, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930)⁶⁰ portrayed soldiers as victims of a suffering that appeared meaningless against the "futility of modern warfare," and of capitalization and industrialization more generally.⁶¹

Similarly, Roger Stahl, in his 2006 article "Why We 'Support the Troops,'" argues that during the Vietnam War characterizations of soldiers in film reflected the political and social turmoil of the country.⁶² In their compilation and analysis of psychological and sociological studies of the Vietnam era, *The Vietnam Veteran Redefined*, Kadushin and Boulanger write that

⁵⁸ John Whiteclay Chambers, "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate in America, 1930-1941," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 36, no. 1 (2006): 45.

⁵⁹ *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, directed by Michael Curtis (1938; Burbank: Warner Brothers).

⁶⁰ *All Quiet on the Western Front*, directed by Lewis Milestone (1930; Hollywood: Universal Studios).

⁶¹ Chambers, "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate," 47. Chambers describes filmic representations of war in film during World War II: "Even during the peak of the disillusionist anti-war films, Hollywood could be counted on to churn out pictures emphasizing the romance, excitement, and adventure of war and the military." Further bolstering the emphasis on war as shared significance, Chambers describes "a slew of newsreel stories and feature films, dramatic and even musicals" were made with the cooperation of armed services."

⁶² Roger Stahl, "Why We 'Support the Troops': Rhetorical Evolutions," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (2009): 533-70.

“vets were a continuing source of concern, embarrassment, fear or distrust to the American public, to politicians, to future employers, to the legal and mental health professions.”⁶³ Stahl describes the focus of the period’s films on drug use, psychological disfunction, and the return of the veteran as a kind of social contagion, arguing that the soldier was used as a synecdoche of national unease and shame. In contrast, Stahl characterizes the dominant perspective of contemporary U.S. war films as “new patriotism.” Films such as *Black Hawk Down* (2002)⁶⁴ and *Saving Private Ryan* (1999)⁶⁵ depict suffering and even futility in war without commenting on a particular conflict or policy, and portray war as an individual journey of manhood and brotherhood amongst soldiers as a paradigmatic intimate and ethical bond. War films carry the status of high seriousness, and certain images, narratives, and themes recur in its canon.⁶⁶

The social weight of the soldier lends war movies an aura of significance; in turn, the films cultivate and amplify the soldier myth and its social weight. Thus, war movies excite a sense of importance, whether they depict a pro-war attitude of heroism and nationalism, or an anti-war attitude of disillusionment. In his 2004 novel, *Jarhead*, Anthony Swofford, who served as a Marine Lance Corporal during the first Gulf War, makes a similar argument. Not only are soldiers drawn to enlist by the desire to become the masculine characters they see in film, and to enact the scenarios these fictive soldiers perform, but they memorize and recite film monologues about the futility of suffering and killing as a way of “psyching themselves up” before a patrol.

⁶³ Introduction, Ghislaine Boulanger and Charles Kadushin, *The Vietnam Veteran Redefined: Fact and Fiction* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986), 1.

⁶⁴ *Black Hawk Down*, directed by Ridley Scott (2002; Santa Monica: Revolution Studios).

⁶⁵ *Saving Private Ryan*, directed by Steven Spielberg (1998; Universal City: Dreamworks).

⁶⁶ Artist Reynold Reynolds edited and categorized scenes from over fifty American war films, ranging from the 1930s to the early 2000s, for his 2006 film installation “Based on an Actual Event.” Presented in triptych, the piece reveals striking similarity and repetition of departure scenes, death scenes, scenes in which a weary soldier speaks of the futility of war and the meaningless of the term “enemy.” Reynold Reynolds, “Based on an Actual Event,” 2003. Information on the number of films in the video is taken from the artist’s website, <http://www.reynold-reynolds.com/pages/basedonevent.htm> (accessed June 9, 2011).

Whatever the intentions of the director, Swofford claims, war films are “all pro-war” because “the magic brutality of the films celebrates the terrible and despicable beauty of fighting skills.”⁶⁷

In the field of news media, soldiers also carry significant social weight yet exert little influence. Embodying authenticity with regard to their war experience, they wield little authority—a key feature of the scapegoat. A habitual survey of mainstream news reveals an image of veterans and soldiers as passive victims, on the fringes of society, going to war because they lack options, returning as damaged, and then living on the fringes of society as criminals or on public assistance.⁶⁸ While the *New York Times* (and other news outlets, such as National Public Radio) publish soldiers’ own writing, the topic is usually the soldiers’ personal lives and experiences, and does not include their perspective on any policy regarding the war itself.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Anthony Swofford, *Jarhead: A Marine’s Chronicles of the Gulf War and Other Battles* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 6-7.

⁶⁸ A feature-length investigative article in the *New York Times*, on an Army regiment accused of the unfounded, revenge-fueled killings of Afghans in May, 2010, makes quick reference to a 500-page account of the “command culture” of the regiment, but then moves on to soldiers’ testimonies about their own negative attitudes and drug use. The article’s title, “A Beast in the Heart of Every Fighting Man,” is indicative of the same essentializing and stereotyping of soldiers that *The Vietnam Veteran Redefined* describes as typical in the 1960s and ‘70s. “A Beast in the Heart of Every Fighting Man,” Luke Mogelson, the *New York Times Magazine* online, April 27, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/magazine/mag-01KillTeam-t.html?pagewanted=1> (accessed January 29, 2012). The *Times* has also published video with soldier’s narration of violent events, see “First Person Combat: In a Minefield,” in “At War: Notes from the Front Lines,” the *New York Times* online, June 7, 2011, <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/07/first-person-combat-in-a-minefield/?scp=1&sq=%22combat%20in%20the%20first%20person%22&st=cse> (accessed January 29, 2012). See also “War Torn,” a series on soldiers’ return home, violence, PTSD, other forms of psychological damage, domestic violence, crime, and drug abuse. “War Torn,” Deborah Sontag and Lizette Alvarez, 2008, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/us/series/war_torn/index.html?8qa&scp=1-spot&sq=war+torn&st=nyt (accessed January 29, 2012).

⁶⁹ See for example the “Home Fires” series of blog posts by veterans and active duty soldiers in the *New York Times*, published since 2007, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/category/home-fires/> (accessed October 19, 2011). NPR features first-person accounts that focus on personal relationships between soldiers and their wives or husbands and among fellow soldiers. For example, see “Army Couple Deploys to Iraq But Only One Returns” in the “Story Corps” series, NPR.org, May 27, 2001, <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/27/136689576/army-couple-deploys-to-iraq-but-only-one-returns> (accessed October 19, 2011). See also “Married to the Military” series on American RadioWorks, produced by the Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University, which has aired since August 2005. Siobhan Fallon’s memoir, *You Know When the Men Are Gone*, which narrates the author’s experiences as the wife of an active duty soldier, was widely reviewed in May and June, 2011. Siobhan Fallon, *You Know When the Men Are Gone* (New York: Amy Einhorn Books, 2011). See also the documentary film *Restrepo*, which focuses on the relationships among soldiers as they face danger, injury, and death. Tim Hetherington and Sebastian Junger,

Though they may at times address veterans' issues, when they address policy it is in terms of their own self-interest that they are granted the role of both a person with a vested interest and an expert. They are the anonymous and generic visual background during news voiceovers about the war.⁷⁰ When soldiers and veterans are individualized, they are mostly often used as illustrative examples of wider problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or the loss of limbs and other disfigurements.⁷¹ This personalizes an issue for a reader, viewer, or government official whose job it is to reflect upon it, and the affective or expressive aspect of the coverage could be seen as providing the impetus for democratic engagement with information. James Arnt Aune has referred to drama and personalization as what "persuades the public to care," the emotional investment needed to engage the information needed in order to judge.⁷² Soldier's experiences, then, function as reasons to care, supplemental to the terms of discussion that are set by those with the authority to describe and explain reality. While they bear a powerful social weight, real soldiers are capable of exerting little or no real power over decisions. Although a certain deference is given to soldiers (*New York Times* columnist Maureen

Restrepo, documentary film (2010; Los Angeles: National Geographic Entertainment, Outpost Films), 2011, DVD. For a study of the effects of embedded reporters on the coverage of soldiers and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, see "The Portrait from Iraq—How the Press Has Covered the Events on the Ground," Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, published December 19, 2007, and available online at <http://www.journalism.org/node/8996> (accessed September 12, 2009).

⁷⁰ See for example "Iraq War Coverage" on CNN, April 7, 2003; April 8, 2011, and April 11, 2003. Accessed through the Vanderbilt Television News Archive, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/diglib-fulldisplay.pl?SID=20111019321197509&code=tvn&RC=886268&Row=5> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁷¹ For example, see "Coping With War," a series on the PBS News Hour, November 9, 2004, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec04/coping_11-09.html (accessed October 18, 2011). See also "Issues of Military Suicides Continue to Raise Concern," on the PBS News Hour, January 29, 2009, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/health/jan-june09/suicides_01-29.html (accessed October 19, 2011). CBS News also featured two reports soldiers going through rehabilitation with prosthesis after losing limbs during the war. See "Wallace's Reporter's Notebook," and "The Wounds of War," June 14, 2006, CBS News, <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=1304131n&tag=contentBody;storyMediaBox> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁷² James Arnt Aune, "'Only Connect': Between Morality and Ethics in Habermas' Communication Theory," *Communication Theory* 17 (2007): 340-47.

Dowd grants the families of soldiers ultimate “moral authority”),⁷³ their experience is not viewed as expertise and not applied to discussions of war policy.⁷⁴ Soldiers’ own narrations of their experiences frequently appear in the news, but they act as an empathic supplement to the “neutral” information given by journalists, pundits, the Pentagon, and other government officials. Soldiers are relegated to the position of personalizing an issue, making us feel a reality others have already told us.

The continued delineation of information from empathy and personal interest from neutral expertise, forms a barrier that prevents the perspective of soldiers and veterans from meaningfully influencing national discourse. In a very recent (2006) iteration of the legacy of civic republicanism in contemporary analysis of democratic communication, Jürgen Habermas blames what he views as the corruption of public discourse on the blending of entertainment, drama, and personalization into political journalism.⁷⁵ Yet, even as these elements are present in political coverage, journalistic procedures maintain the distinction between the categories of neutral information and personal expression when judging which people—for example, veterans, pundits, or Pentagon employees—are considered experts or interest groups. Empathy for wounded soldiers and their families, elicited through the personalization and drama in news media, supplements the authoritative discourse of journalists. *Operation First Casualty* reveals the necessity of empathy to understanding previously subjugated knowledge so relevant to the issue, and to recognizing the authority of soldiers on their own terms. In *Operation First*

⁷³ Maureen Dowd, “Why No Tea and Sympathy?” the *New York Times*, August 10, 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/10/opinion/10dowd.html> (accessed June 1, 2011).

⁷⁴ Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America is an exception to this claim; and Paul Reickhoff, the group’s executive director, appears on The Rachel Maddow Show and on Meet the Press. However, IAVA speaks on behalf on veterans and does not critique of war policy or the behavior of military employees in Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁷⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “Political communication in mass media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research,” *Communication Theory* 16 (2006): 411-26.

Casualty, empathy functions not as a supplement to information, but rather as a form of information that is crucial to the rational, inclusive understanding inherent to the values of deliberative democracy. The potential for theatre's physical immediacy to exist in a dialogic, check-and-balance relationship with mass media is thwarted by the subservient position of empathy, drama, and personalization within the new media, which in turn limits public recognition of different perspectives.

One clear example of this was the news media's almost total failure to cover "Winter Soldier," a series of panels on the rules of engagement, featuring academics as well as veterans, produced by IVAW in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 2009.⁷⁶ IVAW took the title and concept from an event produced by Vietnam Veterans Against the War in 1971, which focused on the moral implications of the war.⁷⁷ In IVAW's "Winter Soldier," testimony focused on contradictions between the rules of engagement and the tacit directives soldiers received from superior offices, the overall culture of the military and its effect on outcomes in Iraq, and the difference between the government's statements about the means and goals of the war and the reality soldiers had witnessed. Some speakers directly contradicted news coverage and military and government statements. The event received very little media attention, and when Adam Kokesh, a member of IVAW, contacted the *New York Times* to ask why they had not sent a reporter, he was told by the paper's public editor Clark Hoyt that the three "Pentagon reporters" who might have covered the event were busy elsewhere. Hoyt wrote, "News organizations like the Times, with its own substantial investment in independent reporting from Iraq tend to prefer their own on-scene accounts of the war, rather than relying on charges and counter-charges at home by organizations

⁷⁶ See Iraq Veterans Against the War, "IVAW Timeline," IVAW.org, <http://ivaw.org/about/history> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁷⁷ See John J. Fitzgerald, "The Winter Soldier Hearings," *Radical History Review* 97 (Winter 2007): 118-22.

with strongly held political viewpoints about the war.”⁷⁸ What Hoyt (and Habermas) fail to see is that this distinction between public and private, abstracted information and the experiences of members of interest groups, excludes crucial information from the news and the public sphere. According to the logic of Hoyt’s statement, reporters are needed to cover the Pentagon in order to receive more crucial and more valid information, while reporters dispatched to cover “Winter Soldier” would provide supplemental coverage: the special interests of a group, rather than the information of experts. Hoyt’s voicing of a classic civic republican distinction between *amour propre* and republican disinterestedness--where IVAW is a “special interest,” representing a personally invested perspective, in contrast to the Pentagon’s neutral, and detached, information—provides a particularly explicit statement of the hierarchy of authority in mainstream U.S. media.

What is at stake here is a whole category of knowledge and information that cannot be communicated through text or testimony—it is bodily and gestural. While much has been written on PTSD, for example, part of scholars’ reasoning for why veterans are marginalized in society when they return from war is that their experience is not only different from others, but supposedly also incommunicable. Walter Benjamin made this argument about World War I. Decades later the same argument was made in the anthropological and psychological study, *The Vietnam Veteran Redefined*.⁷⁹ Bystanders’ and volunteer participants’ responses to *Operation First Casualty* show the possibility for a kind of communication that might ameliorate the

⁷⁸ Adam Kokesh, “New York Times Responds to Readers About WSIA Blackout,” (blog) Tuesday, April 15, 2008. <http://kokesh.blogspot.com/search?q=clark+hoyt> (accessed December 29, 2008).

⁷⁹ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov,” in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, Hannah Arendt, ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 89. The collection of studies in *The Vietnam Veteran Redefined* focuses on contemporary stereotypes that contributed to the social alienation of soldiers, along with the stereotype of veterans as alienated from society and politics. See especially chapters six through eleven. Ghislaine Boulanger and Charles Kadushin, *The Vietnam Veteran Redefined: Fact and Fiction* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates), 1986.

marginality and alienation of veterans. By performing interactions such as “Suspicious Person,” and demonstrating every day brutal, degrading, and dispiriting behaviors such as pushing a suspect’s head against the ground with the heel of a boot, IVAW members draw Americans who have not served into a shared space of complicity.

The Soldier as Scapegoat

To understand the codeterminacy of the marginal status of soldiers and the social framing that gives the soldier figure such pull, I overlay theories of tragedy and political sociology in which scholars explore the ritualistic dynamics of scapegoats, collective identity, and outsiders in democratic society. I draw upon this scholarship to interpret the soldier’s role as a border figure and a scapegoat in the national imaginary—his suffering and futility, altruism and lack of self-determination. Carl Schmitt theorized national democracy as reliant upon the existence of an enemy for the formation and maintenance of the common bonds of citizenship.⁸⁰ Because the equality and community of citizenship in a national democracy traverses religious, economic, and cultural difference, Schmitt posits death and the presence of an enemy as the common threat that unifies a nation. Death and the enemy present sufficient difference and necessity to bind an otherwise disparate group of citizens in a nation. War inscribes this difference perhaps most markedly; and soldiers are the frontlines of collective identity. Polis identity in war rests not only on common nationhood but also on the presumption of shared values.

The figure of the soldier functions as a scapegoat by marking difference not only between nations, but between several other significant zones. In René Girard’s description of the role of scapegoats, they stake out the existential border between humans and death; they also mark the difference between human and machine. The soldier features prominently in video games in

⁸⁰ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 26-27.

which the avatar takes a combination of human and futuristic technological forms. Movies, video games, and military advertisements feature soldiers and soldier-like action figures in close connection with machines.⁸¹ Donna Haraway's work on cyborgs explores social investment and exploration of the human through human projection into machines.⁸² Gabriella Giannachi furthers Haraway's idea that cyborgs, like monsters, have always "defined the limits of community," representing "the liminal zone of the human."⁸³ In actual military technology, soldiers are often at the forefront of development of the interaction of the human body with machine.⁸⁴ A glossy Marines recruitment pamphlet from 2006 depicts many images of men seemingly fused with protective gear and weapons: in one, a man and a tank form one figure in silhouette.⁸⁵ Merging the human with the machine, soldier figures mark the boundaries of humanity.

Images of soldiers' bodies are arguably both private and public: soldiers are public servants who represent the U.S. (and U.S. interests) abroad. Images of soldiers' bodies are both part of public knowledge about the consequences of the war and a private, family matter.

Photographs and video of soldiers' wounded and dead bodies trouble social codes of propriety

⁸¹ Examples of video games include *Gears of War 3*, *Halo: Combat Evolved*, and Tom Clancy's *Ghost Recon Future Soldier*. Examples of films include the *Universal Soldier* series (1999-2004), *Starship Troopers* (1997), *Aliens* (1986), and the 2004 television show, *Battlestar Galactica*.

⁸² Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth-Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

⁸³ Gabrielle Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004), 43-45.

⁸⁴ For example, see David Walsh, "Connected," in "Top Networking Initiative," *Defense Technology* 3, no.1 (January 1, 2009): 83. This article reports that the main program to emerge from the Pentagon's one hundred and sixty billion dollar initiative to equip soldiers with high-tech gear has been "Future Combat Systems (FCS)" which will "tie troops and commanders to manned and unmanned ground and air vehicles and sensors. The idea is to equip soldier with a comprehensive "future suit" comprising various subsystems: helmet-mounted optics, *International*, accessory-laden weapon, voice and data communications, GPS-enabled navigation, "soldier control unit," (mini-computer, wearable power, special armor) and more." See also Ann Roosevelt, "Robotics Offers Promise of Relief for Soldiers, White Paper Says," *Defense Daily*, April 1, 2009, <http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&> (accessed January 30, 2012).

⁸⁵ Marine Corps Opportunities, *Choose a Place Among the Few*, recruitment pamphlet (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Marine Corps, 2006): 15, 20, and 26.

and respect. Activists and journalists have argued that the public has a right to see the images of caskets being unloaded from planes, as they are evidence of the consequences of a war their government supports.⁸⁶ In December 2009, President Obama lifted the ban. In 2007, the *New York Times* published a video of combat in Iraq that included footage of a soldier who was shot and later died from the injuries; outrage and hurt from the family of the soldier and veterans groups followed, and the *Times* withdrew the image and issued a statement of apology.⁸⁷

In his description of the AIDS activist group, Act-Up, David Savran refers to the group's strategic use of the highly charged figure of the gay male body as a site of suffering and death.⁸⁸ Similarly, the body of the soldier is a "spectacle body," signifying proximity to death, and *Operation First Casualty* capitalizes on the emotional reaction that their own bodies evoke when they wear fatigues and mock carrying a gun. In "Suspicious Person" and "Riot," IVAW members evoke both pity and fear, since soldiers both put their own safety at risk and threaten the lives of others. The scapegoat, following Eagleton and Agamben, forms the boundary between the life of affiliation and distinction that supports social bonds and the life of meaningless and mere existence (what Agamben terms "bare life" and Eagleton sees similarly as the commonly human bodily existence). Eagleton and Agamben both describe the scapegoat's exposure of human

⁸⁶ "Obama reviewing ban on photos of military coffins," *USA Today*, February 10, 2009, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-02-10-obama-coffins_N.htm (accessed June 15, 2011). Peter D. Feaver, Christopher Gelpi, and Jason Reifler, "Photos of military caskets might not increase war opposition," *Guests Columnists*, *The Seattle Times* online, February 7, 2009, http://seattletimes.nsource.com/html/opinion/2008794948_opinb28feaver.html (accessed June 15, 2011). Susan Donaldson James, "Grief for War Dead Shrouds Casket Photo Ban," *ABC News/Politics* online, February 17, 2009, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=6891970&page=1> (accessed June 15, 2011).

⁸⁷ Damien Cave, "Man Down, When One Bullet Alters Everything," the *New York Times*, Middle East section, January 29, 2007. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/29/world/middleeast/29haifa.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed January 31, 2012). For articles on the Times decision to post the video and the following controversy, see Michael Hedges and James Pinkerton, "New York Times Posts Video of Dying US Soldier," *The Houston Chronicle*, January 13, 2007. See also a discussion on the ethics of the post on the website of the Poynter Institute, an organization that focuses on ethics and journalism: Bob Steele, "Man Down: Balancing Truth and Harm," Poynter Institute, February 7, 2007 (updated March 3, 2011). <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/everyday-ethics/80592/man-down-balancing-truth-and-harm/> (accessed June 16, 2011).

⁸⁸ See David Savran on *Rambo* in *Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 200-1.

frailty and finitude. Death, Williams states in his theorization of tragedy, is the “shadow” or dark background that highlights and grants supreme significance and tragic status to whatever is placed against it. Death functions then as background to tragedy, throwing values and norms into relief.⁸⁹ *Operation First Casualty* participants and bystanders make comments on soldier’s proximity to death and killing. A phrase that indicates whether a soldier has experienced combat, “been in the shit,” implies the sacred and profane aspects of the soldier figure. While of course many soldiers serve without killing anyone, a willingness to kill and die in war is a defining feature of soldier identity. Soldiers who have experienced combat are seen as having gone beyond the realm of common experience, even common understanding. One civilian volunteer for *Operation First Casualty* spoke of soldiers having an experience (of war and killing) that none of us will ever know. Many other volunteers and bystanders also expressed this sentiment, that soldiers had risked their lives and faced killing, in their exceptional service for “us.” The othered status of soldiers in uniform was apparent as well: while volunteers and bystanders exhibited a kind of reverence for the IVAW members that even more acute when the members were in uniform, they seemed honored to be near the soldiers and veterans, while also maintaining a distance. As we position death and killing as the experience of the soldier, the social norm of keeping a “respectful distance” may be partly due to our own discomfort and disavowal: we assume an unbridgeable distance of experience divides us. Since the soldier risks death by placing himself among people who are indentified as enemies, the association of these people with death blots out the ethical and pragmatic bonds with Iraqis and Afghanis that IVAW presents.

⁸⁹ Williams writes that “death is universal, and the meaning tied to it quickly claims universality, as if it were in its shadow.” Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto and Windos, 1966), 72.

The guilt of soldiering, of having broken common ethical bonds, in some way remains unrecognized as part of military culture: guilt is confined to the individual. The contemporary culture of “support the troops” that views soldiers as noble martyrs (as opposed to, for example, the Vietnam-era vision of soldiers as corrupt) denies the aspects of dehumanization inherent to soldiering. Over two hundred people attended “Winter Soldier” in March of 2008, and a video of the event was posted online as a webstream. Three months later, IVAW participated in “Winter Soldier on the Hill,” testifying to the Congressional Progressive Caucus.⁹⁰ One of the main foci of veteran testimony was the culture of dehumanization promoted by military leaders, as opposed to the rules of engagement. Several members referred to the ubiquitous use, by members of the military, of the term *hajis* in reference to Iraqis, which they compare to the term “nigger.”⁹¹ Furthermore, several panelists described instances in which senior officers advised them to disobey the rules of engagement and to fire on Iraqi civilians without provocation and without following military protocols.⁹² These events as well received almost no news media coverage, besides a cursory reference on PBS News Hour, which did not describe the content of the testimony.⁹³

IVAW’s efforts towards self-definition have had little efficacy beyond the realm of their own organization. As I mentioned earlier, military advertising targets a sense of a lack of distinction, significance, pride, and agency in its potential recruits.⁹⁴ Ironically, one of the main

⁹⁰ Video of this testimony can be found online. C-SPAN Video Library, “Iraq War Veterans Accounts,” May 15, 2008, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/videoLibrary/event.php?id=166622&timeline> (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² IVAW, “History of IVAW,” IVAW online, <http://www.ivaw.org/about/history> (accessed June 16, 2011).

⁹³ “Witnesses to War,” PBS News Hour, May 21, 2008.

⁹⁴ See the U.S. Army video, “Always There,” which argues that the Army is for those who believe that “one person can make a difference.” July 29, 2003. And the “Legions” series, “I am a soldier, an army of one, even though I am part of the strongest army in the world, I am my own force. With the latest technology, training and support, who I am has become better than who I was.... I am an army of one.” Legions (30 seconds) MGP.2003. “An Army of One TV Commercials,” U.S. Army 2003, DVD.

promises that military advertisements offer is that of self-determination—most famously “be all you can be.”⁹⁵ Yet being all that one can be entails exerting agency over how one’s experiences are represented and understood, and IVAW’s lack of influence on national discourse indicates they have very little agency over how they appear as soldiers. There is a higher rate of joblessness among veterans than among the general population. The military promises of agency, distinguishment, and self-determination are false. My analysis of IVAW and the representation of soldiers in U.S. media finds that outside of the role of the soldier as hero or victim, the actual soldier’s opinions and experience are not granted significant attention.

Conclusion:

Speaking of tragic protagonists, Williams wrote, “When we confine our attention to the hero, we are unconsciously confining ourselves to one kind of experience which in our own culture we tend to take as the whole.”⁹⁶ Perhaps Williams’s statement could be amended, in terms of soldiers: when we confine ourselves to the heroes as we have become accustomed to recognizing them, we confine ourselves to one version of this experience which in our culture we tend to take as the whole.

While in this chapter I have tried to make the case for the soldier figure as a scapegoat, the concept of *anawim* or undifferentiated others serves as an explanation for the lack of U.S.

⁹⁵ The 2005 Marines recruitment advertisement campaign, “The Climb,” includes such claims as: “The passage is intense, but if you complete your journey, you will find your destiny among the world’s greatest warriors. The few, the proud, the Marines.” The slogan “1 800 the change is forever” is also a part of this campaign. “Films Videos & Commercials,” *Marines: The Few, the Proud*, 2008, DVD. In the advertisement, “Leap,” a soldier character narrates over images of training, stating that he was “unsure, apprehensive, and scared out of my mind. But I came up a Marine.” In one scene, a recruit fearfully dives into pool, then surfaces the ocean in fatigues in ocean, and is finally pulled onto raft by fellow soldiers. I see this as part of a trend in military advertisements, framing training and soldiering as a passage into manhood and distinction. This advertisement appears on the YouTube channel of the U.S. Marines, <http://www.youtube.com/user/OurMarines?v=G1uvLYyZhS4#p/search/0/1Q77RONxL7o> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁹⁶ Williams, 55.

recognition or development of solidarity with Iraqis and Afghans on any meaningful scale.⁹⁷ Outside of their role of soldier and scapegoat, those people who have served do not have the social and political capacity to articulate their own identity and values. This is not a privilege their service grants them, and so their status is not very different than the status of Afghans and Iraqis within the U.S. And so, they are deprived of the ability to articulate the social and political significance of solidarity with others. Along with Williams, contemporary theorists have focused on limitations placed upon new affiliations and solidarities that challenge normative identity bonds.⁹⁸ What is at stake and in question is whether these potential new subjectivities can be accommodated and incorporated; or will be arrested, disciplined and reabsorbed; or excluded by the national, communitarian, and familial primacies they challenge.

In August 2008, I visited the IVAW house in D.C., and I could see that it provides not only housing but also group meals, counseling, camaraderie, and a space to coordinate. A YouTube video, “A Typical Sunday at IVAW house,” depicts shared meals, clean up, postering, and finally, joking at the end of the day.⁹⁹ The YouTube video is not incidental; it functions as outreach and as self-reflection, both key in terms of the agency involved in creating the group’s

⁹⁷ Knopf writes “these soldiers, far from being elites of society, are in fact marginalized or at least disenfranchised, persons.”

⁹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “lines of flight” could be understood as the possibility of identity formations and solidarities that break out of the primacy and rigidity of nation, ethnicity, and family as the descriptive confines of identity. Deleuze Gilles and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking, 1977), 42-46.. Edward Said has pointed to “unregimented subjectivity,” or an identity unbound to a single, primary national or ethnic affiliation, as a potentially liberating force. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Press, 1994), 334. Hardt and Negri further this concept of “new figures of subjectivity, in both their exploitation and their revolutionary potential.” Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), 29. Describing the tension between proscriptive national/community/familial bonds and the desire lines of imaginaries that can traverse them, Appadurai writes: “There has been a global change in the condition of life worlds: put simply, where once improvisation was snatched out of the glacial undertow of the habitus, habitus now has to be painstakingly reinforced in the face of life-worlds that are frequently in flux.” Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 55.

⁹⁹ Adam Kokesh, “A Typical Sunday with The DC Chapter of IVAW house,” video posted on YouTube, February 26, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPyTPkjJuJs> (accessed June 27, 2011).

identity. Through self-representation, IVAW both galvanizes and tends to a community. Asked if performing in *Operation First Casualty* and “bringing the reality of occupation home” made him feel less alone, Hughes said no:

What makes me feel less alone is being in a community of veterans and being in a community that is willing to talk about this stuff because in our daily lives we’re not talking about the war, we’re not talking about the impact its having on the world, and we’re not talking about how it should be impacting our lives.¹⁰⁰

In its portrayal of these otherwise unacknowledged identities and ethical bonds, *Operation First Casualty* fulfills tragedy’s role in a democratic public. As the information and values accrued by this organization have not been able to cross over into the public sphere, *Operation First Casualty*’s unmet demands reveal damaging occlusions and ethical denials.

¹⁰⁰ Aaron Hughes, telephone interview, March 15, 2010.

Chapter 3:

Tragedy and Collective Interpretation: Storytelling Performances by Rubén Martínez and Aaron Hughes

Rubén Martínez, a journalist who travels back and forth across the U.S./Mexico border, and Aaron Hughes, an artist and Iraq veteran, have designed storytelling performances in response to what they describe as the alienating limits and lacunae of representations of immigration and the Iraq War. In interviews, both performers have referred to the given, polarized, and static characterizations of immigrants or soldiers, and have spoken of their aims to detach their audiences from common presuppositions, allowing for new commonalities.

A former journalist and author of *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail* (2001), which details three trips across the U.S./Mexico border from the perspective of one Mexican family, Rubén Martínez developed episodes from his book into dramatically enacted stories, which he performed rather than read when invited to book events.¹ While a columnist for *LA Weekly* from 1986 to 1993, Martínez profiled Mexican and South American immigrants and second-generation Latinos in Los Angeles. His writing extended these profiles across the border in his 1993 book *The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City, and Beyond*.² *Crossing Over* garnered Martínez a greater degree of attention than his previous books, and he became a public voice on immigrant issues: he produced book and television documentary for PBS on immigrants in the U.S., *The New Americans* (2004), and he became a commentator for the PBS

¹ Rubén Martínez, *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail* (New York: Picador, 2001).

² Rubén Martínez, *The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City, and Beyond* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

“Religion and Ethics” series. Invitations to speak at colleges and in conferences based upon his journalism placed him in an academic milieu, with expectations of a podium reading.³

Aaron Hughes, a sergeant in the Illinois National Guard who served in Iraq and Kuwait from 2003 to 2004, developed his storytelling performance in an attempt to unsettle audiences from what he has experienced as a repetitive template of questions posed to veterans. Hughes’s stories—with carefully crafted gestures, rehearsed and theatrical cadence and pauses, and tonal shifts from humor to pathos—are distinctly theatrical, designed by a veteran who is also a trained artist and performer. Like Martínez, Hughes describes his work in opposition to the limits and exclusion of schematic dominant views soldiers and the Iraq war:

The work began from an awareness of the U.S. culture’s idea of what was going on and how distant it was even in the liberal left and activism it was more a slogan than a reality, a complicated day in day out reality of things... The complexity and the human loss in the war, humanity was numbers and campaign slogans and I find that really disheartening and I wanted to break through that and connect the daily experience that are in Iraq with a soldier and also with civilians.⁴

After serving as a truck driver providing combat support in the Army National Guard in Kuwait and Iraq in 2003 and 2004, Hughes returned to study art at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Hughes, like other soldiers, returned to a country that seemed unaffected by the war. In an interview he said, “we are perpetuating what’s going on over there and we are completely disconnected from it in our daily lives.”⁵

In response, Hughes created a diary-like series of drawings, based on his memories, that seem both indelible and hazy from repetition. A recurrent image is of a child or group of children

³ Independent Lens, “The New Americans,” PBS.org. <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/> (accessed January 29, 2012).

⁴ Aaron Hughes, telephone interview, November 13, 2006.

⁵ Aaron Hughes, telephone interview, March 15, 2010.

by the road or in the road, holding their hands out for water. This particular memory seems particularly sharp for soldiers; I've heard it several times, referred to in asides by members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, yet I have never seen or heard reference to this from any other source. These are deep impressions of the daily life in Iraq for soldiers that do not seem to fit into the template of pertinent information as dictated by journalistic discourse on the war. In 2006, Hughes experimented with bridging the gap between soldiers' and civilians' everyday experience by curating a group show: "In War/At War, the Practice of Everyday." Once he began presenting as a speaker with Iraq Veterans Against the War, and at the end of his studies, Hughes started to think about "a space between monologue and dialogue, and how they can float into one another." He described the process as educational and transformative, as people "take a set narrative and then begin to internalize it and tell their own stories from it and see how these things relate."⁶ Hughes created a distinct space for his monologue-dialogue. In his first performance of *Tea*, in March of 2009, at Powerhouse Arena in Brooklyn, he invited his audience to sit on an oriental rug, served them tea, and asked them to tell their own stories both before and after he had shared his own.

The dramaturgy of Martínez and Hughes' performances created a space for the audience to question and critique dominant narratives, and to participate in the creation of new, more vital and inclusive identity categories. Hughes described his decision to combine the genres of storytelling, performance, and press brief as an attempt to break through the alienation he and other soldiers feel in the face of the lack of communication of the reality of the war. Martínez noticed that audience commentary after events in which he spoke in the straightforward style of a book-reading seemed to "mimic" the point of view and terms of debate of the news pundits.

⁶ Ibid.

Commentators spoke from one seemingly pre-defined static position or another and seemed to “parrot” the same points, language, and perspective that Martínez recognized from television and radio news and opinion shows. When he shifted to something more dramatic, using music, gesture, more expressive vocal delivery, and role playing, he claims that the audience response changed significantly: people’s responses were more exploratory, more open, and less polarized.⁷

According to a Brookings Institute 2008 report, increase in media competition has actually led to a narrowing of the ways news is portrayed.⁸ Recurrent narratives and the attendant characterizations of their protagonists both permit and limit our understanding of the figures of current events. When the media pick up and repeat “flash” stories, these narratives dictate “not what to think but what to think about.” The repetition of “flash” dramas creates a cumulative impression of general and limited narratives that represent immigration and war, and also the people we associate with these issues.⁹ The Brookings Institute’s report on border coverage states that the immigrant is depicted as the protagonist who enters a generic, passive nation—corporations, employers, and consumers are left beyond the frame.¹⁰ Research on the coverage of the Iraq War found that the “daily life” of Iraqis is almost entirely absent from reporting.¹¹ The characters are limited by the stories in which they continually reappear: victims or criminals, heroes or martyrs. During their performances, Martínez and Hughes pried the frames of these reiterated narratives and characterizations loose by offering terms that traverse the habitual

⁷ Rubén Martínez, phone interview, December 1, 2007.

⁸ Roberto Suro, “Executive Summary,” *A Report on the Media and the Immigration Debate*, Governance Studies at Brookings Institute, published September 25, 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/events/2008/0925_media_immigration.aspx (accessed October 31, 2009), vii.

⁹ Suro defines “flash” stories as those that describe a dramatic event, usually a violent one, with little context; he opposes “flash” stories to “ooze” stories, which develop over a longer arc of time. Immigration, according to the Brookings report, is an ooze story, developing over a long period of time and influenced by many factors, however the media’s focus on discrete events portrays it as a “flash” issue.

¹⁰ E.J. Dionne Jr., “Chapter One: The Immigration Narrative,” in *A Report on the Media and the Immigration Debate*, 27.

¹¹ “Overview,” in “The Portrait from Iraq—How the Press Has Covered the Events on the Ground,” Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, published December 19, 2007, and available online at <http://www.journalism.org/node/8996> (accessed September 12, 2009).

categories that divide us from them, soldier and civilian, immigrant and citizen. Both performers invited the audience members to invest their own experiences along with those who have been commonly and continually framed as distant and different. In personal interviews, both Martínez and Hughes described their desire for their audiences to respond by granting themselves the authority to interpret the Iraq war and U.S./Mexico immigration themselves, rather than relegating this authority to others.

An intent to elicit a counter-hegemonic practice of collective interpretation aligns these two performers across distinct, contemporary, predominant, and divisive political issues. Their focus on counter-hegemonic interpretation as collective and plural, rather than the work of an individual artist, pundit, scholar, or critic, distinguishes them both, and I will argue in this chapter that in their combination of genres—press brief, author talk, solo performance, even group encounter session—both performers aim for a formal innovation towards a democratic practice of collective interpretation.

In critical theory, the text and its solitary reader is the prevailing model of counter-hegemonic interpretation.¹² In scholarly analysis of activist performances, often scholars take the role of the most authoritative critics, interpreting the meaning to their readers.¹³ Although the concept of deliberative democracy is based upon the plural interpretations of common issues, scholarship in deliberative democracy predominantly focuses on text (most commonly theory

¹² Homi Bhabha cites Frantz Fanon's concept of the "third figure," which does not mitigate between two contesting forces, but instead concretizes and critiques the terms that organize their argument: "the struggle for freedom aims at a fundamentally different set of relations." Bhabha refers to Fanon's "third space," as a space within discourse in which the terms of discourse itself are challenged. Bhabha focuses solely on writing and text as a form of counter-hegemonic interpretation. *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 168. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* hinges upon a concept of textuality and counter-hegemonic reading, while offering a radical politics of democratic inclusion. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001).

¹³ Along with the examples of this approach in the introduction, see Jill Lane's articles on Reverend Billy, in which her interpretation trumps tourists in the Disney Store. Jill Lane, "Preaching, Protest, and Postindustrial Flanerie." *The Drama Review* 56, no. 1 (Spring, 2002): 60-84.

and philosophy) and the practice of reading. Jürgen Habermas's class- and education-based criteria for what cultural objects may be included in what counts as democratic deliberation limits the inclusiveness of his model.¹⁴ Yet Hannah Arendt's concept of a performative politics, without entry criteria or mitigating epistemology, refers to "a common world of things."¹⁵ The vagueness of the phrase allows for the inclusion of whatever forms unite a disparate public around shared object. Thinking with Arendt brings deliberative democracy to an understanding of Martínez and Hughes, and their use of co-presence and plural interpretation in response to mass media hegemony.

An understanding of tragedy as a theatrical practice co-determinant with democracy traverses the work of some theatre scholars, classical anthropologists, and democratic theorists. Tragedy is seen as compelling its audience of citizens to "read" beyond literal meaning, and to challenge hegemonic social categories of understanding.¹⁶ In the audience-performance dynamic of tragic practice, the emphasis is not on the model of an individual in private reflection, nor on the writer as sole questioning voice, but rather on a collective practice of questioning and creating alternatives to the terms of discourse and categories of identity. Political theorist Peter Euben describes Dionysus as a characterization of tragedy's ability to highlight constitutional social norms; theatre, following Euben, is a democratically inclusive practice of counter-hegemonic interpretation.¹⁷ By performing stories that do not reiterate dominant narratives, Martínez and Hughes throw the partial nature of these representations into relief, and highlight the contingency of their construction.

Shifting definitions and allegiances: Rubén Martínez's Border Ballad

¹⁴ See pages 8-9 and 16-17 in my introduction.

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973), 109.

¹⁶ Brian Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy: Drama, Myth, Society* (London: Longman, 1979), 153.

¹⁷ Peter Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 210.

Martínez began performing what he describes as versions of *Border Ballad* as a one-man show at Harvard University in 2000. *Border Ballad* follows the story of the Chávez family from *Crossing Over. Visions in the Desert: Looking for Home in the American West*, performed at the Los Angeles Public Library as part of their 2009 Aloud series, profiled different characters, but was linked to *Border Ballad* not only through a focus on the border and the West, but by its continuing theme of the connection between self and place.

In the 2000 *Border Ballad*, Martínez's narrative began with a brief biography, explaining his original journalistic and personal reasons for traveling to Michoacán, and his realization of the shallowness and opportunism of his initial plan. He had intended to interview María Elena Chávez, the mother of five sons, three of whom were killed in a chase with the U.S. border patrol near the Tijuana-San Diego border, and return with what he described as the pro forma grief interview for his editor and readers of *LA Weekly*, but he found upon arrival that twenty-five reporters had already visited. He decided to stay:

Remain there, then, among the people, listening to their stories, partaking of their rituals, speaking as they speak, dressing as they dress.

Become one with them.

And, taking the cue from the patron saint of literary journalism, James Agee, you shall write of the people movingly, with a point of view that is yours alone, with a consciousness sublime and mysterious that does not contradict the ultimate aesthetic and political goal of achieving a crystalline and accessible social realism that properly respects the worker and metaphorically breaks the chains that bind him! (*Turns to audience*) Wouldn't that be cool?¹⁸

¹⁸ Rubén Martínez, *Border Ballad script*, unpublished manuscript, supplied by author, 14.

This passage, from early on in the play, described the shift from one professional identity to another: from mainstream reporter to leftist, humanist, literary author. It also highlighted Martínez-the-character's use of the Chávez family and their story to develop his own sense of himself as a heroic journalist. In the narrative, *Border Ballad* highlighted Martínez's self-awareness and shifting allegiance as he grew close to Rosa, María Elena's daughter, and Wensi, Rosa's husband, both of whom were tempted to make the journey across the border, despite María Elena's fragile, still-grieving state.

As Rosa and Wensi opened up to him, Martínez found his journalistic detachment, and the format of his story, upended. Immediately after the passage in which he mocked his own heroic journalist intentions, the narration cut to the middle of a drunken party in Michoacán: a crush of people, sound, movement, and sensory overload in which the narrator was lost mirrored the unsettling of Martínez's relationship to the people who had previously been his subjects. Out of the brawling, dancing crowd, Wensi grabbed Martínez and forced him to hear perhaps more than he asked for, describing his feelings of entrapment, frustration, and shame: "I'm thinking it's about time for him to puke he raises his head starts sobbing and talking at once, 'Rubén, you just don't understand. You just don't understand.'" Wensi described his shame over his poverty, how his little brother's shoes were taped together, and his determination to cross the border again and make enough money to unite his whole family in Missouri. "You'll visit us someday," he told Martínez, who asked, "Do I understand him now?"¹⁹ The perspective shift here was delicate: from Wensi's words and expressions, to Martínez as a kind of narrating medium for Wensi. The awkward pronoun shift did not allow the audience to forget that these were not Wensi's words channeled through Martínez the narrator/reporter, but rather what Martínez heard, and how he

¹⁹ Ibid, 20.

heard it. “Do I understand him now?” If Martínez was the audience’s guide to the family’s hometown of Cheran, Michoacán and back to the U.S., he was also its guide through different perspectives. Transmitted through Martínez’s experience, it may have put the audience in the position of being asked: “Do I understand him now?” This moment illustrates a crucial conception of an ethics of empathy and identification: in this case, it was clearly demanded, by Wensi; it is a moral imperative, not universal but absolutely contingent, an ethics of contingency. This moment worked as the tragic hamartia in *Border Ballad*, as Martínez’s primary responsibility shifted from telling this story to Californians, to aiding Wensi and Rosa as friends.

As the figure of Martínez the storyteller remained stable before the audience, a guide and proxy to the distant experience of border-crossing, his allegiances shifted, allowing the audience members to become aware of their own shifting identifications with this narrator and protagonist. In turn, Martínez created a space for the audience to question pity, highlighting the dynamics of pity, friendship, and identity. Stephen Halliwell describes theatre’s particular ability to analyze the role of pity in social ties and ethical responsibility. Halliwell argues that a character in a tragic play functions as an audience proxy; as understanding of and compassion for an outsider figure develop, so does an ethical bond. Halliwell argues that Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, and tragedy in general, engages the audience in questioning the ethics of pity and identification.²⁰ Martínez inserted himself into the narrative in a later version of *Border Ballad*; the “I” character of himself as a journalist in the role of James Agee was posited as a stand-in for the audience, who might have tended to reiterate a self/other dynamic through a self-congratulatory pity of migrants. As Martínez placed this monologue in the beginning of the performance, with the

²⁰ Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 209-10.

sarcastic, self-mocking “Wouldn’t that be cool,” it served as almost an instruction on how not to relate to Wensi and Rosa.

At Harvard, during the early, workshop presentation of *Border Ballad* in 2000, this element of the performance was not recognized.²¹ Audiences afterwards expressed empathy, pity, and guilt, and they thanked Martínez for presenting a perspective and experience they had not witnessed before. In the midst of a series of performances within Anna Deavere Smith’s Institute for the Arts and Civic Dialogue, the audience members were self-selecting: academics, artists, and activists whose politics were progressive, with interests in community activism. Martínez’s role as a Latino journalist representing Latinos to a Harvard audience was unmistakable, and for many people who participated in the talkback, his performance seemed to be the first time they’d been exposed to the “immigration issue” on a personal, experiential level. Much of the talkback I attended focused on audience members expressing how moved and impressed they were by the struggles of the protagonists, Wensi and Rosa. With Martínez the performer tokenized, his subjects seemed at once like more distant, exotic, and authentic figures. Joseph Rodriguez’s black and white and grainy photographs, projected at the end of the show, intensified this sense of authenticity and otherness. Rodriguez’s images were stylistically similar to Walker Evans’s photographs of the dustbowl poor. As Martínez later noted in *Visions of the Desert: Searching for Home in the American West*, the 2009 version of his ongoing border work, the “native” art, “genuine” adobe homes, and other signifiers convey a romantic authenticity to some audiences; poverty and marginalization are the other side of the mirror of this landscape.

²¹ I attended rehearsals and talkbacks as well as Martínez’s performance at the Institute for Arts and Civic Dialogue, as a journalist for the institute in 2000.

“The gentry will both fetishize and ignore the native.”²² The audience at Harvard was limited to a pathos of incapable tragic pity, and prevented from a more wide-ranging discussion by Martínez’s singular presence as a Latino and the aesthetics of the production. Immigration policy was not a part of the discussion, though Martínez pointed to Pete Wilson and Proposition 187. In the summer of 2000, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Martínez was not so much intervening in a debate about immigration as introducing an issue.

The critical success of *Crossing Over* moved Martínez’s career from journalist to pundit within a leftist, liberal media that self-identifies as offering a deeper understanding, different from the shallow and quick terms of major news networks. These media outlets, though, continued a reception similar to Martínez’s play in Cambridge, operating on the same terms of us and them. In a March 24, 2006 show on “All Things Considered,” Jennifer Ludden portrayed the range of the debate between senators Specter and Frist’s immigration bills. The show quoted President Bush, stating his hope that the debate wouldn’t be “fractious” but acknowledging that “it is a very difficult issue... it’s a very emotional issue.” Ludden further summed up the tone surrounding the congressional debate: “It’s a very emotional issue, I think both sides are getting quite heated. We’re seeing certainly with these demonstrations and you know part of the reason is it’s a very difficult issue. It splits the Republican Party. It splits the Democratic Party.” In a closing coda, Ludden summarized public opinion in the U.S. on this issue: “I think people when they try to figure out where they come out, you know, they don’t want 12 million people in the country that don’t have papers, but you love your nanny.”²³ The way that the NPR program framed the issue assumed a stable and monolithic us/them frame for its audience. As Martínez

²² Rubén Martínez, “Visions in the Desert: Searching for a Home in the American West,” presented by the Library Foundation of Los Angeles, July 30, 2009. Podcast, <http://events.lapl.org/podcasts/PodcastView.aspx?pid=266>, (accessed March 12, 2010).

²³ Jennifer Ludden, “Senate Pursues Immigration Bill,” on “All Things Considered,” National Public Radio, March 24, 2006.

has noted of L.A.'s disparate newspaper audiences, a presumption about the identity and interests of the audience determines the perspective, and filters the information that various news media provide.

A keyhole view of U.S. news media's representation of Mexican immigrants (and Central American immigrants, as those who cross the border from Mexico to the U.S. have first crossed the border of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras) reveals some consistent frames. First and most obviously, a survey of television media segments from the five major networks, accessed through the University of Vanderbilt News Media Database, shows that the illegal immigration/border issue is usually presented as a conflict between Mexican immigrants who want to cross, and various degrees of U.S. opinion on what rights of movement, labor, and citizenship they should be granted. The term used to refer to the issue is frequently "border," and the images I reviewed over the past years are overwhelmingly photographs of the border itself: a wall, a fence, sometimes with a shadowy figure to show the scale. Photographs in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and other major papers rarely show faces. If the image is of a border patrolman, the face is obscured by a hat or the angle of the camera. If the image is of a border crosser, it is usually from behind, in shadow, or at a distance. There are no photographs of injured people, people with lost limbs, or dead bodies.

In a 2007 editorial for *The Los Angeles Times*, Martínez described this communicative divide:

The typical *Times* latino story is set in the immigrant city, but clearly written from outside. It's a story about foreigners for the "natives," about the working class for the middle class, about the Spanish speaker for the English speaker. There is an urge to

“translate,” rather than integrate perspectives. What is missing is the ordinary, the everyday.²⁴

In the later version of *Border Ballad*, Martínez further targeted his dramaturgy towards highlighting the occlusions in our conceptions of others that this “translation” (rather than “integration”) entails. In July 2009, in his performance of *Visions in the Desert: Searching for Home in the West*, at Los Angeles Public Library’s Aloud series, which I viewed as a podcast, Martínez wears a black cowboy hat, and greets his audience with, “Good evening, I’m Johnny Cash.” The audience laughs, and he then says, “Good evening, I’m Cornelio Reyna,” and notes the silence: “I see we have fewer Cornelio Reyna fans in the audience.” As he greets his audience with reference to Cornelio Reyna and receives silence in response, Martínez prods his audience to recognize an absence that would otherwise remain assumed and unexamined.

Martínez prefaces the three stories he tells by referring to Cormac McCarthy’s portraits of the U.S./Mexico border in novels and film adaptations: *All the Pretty Horses* (2000) and *No Country for Old Men* (2007).²⁵ These and other movies, Martínez says, present the “other side” of the border as a place of darkness, chaos, and killers. In the first story, he tells of driving in the desert close to the border, he and his wife wearing cowboy and cowgirl hats, having dressed the part for the mythic landscape of books and movies. When a car passes them and then stops ahead on the road, Martínez details his inner monologue: his mythic border fantasy is about to become too real, as the car surely holds narco-trafficking killers who will somehow prey upon them. The

²⁴ Ruben Martinez, “LA Needs Two Big Papers,” *The Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 2007. <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-op-martinez15apr15,1,4544197.story>, accessed Sept 25, 2009.

²⁵ *All the Pretty Horses*, directed by Billy Bob Thornton (2000; Culver City: Miramax Films). *No Country for Old Men*, directed by Ethan Cohen and Joel Cohen (2007; Hollywood: Paramount Vantage). Cormac McCarthy, *All The Pretty Horses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005).

car soon starts again, and then disappears in the distance. Probably, he muses, they were also just on a daytrip.²⁶

There is much to support Martínez's view that the border is mythologized in film as the place of dark, chaotic forces. While the 2005 film *Under the Same Moon* did depict a character's struggle to cross the border, the use of an adorable child as the protagonist transformed the menaces (drug and child traffickers, border patrol, dangerous weather) into a fable, with little relevance to actual people.²⁷ In the 1997 play *Real Women Have Curves* by Josefina López, legal status is a key aspect of the plot and the protagonist's development; nevertheless, this aspect was dropped in the 2002 film.²⁸ In *Babel* (2006), a woman who works illegally as a nanny crosses the border with her two young, blond charges to attend her son's wedding while their parents travel in the Middle East.²⁹ She gets drunk and dances while her children wander around without supervision, eventually ending up lost in the desert.

As with Ludden's purportedly objective portrayal of the immigrant debate, these repeated narratives and characterizations are grounded in what Roland Barthes defined as myths: units of significance that carry a hidden determined reading as "what-goes-without-saying."³⁰ A regime of empathy and identification patrols the borders between us and them, and, as tragic theorist René Girard said, while our politics may be polarized, before disagreement on the issue there was a prior, and much unexamined, agreement on the terms.³¹ Tragedy portrays characters at loggerheads due to these shared, limited terms through which they argue; the destruction

²⁶ Rubén Martínez, "Visions in the Desert: Searching for a Home in the American West," presented by the Library Foundation of Los Angeles, July 30, 2009. Podcast, <http://events.lapl.org/podcasts/PodcastView.aspx?pid=266>, (accessed March 12, 2010).

²⁷ *Under the Same Moon*, directed by Patricia Riggen (2005; Los Angeles: Fox Searchlight).

²⁸ This insight comes from Gad Guterman's dissertation, "Without Papers: Legal Identity, Legal Consciousness and Performance," The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2010.

²⁹ *Babel*, directed by [Alejandro González Iñárritu](#) (2006; Hollywood: Paramount Vantage).

³⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1972), 11 and 128.

³¹ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 83.

characters face portrays “the consequences of having clung to a partial view of the world and themselves.”³² In his 2009 performance, Martínez picked up a dramaturgical technique he used at the end of *Border Ballad*, drawing new categories of affiliation, across immigrant/citizen. Unlike the 2000 performance at Harvard, in *Searching for Home* Martínez places other U.S. citizens besides himself within the narrative, perhaps to head off the audience’s tendency to perceive through the reiterated frame of us/them, and to experience tragic, but irresponsible, pity.

The 2000 version of *Border Ballad* at Harvard ended with a description of Rosa crossing with her small daughter. After no word for twelve days, Martínez and Wensi traveled to pick them up in the middle of a barren, frozen part of Denver, Colorado. They approached a trailer wary of finding battered and exhausted people inside. Instead they found a fiesta, warmth, and dancing, and the family was reunited: “She was home. She was finally home.”³³ The homecoming plot was familiar, but the dominant narrative of immigration, protagonists leaving, traveling away to a neutral or empty destination was reversed: immigrants instead set out to be reunited with family, and finally arrived at home. In this adaptation of the myth, the hero arrived at a definition of home that included both immigrants and legal citizens. Rather than a journey that ended with an immigrant entering a neutral territory—an empty metaphor for opportunity, easily filled by projection— Martínez framed the ending with a reunion, and with his protagonists’ arrival into the ability to have some agency over who they become, their fate. By telling a story with a different dramatic structure than the repeated border-crossing narrative— protagonist leaves home to enter a land of opportunity— Martínez proposed another unit of significance, another logic of affiliation.

³² Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory*, 56.

³³ Rubén Martínez, *Border Ballad script*, unpublished manuscript, supplied by author, 31.

Martínez's de-mythologizing role is akin to the function both democratic and tragic theorists have ascribed to tragedy, specifically to Dionysus in Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Dressing Pentheus as a woman, Dionysus reveals the constructed nature of social and gender categories, categories of identity that collate woman, slave, and foreigner with noncitizen.³⁴ Dionysus, Pierre Vernant argues, "sets up communion between things hitherto isolated, separate. His eruption into nature, the social group, and each individual human being, through trance and related possession, is a subversion of order."³⁵ By offering terms of shared experience that traverse reiterated categories, Martínez shifted away from pity towards mutuality and responsibility.

In Los Angeles, Martínez told several stories, a triptych with allusions to the recent burst of the real estate bubble. Martínez introduces the story by number. In the first story, he drove through the desert and imagined he was stepping into a distillation of film mythology, then met with a real estate agent about renting an "authentic adobe" to fulfill his image of himself as a writer in the West. In the second story, Martínez narrated the evolution of Al's Swinger's Bar, "the first black-owned bar in the Morango basin." A Panamanian divorcee asked Al for a job and became the manager until 1997, but could not afford to buy the bar when he died. "Flash forward to mid 2000s," Martínez says, and proceeded to describe the way the bar, real estate, and landscape are continually remade:

[They] played the role of pioneer for next generation of speculators that followed. Art dealers, speculators, journalists, Mexicans who hammered at wood frames in the sun. People moved, and people were moved.

³⁴ Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory*, 210.

³⁵ Jean-Pierre Vernant, "The Masqued Dionysus of Euripides' *Bacchae*," in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, 390.

The *L.A. Times* came and proclaimed, “Desert cool.” The designer Andrea Zittel said in the *New York Times* that it was “so great to live in the middle of nowhere.” Which is the same way of saying that no one lived there. Until Zittel.

The boom tornado swirled through Twentynine Palms, but avoided Als. It finally sold in 2007. It would become an art gallery.³⁶

The third story starred Martínez’s mother-in-law and featured her journey through 1960s feminism, a divorce, a college education in middle age, and, finally, a confrontation with her family, who wanted her to stop dating three men and pick the right one. She told them to leave her alone, that she wanted to come home after work and “just be in her body. Just be in her body. In her home, out on the mesa.”³⁷

The three stories portrayed different iterations of the ways a sense of self and a sense of place are linked; protagonists had limited control over the identity of a place that is itself vulnerable to social, economic, and historic forces, and Martínez raised questions of who really is the stranger. One story unsettled the concept of land ownership and land identity as solely circumscribed by nation by tracing the history of the ownership of Al’s bar in west Texas. Martínez described the real estate boom, economic inequality and its ties to ethnicity, and cultural trends as forces that act like weather and effect people unpredictably. In the dominant framing of the border myth, people change their fate and identities by moving across the landscape, the borders of which remain stable. In the later version of Martínez’s performance, the land itself changed, and the effects were beyond people’s control and even their understanding. The stories re-categorized which experiences could be shared, and posited geographic vulnerability and desire for home as another unit of significance, introducing a

³⁶ Rubén Martínez, “Visions in the Desert: Searching for a Home in the American West.”

³⁷ Ibid.

common term with the capacity, as Halliwell described, to “shift ties previously organized by social norms.”³⁸

Martínez posited “the everyday” as what is left beyond the frame of dominant narratives and identity categories. By aligning the audience’s experiences with immigrants, including legal citizens in journey narratives, whether it be through real estate or a research trip, involving change, opportunity, identity, and loss, Martínez allowed audience members to hold their experience in comparison with immigrants. Across U.S. and Mexico, documented and undocumented borders, the stories created shared themes the connectedness of self-determination and place. By drawing outlines of common categories of experience, his work highlighted the constructed, inessential nature of these divisions based on nation, geography, and ethnicity.

Both Martínez and Aaron Hughes used storytelling against the backdrop of mythic figures and narratives to elicit the spectators’ investment of their own experiences and observations. Walter Benjamin contrasted storytelling with what he described as newspaper’s delivery of information “understandable in itself,” or already-interpreted. Benjamin posited storytelling as a contextual practice that depends upon the investment of collected experiences.³⁹ In 1922, media theorist Walter Lippman expressed confidence that though media representations of distant places and people were distributed on a mass scale, they would not become monolithic and static; through their function as intermediaries in the deliberation of many different peoples, they would be “subject to check and comparison and argument.”⁴⁰ The degree of success these storytelling, journalistic performances had in instigating their audiences to subject myth to the

³⁸ Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 216.

³⁹ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov,” in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, translated by Harry Zohn, Hannah Arendt, ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 89.

⁴⁰ Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 11-12.

interpretation, comparison, and adaption of their own experiences was easier to gauge in Hughes's work than in Martinez's. Hughes's work allowed for a more insightful and thorough understanding of audience's response, because audience response was built into the core of his performance.

Dispersing interpretive authority: Aaron Hughes' *Tea*

Rather than serving as a personalized version of a remote war communicated through news media, or as an exotic and remote adventure, Hughes's collaborative storytelling allowed his experience to be shared and adapted. Hughes alternated his own stories with questions that elicited parallel ones from his audience members, so that his experience and theirs wove together. Hughes and other Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have said that when they return to the U.S., they are alarmed and disoriented by the fact that the war does not seem to be a part of daily reality here. In a survey of journalists for the Pew Foundations' report, the topic of "daily life" was ranked as receiving the least media attention.⁴¹ The information comes almost always exclusively from reporters, not soldiers or Iraqis, perhaps because of the ability of more reporters to embed.⁴² During the 2004 presidential campaign, the attention paid to John Kerry's remark that people who do not complete their education get "stuck in Iraq" revealed the use of soldiers as large-scale identities in the ideology of political parties. Republicans portrayed their party as aligned with the working class and Democrats as elitist, and thereby identified soldiers as both working class and Republican. Republicans also conflated a pro-soldier and pro-working class stance with support of the war in Iraq. As David Graeber pointed out in an article in *Harpers*

⁴¹ "Overview," in "The Portrait from Iraq—How the Press Has Covered the Events on the Ground," Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, published December 19, 2007, and available online at <http://www.journalism.org/node/8996> (accessed September 12, 2009).

⁴² Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism "A Picture of Violence and Chaos," and "Embedded Reporters, What are Americans Getting?" in "The Portrait from Iraq—How the Press Has Covered the Events on the Ground."

Magazine, Democrats and the left lost control of “the message” because they engaged in the debate on the same terms as their opposition.⁴³ The intensity and the amount of public reaction in 2008 to the film *The Hurt Locker*—some people in the military claimed the depiction of a bomb-expert was unrealistic and insulting, while others said that they understood exaggeration as the nature of movies, and more than one person claimed to be the real soldier on whom the fictional protagonist was based—highlight the significant influence and power of these few, limited large-scale depictions of soldiers.⁴⁴ The Iraq Veterans Against the War latched on to *The Ground Truth*, a documentary about post-traumatic stress disorder and suicides, and featured it on their homepage, because they said it was one out of the limited selections of prominent representations of soldiers that reflected their perspective.⁴⁵ This is another example of how soldiers and veterans do not see their experience represented in nation discourse.

Matt Mabe, a soldier who attended Columbia Journalism School and worked as a journalist in between tours of duty in Iraq, returned to the U.S. and civilian life to find himself surrounded by colleagues who stereotype soldiers as both heroic and ignorant, “lost, disadvantaged, exploited.”⁴⁶ Hughes echoed Mabe’s opinion of the media’s limited perspective, and described his work as an attempt to get people to “stop listening to generals, politicians, media, everyone who is going to break it into binaries and we start listening to soldiers who are on the ground dealing with daily experiences.”⁴⁷

⁴³ David Graeber, “An Army of Altruists: on the alienated right to do good,” *Harpers Magazine*, (January 2007): 31-38.

⁴⁴ Julian E. Barnes, Ned Parker, and John Horn, “‘The Hurt Locker Sets Off Conflict,’” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 2010. *The Hurt Locker*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow (2008; Los Angeles: Voltage Pictures).

⁴⁵ *The Ground Truth*, directed by Patricia Foulkrod (2006; New York: Plum Pictures).

⁴⁶ “On the Front Lines,” On the Media, Podcast, National Public Radio, August 9, 2009, http://www.onthemedial.org/topics/iraq-middle_east/1 (accessed August 23, 2009). Podcast. See also Matt Mabe, “One of Us,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, August, 2009. http://www.cjr.org/feature/one_of_us.php (accessed February 13, 2010).

⁴⁷ Personal interview, Hughes, November 11, 2007.

One of the ways Hughes felt his 2010 performance *Tea* succeeded was in “breaking down” the barriers over who has the right to tell stories about the war. Indeed Hughes’s various directorial choices compelled and sometimes prodded his audience to place their own experiences of the war alongside his.

These things do have value, it’s just counter to the way we look at the war, we’re always looking to experts....I don’t think anyone has the privilege to know enough to claim agency over a region or a war...⁴⁸

In his essay on storytelling, Benjamin argues that the effects of military technology have exceeded humans’ ability to communicate experience; soldiers are no longer able to bring distant experience close through storytelling. But Hughes observed a social unwillingness to engage with soldiers, a buffer of silence, perhaps out of respectful deference. In my observance of Iraq Veterans Against the War, I noticed that veterans were treated somewhat like celebrities or rock stars, spoken of and treated as both romantic and tragic figures, having been to places that others will never go and withstood experiences we can never understand. This presumption of an inability to understand perpetuates a barrier between civilian and soldier. Hughes’s performance worked against this presumption by basing authority on participants’ own experiences and their ability to relate and connect them. In this way he dispersed authority to interpret the war.

On March 19, 2010 at Powerhouse Books in the Dumbo section of Brooklyn, the audience of about thirty people arrived and milled around, looking for the performance area, as Hughes brewed tea. He invited people to sit on the floor on a decorative rug and passed out Styrofoam cups to everyone, which he filled with strong, sweet tea: an Iraqi habit, he explained. The group’s interactions were tentative and polite in the middle of awkward silences. When the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

tea was served, Hughes shifted from a reticent, casual attitude to a more theatrical one. He is unusually tall, with long arms, large hands, and a wide, boyish face, making his deliberate gestures, which he moved into slowly and held, striking. He began by asking, “What were you doing five years ago?” The audience consisted of several white men and women over forty, one who identified herself as a journalist and one as an anti-war activist, several anarchist punk women and men under twenty-five, and several graduate students. The two women described the beginning of the Iraq War as the beginning of their own research, exploration, or activism. Everyone else described a vivid memory (“I can remember where I was”) and an emotion, and most agreed that after that moment, even if they took part in a protest, their lives returned to the way there were before. They were surprised to realize the war began five years ago, and talked about what those five years had been for them—some spoke about college, others about traveling abroad, and some others spoke of jobs, divorces or marriages. The Iraq War seemed like part of Hughes’s story, just as each audience member had his or her own. In a sense, Hughes invited his audience to recognize the experiences they have in common with him, rather than posing their prepared questions across what they assumed to be a great divide of experience, education, and values. This enabled his audience members to enter the story with their own interpretations, adapting and checking repeated narratives and characterizations or myths. Staging a practice of inclusive interpretation, Hughes incited his audience to (as Linda Zerilli describes the equality of authority Arendt’s performative, political sphere) “create new forms or figures with which to make sense of objects and events.”⁴⁹

Hughes describes his deliberately slow pacing and use of silence as a way to “let the stories have weight” and also to force his questions past the rhetorical: “people feel more

⁴⁹ Linda M. G. Zerilli, “We Feel Our Freedom: Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt,” *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (April, 2005): 180.

uncomfortable with silence than with telling their own stories.”⁵⁰ The silence also forced a heightened awareness of the shared surroundings, on everyone in the audience, not just the performer, and the whole space of the room, not just the space around Hughes. This awareness of shared surroundings, in what became a kind of shared stage, allowed for an awareness of what the audience and Hughes were creating, collectively:

I push at the audience, but I don’t feel like I need to pry a specific idea or story, I want them to tell me how it relates to their lives, even if its abstract, what they were doing when the war started, hearing from people protesting to people being on vacation in Florida, and their brother is inside watching CNN and can’t unglue. All these different little pieces begin to add up to our cultural relationship to this thing we never talk about.⁵¹

The silence Hughes uses to frame his stories and to “push at the audience” is charged. While his quiet, sincere demeanor and the open-ended nature of the questions create the air of an encounter group, there is also a frustration and anger in his deliberately choreographed, weighty gestures and his emphatic, somber delivery. Part of what Hughes is pushing at is the myth of soldier that audiences expect him to perform, the assumption that Hughes, as soldier, would perform his experience for us. Stephen Salkever notes that the term “kathartic art,” long connected to tragedy, also describes the effects of the stranger character in the *Sophist*: the illumination of assumptions, an alienation affect.⁵² This definition of katharsis is the opposite of relief in the aftermath of terrifying events; instead, as in Hughes’s *Tea*, we might think of katharsis as the appearance of a lack in communicative norms, a gap between us and others that we have not yet the terms to bridge.

⁵⁰ Hughes, 2010.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Steven G. Salkever, “Tragedy and the Education of the Dēmos: Aristotle’s Response to Plato,” *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, Peter Euben, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 300.

After everyone had answered, Hughes told three stories. The first story was about a friend of Hughes's who worked as a guard in Guantánamo, who said it was "the fastest way to become a concentration camp guard." The inmates are not allowed to keep any items, and the guards collected the Styrofoam cups from which they drank tea. The inmates commonly drew on their cups with their fingernails— intricate patterns of flowers and vines. Hughes asked us to look at the cups we were drinking from and told us he'd carved a pattern on them all, 385 cups for 385 prisoners. The second story was about Hughes and his fellow Army National Guard soldiers and Marines in a truck convoy. The territory they were covering was sketchy, and Hughes described a jocular back-and-forth between the Marines and the National Guard over who should go first. The argument ended with the Reserves winning: only one team has any means of communication, (a "com box"), and as Hughes says, "You're the Marines." The Marines truck hits an IED; and the Marines have no way to alert the National Guard soldiers behind them. The National Guard, without a com box, has no way to call for help. At this point, Hughes's narration turns away from the violent event and the consequences. He said he remembered looking down and seeing hypodermic needles covering the road, after the medics arrived and left. While they waited for the medics, he said they all sat around, smoked, told jokes, a friend of Hughes's "took a shit in the middle of the road."⁵³ Hughes described this experience as absurd; and absurd is how he characterizes much of his experience of Iraq: "What we're performing over there, our roles over there, the performance of our roles never fits."⁵⁴ Rather than holding the burden of narrating this event, he left the burden of imagining it to the audience, forcing us to fill in the gap. Hughes's tone did not change between reciting the violent event and the jocularly that preceded it. This made it hard to perceive the event through tragic pity—the frame didn't fit.

⁵³ Personal interview, Hughes, 2010.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Rather, Hughes put the tragic event in the frame of everyday absurdity; you can't laugh or cry. The audience looked at him and then away from each other, in a stymied silence.

The last story began with a woman who approached Hughes on a bus and asked him if he wanted to hear some trivia. He asked the audience, "Do you want to hear some trivia?" The woman told him that a park outside Chicago has a building that used to hold German prisoners of war. Hughes was skeptical, but she said she used to play in the park, and she remembered going there with her friend to blow kisses to the "beautiful blond soldiers." Hughes wondered why this woman came to him with this story. "Did I remind her of a German prisoner of war?" He asks the audience, "Do I remind you of a German prisoner of war?"

After each story, Hughes froze and remained silent, giving time for the stories to be absorbed on a different level than "the level at which we process this info, all trivia." His dramaturgy was also an attempt to subvert his audience's genre expectations, of a performance and also of a press brief (which was how the performance had been advertised), and to subvert what he has experienced as a repetitive template of questions posed to veterans. At times, and with some people, it seemed to work, and at other times it did not. The silence after Hughes's question, "Do I remind you of a German prisoner of war?" was immediately broken by a woman who was eager to get an answer to questions that were not related to the performance: "How did you change from being someone who wanted to fight in a war to an activist? How many women are in IVAW?"

Hans-Thies Lehmann describes the "perceptual conditioning" of media habits, blaming television for a loss of ability to experience and respond beyond a level of "information."⁵⁵ While I argue that any hegemonic form and habit, not simply television, "conditions," tragic practices that include otherwise excluded expressions must disrupt not only the kinds of

⁵⁵ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1998), 89.

narratives and characterizations we perceive, but how we perceive them. War stories carry the expectation of a certain emotional as well as narrative arc. By withholding the violent crisis, the crux, and a denouement, Hughes did not allow the audience to leave the story with the sense that the evening's entertainment was complete. Hughes also forestalled the social structural expectation of filling silence with condolence or reassurance, which allows us to take leave of each other on a positive note, or with a gesture of understanding. We were not granted this fictional or social frame of an end, an exit, and instead were forced to literally sit with an awareness of responsibility, to Hughes socially in this moment, as well as to each other, to bridge these silences of guilt, pain, loneliness, loss, and responsibility to the event. Jaspers writes that "tragedy occurs where awareness exceeds power, where a major need exceeds the power to satisfy it."⁵⁶ As Hughes's dramaturgy forced audience members to sit with the lack of reassurance, positivity, and closure, he staged a space for the mutual recognition of our failure to respond, a recognition that the structural norms of social interaction prevent in daily interactions.

Conclusion:

We could view Hughes's and Martínez's performances as attempts to enable an agency to find and create meaning, one that disperses authority beyond pundits, party polarization, and dominant framing. We could see their performances as modeling a practice of investing one's own experience in interpretation in order both to check and adapt dominant frames, and to become aware of the partial and contingent quality of one's own interpretations. The democratic nature of Arendt's conception of judgment, Zerilli explains, creates a coherence that "does not efface contingency, and thus freedom."⁵⁷ The schema of representation in mass media hegemony could enable pluralistic judgment, or, as Hughes warns, we could give away our ability to ask

⁵⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Tragedy is Not Enough* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1952), 17.

⁵⁷ Zerilli, 163.

ourselves the questions. In 2002, Martínez asked his audience to resist the schematization and polarization that have stalled immigration reform. He described George Bush's upcoming immigration reform policy in a question and answer session:

...and I say this as a progressive lefty type. I think he's coming from a genuinely kind of human place with this... I think he's thinking "I came from this area and I'm should do something for these people"...but the left will have to push him, to get the best and most dignified policy in place.⁵⁸

Polls have shown that when people were asked their opinion on specific aspects of Bush's immigration reform without mentioning the term "amnesty" (a term which had been prevalent in news media), they were much more positive than when they were questioned more generally about the policy. They were also more positive when asked about the reform without reference to party affiliation. E. J. Dionne refers to this poll as evidence of a continual failure of national dialogue to come to grips with on immigration law, and the thwarting prevalence of partisan divide as it plays out in news media.⁵⁹ Martínez ended his talk in 2002 hopefully, "We've seen how ugly immigration politics can get, with the name-calling and so hopefully this won't happen next time."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Rubén Martínez, "Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail," DVD recording, Humanitas Series, University of California Santa Barbara, January 22, 2002.

⁵⁹ E.J. Dionne, Jr., "Migrating Attitudes, Shifting Opinion: The Role of Public Opinion in the Immigration Debate," in *A Report on the Media and the Immigration Debate*, 63-83.

⁶⁰ Martínez, Humanitas Series, 2002.

Chapter Four:

Tragic Empathy, Information, and Deliberation: Poverty Simulation

Since 1995, in cities such as St. Louis, Missouri and Savannah, Georgia, poor people have switched roles with the politicians, city and state employees, and members of anti-poverty organizations in a game called Poverty Simulation. Developed in 1995 by a religious anti-poverty organization, the game is currently chiefly used by Community Action Agencies—nation-wide, state-based anti-poverty organizations—to foster communication towards greater understanding of the reality of poverty as well as the recognition of shortcomings in assistance programs. Community Action Agencies (CAA's) are state-based and nation-wide, having begun under President Lyndon Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act: they offer counseling and job training, and act as a hub for charity organizations, faith and inter-faith organizations, and local businesses.¹ CAA's vary greatly by state in terms of the level of activity and networking across city, state, and civil society organizations. In 2001 the Missouri Association for Community Action (MACA) adapted and copyrighted Poverty Simulation as a "game."²³

Poverty Simulation portrays values and criteria of tragedy as a democratic practice, stressing collective critique and mutual vulnerability across social barriers.⁴ In this chapter, I contrast the communicative demands of Poverty Simulation with, once again, what I understand as a reliance on reading and printed material in scholarship on liberal culture and democracy. As

¹ Community Action Partnership, "Fact Sheet," CommunityAction.com, http://www.communityactionpartnership.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18&Itemid=47. (accessed November 18, 2010).

² Brenda Stegeman, Project and Event Manager, Missouri Association for Community Action, "Poverty Simulation," produced by Missouri Association for Community Action, St. Louis, Missouri: May 27, 2009.

³ Poverty Simulation has also been used by many organizations besides CAA's, including colleges, where they have been incorporated into the curriculum, and corporations such as Hallmark, where they have been used as a kind of communicative and anti-stereotyping training for managers. Brenda Stegeman, personal email, May 20, 2010.

⁴ See Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996); Peter Euben, *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

opposed to this model of detached judgment, the theatrical game provides a model of dialogue within a shared space, promoting self-recognition and multi-faceted understanding. I then explore Poverty Simulation's capacity to highlight more privileged people's misrecognitions of poor people's appearances and behaviors. I argue that these misrecognitions stem from the apparent neutrality of middle-class culture, and are perpetuated by hierarchies of authority and by social communicative norms. The theatricality of Poverty Simulation, setting up different communicative norms to the performance than those that exist outside of the game, elicits understandings that are otherwise blocked. In theorizing the ethical relations that Poverty Simulation stages, I turn to scholarship on friendship in ancient tragedy and its portrayal of this relationship, which traverses social hierarchies, as key to democracy. Tragedies present characters whose sense of authority and sense of their selves are vulnerable, and I describe the democratic value of this model of a partial and flawed judging individual. Finally, I turn to the limits of Poverty Simulation, which I view as connected to the limits poverty places upon self-development and self-expression, engaging with Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser's debate on whether a politics of social justice should focus on "redistribution or recognition."⁵ I conceive of Poverty Simulation as a tragic practice, because it provides a stage and a script that support communication across habitual and hierarchical social boundaries and, by doing so, reveals the damaging and unequal consequences of the contemporary economic and social order. As both actors and audience, the participants in the performance witness the failures of responsibility of both local government and the social order of which they are a part.

MACA's Poverty Simulation materials are sold as a kit, with character descriptions and scenarios for twenty-six families, based on social service workers' descriptions of their clients.

⁵ Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso, 2003).

In a large hall, forty-five to eighty people are assigned to a family and sent to a set of chairs where they find their scenario: a description of the family, the bank balance, job and health status, and a list of assets. Actors are given a few minutes to read their scenarios and to strategize before they enact four “typical weeks,” in four fifteen-minute sections, as a person in poverty. The objectives, as stated in a flyer promoting the game in Savannah and explained in more detail by a director of the event beforehand, are to “keep their shelter secure, feed their family each week, keep their utilities on, make loan payments, pay for daily living expenses like transportation, handle unexpected emergencies, keep their children in school, and access local support and resources.”⁶ Around the edges of the hall, tables with signs for a bank, school, jail, faith organization, utility center, workplace, pawnshop, and other sites are arranged, thus creating the spare set. In Missouri, clients of social services play the roles of staffers at these sites. They often mimic behaviors they have endured on the other side of this relationship: some give out misinformation, or act distracted, brusque, and condescending. Others aim simply to fulfill their tasks for the game.⁷

As opposed to printed material, both novels and theories of social justice, Poverty Simulation is based upon actual dialogue in shared space (co-presence), which fosters an

⁶ Step-Up Savannah, “Welcome to the State of Poverty,” flier, Armstrong State University Center for Professional and Adult Education, Savannah, Georgia, February 19, 2010.

⁷ In February 2010, I observed a simulation in Savannah, Georgia, where volunteers to staff the tables of administrators were recruited from television ads offering free tickets to Disney World, and participants included social workers, local business organizations, and students and teachers from Armstrong Atlantic State University. In May 2009, I participated in a Poverty Simulation that MACA produced in St. Louis as training for other community workers who wanted to host the event in their hometown. In St. Louis, poor people who receive assistance from MACA participated, playing the roles of those who administer various forms of aid as well as pawnshop operators, bankers, and bosses. At both events, I was able to speak with participants afterwards, and hear about their experiences with and opinions of the game. The people who hosted the post-performance discussions worked to encourage poor people to talk about their experiences with candor, and to allow others to confess their misunderstandings. Nevertheless, in personal interviews after the event, social workers expressed views and experiences with the game that they had chosen not to share during the post-performance discussion. I assured interviewees that I would not use their name and since I was an outsider (both to the state and to the anti-poverty network), they seemed to speak freely. Social workers also spoke to me of their own experiences with poverty, and the need for the kind of eye-opening experience the game provides. At the same time, critique of the pragmatic limitations of the game came from these interviews. I have received IRB approval for this research.

awareness of each person's understanding. As I survey in this chapter, the theatrical quality of Poverty Simulation allows for a further exploration of the ways empathy may unsettle the self-conceptions of people in authority, and place the hierarchy of authority in a system itself into question. In theories of democracy and communication, scholars often focus on novels, theory, and democratic juridical procedures, in which "the dominant group's view its taken as definitive," and other's views serve as supplement.⁸ Joan Tronto describes the potential boundary blurring when more privileged peoples view those who are less privileged, or simply different as "ourselves undressed."⁹ By contrast to this kind of removed and unchallenged interpretation, Poverty Simulation has the capacity to stage democratic deliberation without the liberal cultural mediation so prevalent in scholarship on culture and democracy. Heather Lockard, a former social worker and current Poverty Simulation facilitator, described the revelation that she has seen many participants express: "the system is the problem and I'm part of the problem."¹⁰ I argue that by placing participants in both the role of observer and observed Poverty Simulation supports participants' awareness of the how they appear to others, and of how their actions affect others. While in the act of reading the judging subject may be more detached, they are also, I will argue, less challenged, and more prone to boundary blurring and stereotyping.

Scenarios of being poor: the rules of the game

Poverty Simulation's intrinsic theatricality highlights the actor-participant's awareness of him- or herself in the role of another, while also fostering an empathy and understanding that several actors said was not accessible to them in their daily lives. In St. Louis in 2008, the game began when I entered a Hilton Hotel convention hall and was given a tag with the name of my

⁸ Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethics of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁰ Heather Lockard, "Poverty Simulation," produced by Missouri Association for Community Action, St. Louis, Missouri: May 27, 2009.

character. I found a seat among the four marked with my character's last name, met my team of three family members (a husband recently laid off, and a grade-school child) and quickly became absorbed in trying to grasp our situation (debt, assets, obligations) and working out a strategy to get through the four weeks.¹¹ Before beginning the game, each participant read over descriptions of their character and other characters in their family. The information includes nothing more than their name, age, assets, employment, and financial status. Actor-participants' sole focus is strategizing a way to get through the four weeks and the series of imminent crises. The game provides no description of character, appearance, or background. The structure of the game, its rules and challenges, absorbed attention to the goal; besides differences in motivation, no one wanted to lose miserably, and certainly not right away. At first participants' tones varied, some were grim-faced, either because they were focused on playing well, or because they took the imitative aspect seriously and had sincere and serious intentions to understand the experience of poverty. Others were buoyant, even giddy, in the attitude of those about to start a party game or amusement park ride. But everyone in the room became myopically focused on the tasks in the game, in both Savannah (2010) and Missouri (2008), very soon after it began. Each character in the Poverty Simulation script is a member of a family, so in St. Louis we all felt responsible to fellow participants as teammates and appeared to perform the game as best each of us could. The only actors in the game who had the time and attention to emote and act a character, rather than frantically and myopically complete tasks, were those who played children or elderly people—these character descriptions limit actors' engagement: adults as children wandered, complaining of boredom, whined for attention, or sat quietly, sometimes actually becoming forlorn, unable to assist teammates. The descriptions of elderly characters often limit their movement (for health

¹¹ The game lasts about an hour and a half: participants have fifteen minutes to get through the challenges of a "week," and brief interludes in between each week to re-group, evaluate the team's status, and strategize for the next week.

reasons or, like other characters, due to lack of a car or bus fare), and actors are forced to wait for services or relatives to come to them, and sometimes are left to tend children. While many participants in the game rushed doggedly from table to table and talked quickly when they met up in their families to report on the past fifteen-minute week and strategize for the next week, others were forced to simply wait around.

Team members must return to their set of chairs that constitutes their “home” and report to their families at the end of each week, and people who did not succeed in the task, such as getting money from a charity or a job interview, shared this news with a sense of disappointment or defeat. The mood quickly became downbeat, yet remained harried. Actors described their progress and setbacks as fellow team members in terms of how they felt they were doing in the game. In this way actors played themselves, rather than trying to act what they imagined a poor person might feel. Actors were so focused on the challenges of the game that they often treated the directors like referees and protested unfairness in the enforcement of the game’s rules. One scene MACA members like to describe is the line at a social services table, where vouchers for discounted bus transportation, gas and electricity, and job referrals are handed out. In St. Louis clients staffed these tables, and they sometimes mimicked behaviors they’ve had to endure, faking personal calls while people anxiously waited in line, or giving out wrong information. According to facilitators, actual disputes sometimes have broken out in this part of the hall. But it is just as common for staffers to attempt to perform their tasks as well as they can, and in discussions afterwards they sometimes say they understand how stressful and overwhelming it might be for social service workers to face an unending line of desperate, anxious, demanding clients.¹² One man said it was all he could do not to yell at everybody to back up.¹³ People

¹² Heather Lockard and Brenda Stegeman, “Poverty Simulation,” produced by Missouri Association for Community Action, St. Louis, Missouri: May 27, 2009.

expressed exasperation that they had to sit for eight minutes in the “workplace” part of the hall in order to receive a voucher that will not cover enough of their imminent expenses.

In Missouri, at the end of each week directors require the actors to answer a brief essay question in order to receive a “check.” The actors are handed back their own essays as they leave the hall at the end of post-performance discussion.¹⁴ In response to the question for the third week, “How would you say you are doing in the game?” I scrawled that I didn’t have a sense of my own situation or the organization of the game as a whole, and that things were moving so quickly that I didn’t have time to strategize, much less to reflect about the theatrical and possibly exploitive or reductive nature of the game. People who work in anti-poverty community organizations use the phrase “the tyranny of now”¹⁵ to refer to the way poverty entails constant attention to constant attention to the immediate demands of survival; and the game models this state in the face of its series of deadlines and difficult choices. The facilitators’ reminders—that “this is just a game” and that “unlike people actually living in poverty, we can leave”—help to frame the event, but participants don’t mistake the game for an approximation of another’s experience. Between the whistled signals of the end of a week, directors respond to actors’ questions, and then call out to the room, “If you’re feeling confused and overwhelmed, that’s how people in poverty feel.”¹⁶ Facilitators act as directors and stage managers and preface the

¹³ A homeless man made this statement during the post-performance discussion after the St. Louis event. May 27, 2009. During post-performance discussion, participants sometimes reveal intimate details of their lives. Many current facilitators were former clients of social services. Respect for privacy around the vulnerability many participants feel is a crucial part of the game, and therefore I will keep participants anonymous.

¹⁴ As I analyze Poverty Simulation as a theatrical event, I am using the term “post-performance discussion.” The facilitators referred to this discussion as a “talkback.”

¹⁵ A man who works in the “Circles of Support” program, part of the Minnesota Community Action Association, made this statement during personal interview at the Poverty Simulation in Missouri: May 27, 2009. For information on “Circles of Support,” which attempts to foster reciprocal relationships among more affluent people and people in poverty, see the Kootaska Community Action Partnership website, “Circles of Support.” <http://www.kootasca.org/circles.html> (accessed November 20, 2010).

¹⁶ Heather Lockard, “Poverty Simulation,” produced by Missouri Association for Community Action, St. Louis, Missouri: May 27, 2009.

event by reminding the participants that this is a game and it is serious. It is not, they repeat, an approximation of the actual experience of poverty.

The space of difference between unemployed and underemployed people, who use social welfare programs and accept charity, and professionals and politicians becomes more distinct during the game. The “as if” quality of this theatrical event illuminates blind spots and brings to the surface assumptions that otherwise remain buried. The empathy elicited in Poverty Simulation and the awareness of partial understanding support a shift in authority in the discussion that follows the performance. By supporting the expression of many perspectives, the theatrical quality of Poverty Simulation provokes an awareness of deficiencies in authority, a sense of partialness of one’s perspective, and an insecurity about one’s ability to judge. This engagement of multiple participants, each with contingent authority, opposes a prevalent model of democracy that posits liberal cultural identity in an unexamined and stable position of authority, in which empathy serves to refine judgment towards the dispensation of mercy and charity.

Pity, reading, and the liberal cultural view from nowhere

The experience of acting in the Poverty Simulation is meant to foster the kind of attention people pay to each other in the post-performance discussion afterwards. Actors perform the tasks in the game with an awareness of the incomplete nature of this experience, and this arouses a kind of empathic curiosity in the discussion. The tasks in the game and the facilitator’s guidance direct the participants in an “as if” approach to their acting, imagining themselves in theatrical scenarios rather than trying to behave as another person or fictive character would. PS organizer Lockard said that before she acted in a simulation she thought she understood what life was like for her clients. During a post-performance discussion in Saint Louis on May 27, 2008, she said

that, after participating in an event, “I realized I didn’t have a clue and I realized I would never have a clue.”¹⁷ The events present empathy as partial, understanding as situated and therefore incomplete, and the identity of subjects as available to plural interpretations. Poverty Simulation forestalls the tendency of actors, spectators, or readers to enact what María Lugones calls “‘boomerang perception,’ an inclusiveness that erases plurality by accepting ‘others’ on the assimilationist assumption that they are, deep down, like ‘us.’”¹⁸

Feminist political theorists have parsed negative and positive aspects of empathy, and advocated for the necessity for empathy in democratic deliberation. Lugones responds to white, first-world feminism’s tendency to speak for, misrepresent, and misunderstand other women. Furthering Lugones, Tronto, Susan Bickford, and Sharon Krause’s proscriptions of the use of empathy in deliberative democracy, Poverty Simulation maintains the actors’ awareness of themselves as they perform a role. In a Poverty Simulation, the co-presence of poor people and the actors who play their parts stages what Bert O. States called “the ghost of a self in performance,” a self that observes not only the performance as a whole, but an actor’s own part in it.¹⁹

In contrast, select genres and media of the liberal canon, based on and constituting a class, continue cultural hierarchies that dictate who represents, who is represented, who asks for mercy and charity, and who dispenses it. Lionel Trilling and Martha Nussbaum, prominent scholars and public intellectuals who champion democratic liberalism as an ethical and pedagogical culture, valorize literature’s ability to include multiple perspectives; Nussbaum also focuses on literature’s ability to evoke empathy. Describing a way of reading that enables an

¹⁷ Lockard, May 27, 2008.

¹⁸ María Lugones, “Playfulness, “World”-Traveling, and Loving Perception,” *Hypatia* 2, no. 2: (Summer, 1997): 161.

¹⁹ Bert O. States, “The Actor’s Presence, Three phenomenal modes,” in *Acting (Re) Considered*, Philip B. Zarrilli ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 23.

empathic and inclusive kind of democratic judgment, both critics assemble a liberal literary canon. In Nussbaum's description, the novel cultivates a level of empathy as refinement in a dominant class; empathy is one-directional and therefore maintains (and even reinforces) rather than disrupts class boundaries. Nussbaum cites lawyers and judges as examples of the more refined "judicious spectators" who are in the position to dispense mercy. Lionel Trilling's 1950 *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* and Martha Nussbaum's more recent *Poetic Justice: Literary Imagination and Public Life* and *Cultivating Humanity* define a literary democratic practice that grooms a refined sensibility while maintaining the authoritative position of those who dispense judgment, however merciful.²⁰ In 1950, Lionel Trilling argued that "liberalism is not only the dominant but the sole intellectual tradition," thereby categorizing any intellectual tradition as liberal.²¹ This liberal cultural legacy continues to influence scholarship on deliberative democracy.

Iris Marion Young and Martha Minow describe what they call liberal proceduralism: the placement of methods of judgment based upon a liberal perspective in the role of neutral arbiter. Young and Minow both argue that liberal proceduralism constitutes an invisibility by positing a classed, gendered, and raced identity as universal. Both demonstrate how communicative norms that dominate the public sphere presume a culture-transcending ethical objectivity while reinforcing a dominant culture of white, upper-class, Western expressivity. Members of the lower-class and minorities have been excluded from decision making, she argues, partly because certain forms of expression (such as those rooted in personal experience) have been considered

²⁰ Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination in Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), xv. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

²¹ Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2008), xii.

inappropriate for political discussion.²² Minow analyzes the Constitution and the legal practices that surround it as culturally biased by “aspects of language, social structure, and political culture” that appear absolute.²³

Liberal democracy’s cultural prerequisite sets up a system of some people speaking for others. This can perpetuate what Chantal Mouffe has described as liberalism’s “constitutive outside.”²⁴ Those who have the required skill represent “the poor” in a specific genre and to a specific audience, rather than people who are poor representing themselves. While identity politics ushered new texts and authors into the canon, supporting the literary self-representation of marginalized groups, this still leaves open a problem: How are theorists to characterize a kind of oppression not yet represented by those groups who have already gained recognition in the public sphere?²⁵ Axel Honneth, like Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (following Antonio Gramsci), assigns this characterization to the seeming extra-perception of critical theory, which should articulate the commonalities of subjugated peoples, and hence grant an identity to characterize and unify those who would otherwise remain “faceless.”²⁶ Tellingly, Honneth and Nussbaum use this same term to describe those whose suffering has not been characterized or thematized in literature or theory, though they choose different genres for the role of identifying

²² Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²³ Martha Minow, “Foreward: Justice Engendered,” *The Supreme Court 1987 Term*, 101, no. 10, 14, in *Law and Morality: Readings in Legal Philosophy*, David Dyzenhaus and Arthur Ripstein, eds. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001, 1996), 231-41.

²⁴ Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), 21.

²⁵ Honneth, 124.

²⁶ See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, editors. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 196-97; for Honneth’s reference to the “faceless,” see *Redistribution*, 128.

and representing the deprived.²⁷ Whether the task is best granted to literature or theory, the problem remains that any privileged genre limits participation in the creation of representation.

Print and reading enable empathy at a distance, and we could view this as fiction compensating for a problem, or overcoming a barrier. Yet distance has long been viewed in political and cultural theory as a positive, even necessary, factor in critical, objective judgment. Joan Tronto's scholarship on the concept of empathy in Western political theory traces a dominant trend towards distance and detachment as a requirement for uncorrupted ethical and political judgment. Kant's dictum, that moral consideration inherently take a "distant and disinterested" point of view, posits that if empathy is a part of judgment it is included after the achievement of a certain remove.²⁸ Fictional characterizations and theoretical "thematization" permit the judging reader's pity, but not the communication between equals, a key precept in democratic communication as well as judgment. Novels enable ethical reflection about people who are distant by place and circumstances from its readers. In fiction representations of individual human beings replace Nussbaum's "faceless masses" with more specific, and presumably more compelling, fictive ones. With characterizations of "the poor," these fictions can mobilize reflection and empathy towards ethical action, but the same synecdochic effect that leads to empathy in interiorized, readerly reflection may play a part in forming a stereotypical perception of "the poor" (or other large-scale identities), thus limiting recognition and justice. Nussbaum and Mary-Catherine Harrison both refer to Charles Dickens's novels as a paradigmatic example of fictive galvanization of empathy towards social justice, but neither mentions the fact that key characters designed to elicit empathy in the reader share a common set

²⁷ Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*, xv.

²⁸ Tronto, 9.

of traits: blamelessness, attractiveness, and often youth.²⁹ There is a tautology here: empathy for a mass of “faceless” others is elicited by representing them according to traits considered worthy of empathy. While fictive and theoretical portrayals of the poor can act as intermediaries, communicating experiences across both geographic distance and social boundaries, an inherent drawback to such deliberation without presence is the capacity for the thematized or synecdochic other to retain a stable “otherness,” without disturbing the self-conception of the reader. Deliberation without presence, while bridging distance, can continue and reinforce a sense that partial characterization is more inclusive than it actually is. Theatrical engagement in co-presence, as opposed to readerly engagement with a “generalized other” in an interiorized and solitary “imaginary sympathy,”³⁰ challenges preconceived images and stereotypes, provoking an empathy that reveals, rather than masks, dynamics of inequality that implicate us.

In political and cultural theory, social justice seems tied to a problem of how the poor, marginalized, or disenfranchised should be represented, rather than how they might be granted a stage on which to represent themselves. Scholars analyze as well as prescribe the formal, aesthetic, and conceptual innovations necessary to bring entrenched forms of suffering and disenfranchisement to light. The following authors identify specific genres and works of literature as capable of articulating oppression, thereby unifying previously disparate peoples and enabling social justice. Walter Benjamin views the poetic innovation of surrealism as capturing the revolutionary potential in the dreary routine of the workday commute.³¹ Axel Honneth argues that critical theorists should define an identity which applies to all underprivileged people. Honneth, Laclau, and Mouffe theorize how new affiliations might be

²⁹ Mary-Catherine Harrison, “The Paradox of Fiction and the Ethics of Empathy: Reconceiving Dickens’s Realism,” *Narrative* 16, no. 3 (2008): 256-78.

³⁰ Nussbaum, 73.

³¹ Walter Benjamin, “Surrealism” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Peter Demetz, ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 181-82.

articulated, but not what practices might form them. Honneth cites Pierre Bourdieu's 1993 *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* as an attempt to include those experiences not captured by political theory. *The Weight of the World*, a collection of close observations of the daily lives of a group of people diverse in race, profession, neighborhood, and education, attempts to describe a certain commonality of daily suffering under the grind of capitalism.³² Unlike Nussbaum's synecdochic examples (in which whole groups of people are represented by fictive characters), Bourdieu's volume seeks to encompass the daily life of real people. The textual innovation of *The Weight of the World* serves as a surrogate, indicating a lack in daily interaction between the people who might read Bourdieu's book and the people it presents. Instead of literary innovation, the theatricality of Poverty Simulation deals with this lack by placing participants in shared time and space while imposing a careful and specific structure. The game attempts to level certain communicative inequalities of everyday life.

In the dynamic of mutual vulnerability of a Poverty Simulation, communication structurally and habitually hindered in normal, daily contexts is shared, and this affects the self-conceptions of individual participants, organizations, and (as I further describe later on) at times even towns and government institutions. Role reversals and the dialogue they lead to after the game provide an alternative framework for empathy, information, and authority. The destabilization of hierarchical identity categories on the small scale of this discrete theatrical event highlights the institutional forces that limit the trajectories of these insights. People who manage the dispensation of charity and guide the poor are challenged, critiqued, and taught by those who have been in position of needing and receiving instruction and direction. The dynamic

³² Honneth, 118-19. Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Accardo, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, translated by Priscilla Parkhurst (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

of vulnerability in the theatre of Poverty Simulation and the post-performance dialogue differs from that of daily life. In the relationship between social worker and client, or company president and employee, hierarchies of job position, class, and the habits of association forestall certain kinds of communication. The game and the post-performance discussion support a kind of recognition and analysis that social norms prohibit outside the theatre situation. Part of the project of the whole event is to disorder the status quo of authority and vulnerability, as the rules of the theatre game oppose social and professional norms. As tragedy reveals the limits to democratic judgment that arise from the failure to recognize the people and perspectives that challenge dominant norms, the rules and criteria of Poverty Simulation frame a kind of tragic practice. This sets Poverty Simulation apart from a liberal cultural model of democratic practice, which is based on a stable locus of authority from which merciful judgment is dispensed to others who are represented fictionally, and kept at a distance. Empathy for a generalized other—or through a fictive, synecdochic other—does not often offer this level of particular and pragmatic confrontation with one's assumptions of oneself in relationship to people one sees every day.

Misrecognitions, blind spots, and moral and aesthetic stereotyping

In a Poverty Simulation participants experience a level of particular and pragmatic confrontation with their sense of themselves as they recognize the habitual mistaken assumptions they've made in relation to people they see every day. In this theatrical event and its outcomes, empathy and information cannot be separated, and the insights surprise social workers, teachers, and others who consider themselves already deeply familiar with their clients and students. Several people who are social service workers when they participate in the game were formerly clients of a CAA. Despite their background, several people said that during the performance they

realized that they had forgotten what it is like to live in poverty, and they were moved by the intensity of experiences they recalled during the game. One social worker in Missouri approached the “pawn shop” table during the game and was offended when one of the people playing a cashier casually asked about her “baby daddy.” In that moment, she remembered the shame she was consistently made to feel when she herself was a struggling single parent and CAA client.³³ Another woman said that after being absorbed in trying to get her mind around her character’s situation and strategize during the game, she realized why her father had been so distracted and remote during her childhood: he was always focused on how to survive. Teachers who have gone through the game have said they came away with a different perspective on some children who act up in class—one said she now saw “attention-seeking behavior” as “survival behavior.”³⁴ Rather than expressing a need for more attention than others, the children exhibit signs of stress. In a 2007 video of a post-performance discussion in Pittsburgh, a woman who works for a non-profit management company confesses that she had seen clients with their children in Walmart after eleven at night, “and the children are crying and I’m thinking very judgmentally why don’t they take these kids home and put them to bed? Now I know ... why their kids are with them at Walmart at eleven o’clock at night.”³⁵ During the game, she’d recognized more of the demands of surviving in poverty, and she understood that her own best efforts might lead her to make decisions similar to the people she judged. Not only did she grasp the blind spot in her prior understanding of the poor people with whom she interacts daily, she also modified her self-conception as an empathetic person who made better choices than the people she helped. Relative to her new perception of poor people’s daily burdens, she might see

³³ This observation was made by a social worker who identified herself as a former social services client during the post-performance discussion in St. Louis on May 27, 2009.

³⁴ A teacher made this observation during the post-performance discussion in St. Louis on May 27, 2009.

³⁵ Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners, “Poverty Simulation,” YouTube, January 13, 2007. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fMA6qAQnzU> (accessed April 10, 2010).

her ease as less a part of her own good decision-making and diligence, as she revised her sense of herself from empathetic to unaware and judgmental.

In post-performance discussion, the issue of standards of appearance and comportment and their connection to class is frequently raised. Several poor people stated that they were judged (as a potential employee as well as a social services client) based upon standards that they are unequally situated to meet. In Community Action materials, poverty is defined as a constant state of struggle and insecurity for basic needs³⁶; it could also be seen as the struggle of some basic needs against others. While playing the game, I had strategized with my pretend family on how to get through the week, and I was surprised at how exasperated I was when a stage manager handed me a “luck-of-the-draw” card in the form of a letter from my “daughter’s” school, asking for money for supplies and a field trip. “Luck-of-the-draw” cards, which include options such as an injury, unforeseen home or car repairs, a sick parent or child, or a robbery, represent “fate” as facilitator Heather Lockard put it. A “luck-of-the-draw” card can sink even the canniest player. The small headway we’d made through planning and diligence was immediately taken away. Lockard said several teachers who acted in the game realized they had mischaracterized some of their students’ parents as inattentive, when actually they were financially unable to meet these sorts of requests. In a post-performance dialogue in Missouri, a woman responded to a comment about the harms of stereotyping: she spoke of how hard she had been working to find a job, and said that she knew her looks prevented people from hiring her for jobs for which she knew she was qualified. “People think because I don’t have teeth that I’m not detail-oriented,” she said. The twenty-six families in the game, all of which were based on real

³⁶ Missouri Association for Community Action, “The Five Pillars of Poverty,” flier distributed at the facilitator training in St. Louis, Missouri, May 28, 2009.

people, must make damaging sacrifices. Being toothless could be as much an outcome of canny choices and dedicated work.

What Raymond Williams describes as society's "order" of cultural representation posits a certain lifestyle as neutral, rather than as predicated upon economic status.³⁷ Pierre Bourdieu argues that the "dominant class imposes needs" on the care of the body and the significance of its appearance.³⁸ In an interview with two women who participated in the St. Louis Poverty Simulation, I was told that wealthier co-workers had asked them why they made the lifestyle choices they did: "They say, 'Why do you eat those chips?' or, 'Why did you buy those clothes?'"³⁹ The people who ask such a question betray a presumption about the social right to make an inquiry and judgment about a matter of "taste," a right that would not apply equally to both parties. A question of "why" about a matter of taste, made to a fellow middle-class person, would question the subject's choices and sense of herself, her reasons for liking this shirt or that sandwich. When a more affluent person asked a client of social services about her clothes and snacks, she interpreted the question as "why are you doing that to yourself?" or "why do you make these choices which cause you not to flourish?" Clothes that are not viewed as practical, items that are more fun and flash, cigarettes and "junk" food are not interpreted as choices towards personal growth and opportunity, such as plain, professional clothes and healthful diet. Bourdieu elucidates how taste, a product of class status, partly masquerades as a personal choice. Food choices indicate class status, as Bourdieu states that "statistical analysis does indeed show that oppositions similar in structure to cultural practices also appear in eating habits."⁴⁰ A denial of social hierarchy imposes a misconception of all areas of self-care as determined by equal

³⁷ Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 57 and 97.

³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 6 and 153-54.

³⁹ Personal interview, Saint Louis Missouri, May 28, 2010.

⁴⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 154.

choice. This allows the mistaken perception of cause: one is poor because one makes these choices, and making other choices is a means towards changing class. Distance and detachment perpetuate this failure to recognize cause, and reflect a middle-class or relatively privileged identity.

Poverty Simulation posits an alternative communicative structure that removes the veil of middle-class universalism, and the assumption that we are more the same than we are. Again, as Young and Minow argue, liberalism posits middle-class experience as an assumed universal; thus, I add, it obscures structural difference and replaces it with character or moral difference. Perhaps a defining cultural norm for those in the middle class is the paradox of relative affluence combined with the sense that one is just getting by. Lauren Berlant states that the lack of a correlation between work and living wages, as well as between work and opportunities to flourish, perpetuates a view of poverty not as a political or structural issue, but as “a problem of will and ingenuity.”⁴¹ The vagueness of the term “middle class” allows it to encompass a wide range of circumstances, and Poverty Simulation reveals the experiential differences in what common terminology occludes. Another woman, a social worker who grew up in poverty, said the game instigated a vivid recollection of feeling abandoned by her father as a child. During the performance she said she caught herself completely absorbed in solving what felt like a series of equally urgent problems that needed her attention immediately and completely—the electricity is about to be turned off, the car needs repair or you’ll miss work, etc.—and recognized the economic demands that dictated her father’s absence. The social worker arrived at a different understanding of her father. She said other social workers, who themselves had once been poor,

⁴¹ Lauren Berlant, “Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding)” to *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of and Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

told her they had realized how, after acting in the game, they had misjudged their clients.⁴² Minow's argument—that dominant culture appears neutral and natural—elucidates how one might misread poor people's choices and behaviors as part of their character, rather than attributing those choices to structural factors over which they have little or no control. Our social norms of communication, between social worker and client but also among people of different social and economic status, block the sorts of exchanges that could dispel these kinds of misperceptions. The social workers who had themselves been poor were in some cases prevented from recognizing experiences they shared with their clients because of the communicative boundaries of this specific, hierarchical relationship, and also because of more general social communicative norms.

Tragic friendship as responsibility and deliberative equality

Poverty Simulation places the recognition of this structural difference into a social context, where the social norms of equality prevail over inequality and pity. Unlike pity, which both reflects and reifies unequal power relations, friendship's reciprocity crosses differences in social status and power hierarchies: friendship is predicated on equality. As part of the goal of Poverty Simulation is to have an equalizing effect on the participants in the post-performance discussion, it reflects what is lacking in social and political life. The script, rules, and directions stage a mode of communication, responsibility, mutual respect, and vulnerability along the norms of friendship, but without the criteria of shared background, economic status, and education that so commonly bracket contemporary friendships. I use the term friendship here to connote communicative expectations to acknowledge and respond, an expectation that is

⁴² This observation was made by a participant during the post-performance discussion in St. Louis, May 27, 2008.

typically not present in the everyday context outside this theatrical situation with people whose economic status is different than ours.

David Konstan traces the roles of friendship in tragedy as a reflection of democratic practice. Hannah Arendt uses Aristotle's concept of political friendship in her description of the shared stage of politics, defining it as respect and reliance on others who reflect and critique us as we reveal ourselves in speech and deeds.⁴³ As such, friendship in tragedy is portrayed as relationship that supports democracy. Konstan cites Horst Hutter's characterization of Greek politics as friendship: "The entire free citizenry of the polis was held to be related in the manner of a friendship. Politics came thus to be seen as the means for the exercise of friendship."⁴⁴

In tragedies, reciprocal and challenging friendships may have portrayed interactions that were lacking outside the theatre, as Poverty Simulation supports interactions we do not often have in daily life. The performative character of Arendt's political action and speech is animated by a structure of relations distinctly alternative to the status quo outside her theatrical, political realm.⁴⁵ Classical anthropologists Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet point out that theatre did not mirror Greek life as it was so much as it portrayed problems and schisms that were not apparent in daily life, much as Poverty Simulation reveals the communication we lack outside the realm of the game.

As the anti-poverty workers at CAA and other organizations define poverty partly as the constant and all-consuming demand of effort merely to survive, this precipitates social

⁴³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 243.

⁴⁴ David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 61. Konstan quotes from H. Hutter's *Politics as Friendship: The Origins of Classical Notions of Politics in the Theory and Practice of Friendship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1978), 25.

⁴⁵ See Shin Chiba on Arendt's political friendship as an "enlarged form of neighborly love," in "Arendt on Love and the Political: Love, Friendship and Citizenship," *The Review of Politics* 57, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 502.

isolation.⁴⁶ “It’s not just money, it’s a poverty of relationships,” a social worker in Missouri told me. Poor people are likely to lack the same quality and density of a network of expectations, trust, support, and access to opportunities that wealthier people have.⁴⁷ After both Poverty Simulations in Savannah and Missouri, many participants remarked that they felt isolated during the game. One young woman, who played the part of an old woman in the game, said she realized that towards the middle of the month the amount of money she had left would be too limiting to allow her to put gas in her car or take a bus. Unless family or friends lived nearby, or visited her, she would be alone for the rest of the month.⁴⁸ Another social worker who was also former a client of Missouri Community Action said that her case worker was the first person she met who “was doing things differently,”⁴⁹ and so being a social worker was the “first option” she was exposed to for having a “self-sufficient life.”⁵⁰

Following Konstan and Berlant, the role of pity tells us much about the hierarchies of relationships and attachments that form affiliations. Friendship, with its mores of responsiveness, reciprocity, and co-presence, contrasts with pity, distance, and unidirectional judgment. Tragic theorist Barry Strauss’s assertion that the capacity to pity demonstrates a privileged and dominant position over others echoes Berlant’s argument on the role of pity in group identity.⁵¹ Pity denotes a detached relationship: the prefix *sun*, meaning to struggle or suffer with, is never

⁴⁶ Both facilitators and poor people spoke of this aspect of poverty, and it is also appears in literature for the anti-poverty organization “Circles of Support” organization. See the Kootaska Community Action Partnership website, “Circles of Support.” <http://www.kootasca.org/circles.html> (accessed November 20, 2008).

⁴⁷ See Bruce H. Rankin and James M. Quane, “Neighborhood Poverty and the Social Isolation of Inner-City African American Families,” *Social Forces* 79, no. 1 (September 2000): 139-64.

⁴⁸ This observation was made by a participant during post-performance discussion in Savannah, February 10, 2010.

⁴⁹ This statement was made by a social worker and former client of social services, during introductions at the facilitator training in St. Louis, May 27, 2009.

⁵⁰ The argument that contemporary U.S. culture is devoid of trust and reciprocity, made most famously in *Bowling Alone*, posits that voluntary associations were the basis of these civic bonds; voluntary associations require a certain amount of freedom from the demands of survival. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Renewal of American Community* (New York: Touchstone, 2000).

⁵¹ Barry S. Strauss, “Athenian Political Thought,” *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*, J. Peter Euben, John Wallach, and Josiah Ober, eds., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 256.

combined with *eleein* (to pity).⁵² A deliberative system that privileges liberal culture and procedures places those with a familiarity and mastery of this form of discourse in the position of detached judge: qualified to dispense pity or condemnation. The categories that determine the kinds of expression considered appropriate for ethical judgment in liberal proceduralism support a hierarchy of political influence and authority. Young states that many activists reject deliberation because it proceeds under these prevailing power hierarchies, in which their voices are thwarted by structural design.⁵³

As the structure of Poverty Simulation distributes authority according to situated knowledge, it highlights the contingency of any method of judgment and moral order, situating and revealing as contingent a supposedly universal ethic. Simulation facilitators said that regardless of what kind of group plays the game—Hallmark executives, prison managers and guards, or social workers—the dramaturgy of the game follows a typical arc. The mood the first week is playful and buoyant as well as task-based: it has the tone of a game. The second week it gets to be “a little bit more of a grind.” The third week, when schools close for a week, people are given furloughs, and evictions begin, “it gets quite frenzied,” and people begin to commit crimes.⁵⁴ After the event, social workers in Savannah said that this is when they see clients who are trying to balance keeping or finding a job with forestalling eviction (the factor that begins in week three of the simulation) begin to fall apart. At this point in clients’ struggle, they see “placement”— children taken out of the home and put in foster care due to neglect or abuse.⁵⁵

The contingency of moral choices is a standard element in the fictional works that Nussbaum

⁵² David Konstan, *Pity Transformed* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2001), 51.

⁵³ Iris Marion Young. “Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy” in *Political Theory* 29, no. 5 (October, 2001): 670-90.

⁵⁴ Brenda Stegeman, a producer of the Poverty Simulation in St. Louis, and Suzanne Donovan, who produced the event in Savannah, described the arc of the game in a very similar way. Suzanne Donovan, Step-Up Savannah, personal interview, February 10, 2010. Email correspondence with Suzanne Donovan, April 27, 2010.

⁵⁵ This observation comes from a participant in the Savannah Poverty Simulation, February 10, 2010.

cites—e.g., Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* in *Democratic Citizenship*—while reifying the authority to determine justice. Yet the practice of reading also permits the perception of a view from nowhere upon which an overarching moral code depends. In Poverty Simulation’s tragic practice, morality is staged as contingent, and democratic communication is modeled as open to various situated perspectives as frameworks for judging. In Laurence Thomas’s concept of “moral deference” as an approach to democratic deliberation, one attempts to understand and evaluate another person’s claims by situating them in the context of that person’s experience and beliefs.⁵⁶ Tragic dramaturgy, according to tragic theorist René Girard’s interpretation of *Oedipus*, portrays the destructive impasse of Oedipus’s refusal to consider Creon’s argument from any perspective but his own. If the destruction in these plays serves as a warning against myopic judgment, their dramaturgy may also implicitly endorse an inclusive form of political communication, similar to the arguments for plural democratic engagement against liberal democratic culture’s blinkered viewpoint, made by Young and others.⁵⁷

In Poverty Simulation, the actor participants perceive the characters they play in terms of their role in a whole event. In turn, they reflect upon themselves in the same terms. John Jones’s concept of “characterful” action, a phrase he coined as an alternative to psychological realism as a means of interpreting tragedy, revisits Aristotle’s dictum on tragedy as “an imitation not of human beings but of action and life.”⁵⁸ Like classical anthropologists Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, Jones states that the tragic protagonist is the city, not any one individual.⁵⁹ He argues that tragedy posits a systemic point of view. This explains, he claims, why Aristotle sees the

⁵⁶ Laurence Thomas, “Moral Deference,” in *African American Perspectives and Philosophical Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 233-50.

⁵⁷ See Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997), 168.

⁵⁸ John Jones, “Character and Action,” in *Tragedy: Developments in Criticism*, R. P. Draper, ed. (Houndmills: Macmillan Education Limited, 1980), 60.

⁵⁹ Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 35.

“fuller psychology” of post-Euripidean drama as ethically deficient.⁶⁰ Tragedy as democratic practice frames an orientation towards self and others as parts of an action or story, each role containing a fragmentary awareness. Amélie Rorty interprets tragedy as a model of the dynamic between civic and the psychological spheres, in which catharsis is the recognition and realignment of the connection between oneself and others, and the “civic pleasure in realizing we form a patterned, structured whole.”⁶¹

Theorists who confront deliberative and participatory democracy with pluralism prescribe approaches to plural communication and judgment analogous to the tragic theory of Jones, Halliwell, and other mid-nineteenth-century theorists. For example, feminist scholar Susan Bickford connects Gloria Anzaldúa’s description of the self’s multiple roles to Hannah Arendt’s concept of performative politics, in which identity is contingent and the subject is open to interpretation from the multiple perspectives of an audience.⁶² Arendtian democratic theorist Lisa Disch describes a politically contingent approach to identity in which the subject is not interpreted according to what one does or who one is, but how one functions within a larger, shared context.⁶³ Everyone is part of the system, everyone’s perception is partial, and everyone is vulnerable to the confrontation that exposure to another partial perspective will bring. William Connolly describes his model of “an ethos of engagement” in contrast to liberal proceduralism, in which mutual vulnerability is pivotal to democratic practice, because “to be ethical is to put

⁶⁰ Jones, 59.

⁶¹ Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, “The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Princeton: Princeton University Books, 1992), 15 and 18.

⁶² Susan Bickford, “In the Presence of Others: Arendt and Anzaldúa on the Paradox of Public Appearance,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. Bonnie Honig (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 313-36.

⁶³ Lisa Disch, “On Friendship in Dark Times,” in *Feminist Interpretations*, 288.

identity at risk.”⁶⁴ Mutual vulnerability on the shared stage of plural interpretation requires courage; as authority is contingent and fluid, one is essentially open to critique from all sides. Tragedy portrays the instability and even chaotic emotions this can entail, when previously tampered voices are heard. Edith Hall points out that women and slaves appeared on stage as characters in tragic plays, as the theatrical context granted a hearing for voices silenced in real social contexts,⁶⁵ and this hearing causes anguish. In response to their recognition of exclusions and inequalities, more privileged participants in Poverty Simulation often do express anguish, frustration, regret, sadness and guilt along with statements such as “the system is the problem, and I’m part of the problem.”⁶⁶

Along with fostering reflection from many perspectives on a personal level, Poverty Simulation has also enabled reflection on a systemic, pragmatic scale. When Poverty Simulation in Missouri has brought together members of governmental, charity, neighborhood, and business organizations, knowledge shared across these areas has revealed important blind spots. One politician realized that she had mischaracterized the economic status of her own district. Brenda Stegeman, the Project and Event Manager at MACA, invited the politician to attend a Poverty Simulation hosted in partnership with the local electric company. The purpose of the event was to gather people together around the issue of lower-rate benefits for heat and electricity for those in need. The politician responded that it would not be relevant to her because “none of those people” who need assistance with electrical bills lived in her district.⁶⁷ Stegeman worked with many people in this politician’s district who qualified for reduced utility payments, and several

⁶⁴ See William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991); and *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), xix.

⁶⁵ Edith Hall, “The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, P.E. Easterling, ed. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), 118.

⁶⁶ Lockard, May 27, 2009.

⁶⁷ Email, Brenda Stegeman, May 20, 2010.

these people attended the event. This anecdote became a motif in introductions to Poverty Simulation and in the press.

Fostering equal discussion across different institutions and groups of people has also staged a city's recognition of the disparity between how anti-poverty organizations have assumed they were caring for their citizens, and what was actually accomplished. Those for whom the poor were already visible realized that their clients' failure to use the opportunities presented by social workers and charities was not because of a lack of initiative, or work ethic. After players strategize about how to get through one of the fifteen-minute model weeks, they often find their plans foiled by a long wait in line for a charity that will give them a suit to wear to a job interview, or a social service provider that will award them lower-cost electricity or heat. Or they will, as may many working poor without childcare, be forced to choose whether to leave a child at home alone, take a child with them, or skip a task such as buying school supplies that they did not have time or means to do earlier in the evening. For people without cars, transportation to the benefits that social services provide can be a major impediment. This kind of understanding, which Poverty Simulation is designed to elicit, confronts unexamined preconceptions about "the poor."

Misperceptions about the values and efforts of poor people often focus on family behavior, and these local insights might reflect a larger, national phenomenon. A 2006 *New York Times* article reported that victims of Katrina remained estranged from their families months after the hurricane. While the article mentioned lack of access to phones and computers as a possible cause, this cause appeared in the midst of depictions of the victims as criminal and disorganized. A call-center operator was quoted characterizing the people who sought help

finding lost friends and family: “Some just out of jail, some it’s baby-mama-drama.”⁶⁸

Assumptions about a poor people’s lack of concern for their families mask the reality that acting on this concern can be hampered by economic factors.

Conclusion:

Though Poverty Simulation unsettles the static authority and identity of more economically secure participants, it does not escape the problem of unequal opportunity to represent one’s self. The poor, while they take on the roles of social service providers and managers, are invited to the event to represent themselves as “poor” in the game and the discussion. As actors, they bring their original and active contributions to different roles, but always from the position and label of “a poor person” from which their interpretation takes its authority. Again, “the poor” as a character highlights a problem in the order of political and cultural self-representation. The poor, following MACA’s definition of poverty as a relentless dominance of necessity,⁶⁹ are those without the resources of freedom from necessity, without sufficient access to options for creative, agentic self-conception and representation. While Honneth poses the challenge of representing the disenfranchised to political theorists’ special insight and eloquence, this reproduces an arrangement of representational privilege.⁷⁰ The identity of those-who-cannot-determine-their-own-identity is not access to representation at all.⁷¹ Poverty Simulation does not solve this problem of representation, or provide this opportunity, but it stages the lack. While Nancy Fraser counters Honneth’s argument by advocating a “parity

⁶⁸ Shaila Dewan, “Storm’s Missing, Lives Lost but Not Disconnected,” *The New York Times*, March 1, 2006. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B06E6DD1731F932A35750C0A9609C8B63>. Accessed February 20, 2011.

⁶⁹ Missouri Association for Communicative Action, “Five Pillars,” pamphlet, May 27, 2009.

⁷⁰ Honneth, *Recognition or Redistribution*, 128.

⁷¹ See Hannah Arendt on the state of refugees, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1968), 301. See also Giorgio Agamben on “bare life” and the polis in Ancient Greece, in which he furthers Arendt’s concept of political identity’s reliance on and production of disenfranchised outsiders. *Home Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

of participation,” she speaks for participation within the sphere of deliberation, not accounting for the inequality of opportunity to develop goals, values, and ideals.⁷² This requires a space of freedom from necessity, from what one Poverty Simulation actor described as “the true definition of the rat race” and “the tyranny of now.”⁷³ Without this, “the poor” or those suffering “social discontent” remain beyond the boundaries of inclusive democratic participation: the unrepresented, constitutive outside of liberal democracy.⁷⁴

Because their free time and free choice are limited, poor people’s ability to develop their own goals and values are thwarted. Asked to describe herself, a former CAA client in Missouri, who now works as a social worker for the agency, spoke about going fishing with her sister, as often as she can, in the lakes she’s visited since she was a child. She mentioned that the lakes have fewer fish now, due to the pollution. Another woman, also formerly a client of CAA and now a social worker, talked to me in the hallway after an event about how much she wanted to get Quick Cash out of her neighborhood. A mother and daughter spoke during a talkback about the lack of social life in their neighborhood and the daughter’s high school. Rather than engaging with the issue of poverty, they spoke of these interests that define them, interests that poverty had prevented them from exploring. The lack that Poverty Simulation reveals is inequality of access to forming and expressing one’s own ethical perspective. The dominance of liberal democracy as a cultural and political framework, and the failure to connect access to self-determination to economic status obscure this inequality, and obscure the barriers to meaningful participation that exclude many citizens.

⁷² Fraser, *Recognition or Redistribution*, 222-23.

⁷³ A man who works in the “Circles of Support” program, part of the Minnesota Community Action Association, made this statement during a personal interview at the Poverty Simulation in Missouri: May 27, 2009.

⁷⁴ Lisa Disch furthers Arendt’s argument that political participation requires freedom from necessity with a reference to *Travels with Lizbeth*, an autobiography of a homeless man. Disch cites the author’s experience of appearing in public as an identity defined by basic needs, and the sense of exposure and depersonalization this produced. See Lisa Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 62. See also Lars Eighner, *Travels with Lizbeth: Three Years on the Road and on the Streets* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993).

Another limitation of Poverty Simulation is a failure to link more intimate discussions at a local level with larger national, systemic issues. At the Poverty Simulation in Missouri, someone brought up the coming presidential election during a discussion; a director said, “Oooh....politics. Scary. We try to stay away from that,” and turned the discussion towards the next topic. One reason why “politics” may not seem appropriate in this situation is that the discussion engages values on a collective and individual scale that are not explored by political rhetoric. Although Poverty Simulation facilitators show great care in guiding inclusive reflection about inequality, drawing out sincere discussions that touch upon issues such as the right to the pursuit of happiness, they do not view this communication as political. The “public philosophy” of liberal democracy and the tacit bracketing of religion from political dialogue discourages the searching exploration of both values and pragmatic, systemic effects. Michael Sandel and William Connolly have both argued that excluding religion from governmental debate has actually posited liberal democracy as the assumed, and largely undetectable, ethical foundation.⁷⁵ I would add that liberal democracy also brackets other forms of expression, besides that of religion, from public debate. In Poverty Simulation’s model of tragic practice, individuals speak from partial, situated perspectives, revealing values that are in turn affected by their fellow participants’ perspectives, a practice of civic refinement of values and judgment. Tragic practice reveals the need for a plurality of authority from which values arise; it is not predicated on one ethical foundation or definition of the good life.

Heather Lockard, the former social worker who now promotes and directs Poverty Simulation events, seems to have the biggest goals for the event: “My vision of the future: I envision a state where all families and communities thrive. Jobs, housing, childcare, livable

⁷⁵ Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1996).

wage, health care, educational opportunities. Not just low-income families but all.”⁷⁶ At the end of a 2009 event in Missouri, social workers, transportation department workers, and poor people concluded that they might need mobile units, so that poor people can access services that are far away. Social service offices in Missouri began to keep their offices open after 5 o’clock, having learned that many people who need their help work regular hours. It came to light that people who stop receiving funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) because they find employment often remain in poverty, preventing them from fulfilling basic needs and putting their ability to keep their jobs in jeopardy. Through Poverty Simulation, dialogue across departments and professional hierarchies led to a policy change, and now people are allowed to keep some TANF benefits after they find a job.⁷⁷ People working at the “power and light” company in Missouri who attended a Poverty Simulation say they are more respectful and compassionate when dealing with clients who are struggling with payments. Yet one participant said there is a limit to these employees’ compassion, as they are struggling themselves: “the people who deliver these services use these services.”⁷⁸ A MACA director said in May 2010 that she was looking forward to a national anti-poverty summit, where their organization would “engage partner organizations, AARP, Catholic charities, United Way, FEMA” all of which were scheduled to attend the summit.⁷⁹ However, the issue of transportation never came up at the summit, and she told me that she didn’t know why. Poverty Simulation’s more intimate communication about pragmatic issues and values lacks a connection to a larger, political sphere of communication.

⁷⁶ Lockard, May 27, 2009.

⁷⁷ Brenda Stegeman, email, May 20, 2010.

⁷⁸ A man who works at an electric company made this observation during the post-performance discussion in Savannah, February 19, 2010.

⁷⁹ Brenda Stegeman, email, May 20, 2010.

I opened this dissertation by referring to a Lexis Nexus search on September 21, 2011 for U.S. newspapers, radio, and wires, using the term ‘tragedy’ in the headline for the last year netted over 3,000 hits, most of which seemed to refer to accidents, violent deaths by a deranged perpetrator, and natural disasters. At this larger scale of national communication the use of the term ‘tragedy’ in news media indicates that social meaning exists where witnesses are least capable of responding, and hold themselves the least ethically responsible. The emotional responses these events and their media representations trigger generally do not go on to animate discourse around elections or public policy. Politicians occasionally use an anecdote that features a person who suffers (either real or hypothetical) to illustrate their argument, but in these instances the person does not speak for themselves.⁸⁰ Poverty Simulation and the practice of connecting emotional responses to issues of collective social responsibility, and to an awareness of one’s own complicity in the suffering of others, remains small scale and marginal.

⁸⁰ For example, in his 2009 speech to Congress on the health care bill, President Obama gave two examples of people who had not received attention for pressing medical issues because they had been denied health care. See “Obama’s Health Care Speech to Congress,” released from the White House and published in the *New York Times*, September 9, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/10/us/politics/10obama.text.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed October 29, 2011).

Conclusion:

Seeking solutions in historic and geographic comparison

In the last three chapters, I have focused my attention on the failures of the performances I have studied, and described the social and structural forces that have thwarted their impact on the terms of national debate. My analysis has so far ended with a description of the potential of these performances, and an explanation for their limited reach. In this conclusion, I would like to venture into the realm of options and alternative models that could facilitate full and acknowledged participation in the public sphere. What shifts would be required so that the messages and perspectives developed in *Poverty Simulations*, *Operation First Casualty*, and the storytelling performances of Rubén Martínez and Aaron Hughes could be heard and responded to, and could be granted authority in a truly public space of national attention? Noting the lack of influence in public discourse, and the lack of authority, granted to the groups I study begs the question of why certain groups have succeeded recently, and in the past. In reviewing scholarship on media and democracy, activism, and activist performance in the U.S. in a slightly earlier period than I have focused on in this dissertation, I aim to begin to sketch directions for possible solutions, as well as to place the national historic moment I study within a historically and geographically comparative context. Scholars have analyzed theatre and performance in Argentina during the shift from dictatorship to democracy, describing the role of plays and demonstrations in foregrounding dominant terms and ideologies as well as expressing critique and opposition. Study of the impact the activist theatre and performance in Latin American countries under dictatorship by scholars Leonardo Avritzer and Jean Graham-Jones inspired the research that began this dissertation, as I sought similar examples in the contemporary United

States.¹ These and other works on activism and culture in Latin America suggested to me a way out of the impasse in deliberative democratic theory, and a bridge between theory and practice. Aspects of this scholarship influenced my framing of activist performance in the contemporary U.S. as examples of the appearance of alternative perspectives to dominant categories, as well as the role of activist performance as the creation of political identity.

Jeffery C. Alexander, in *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics and Ritual*, theorizes the efficacy of democratic performance in terms of the success or failure of a performance to create a socially compelling moral argument that fuses previously disparate values, interests, and audiences.² Alexander's argument neglects significant institutional and professional advantages, which I touch upon in chapters two and three. In looking for performances and other activist efforts that have had relatively more success than the groups I have studied, I find that these successes reveal certain prevailing power hierarchies that manage contemporary discourse, concentrating agency and influence in media and government professions.

Along with asking how the elite publics and their performances studied in this dissertation might be supported, I also look to a few performances by people who are not journalists, pundits, or filmmakers, which nevertheless succeeded in capturing national attention. For example, in contrast to Iraq Veterans Against the War's *Operation First Casualty*'s relatively limited impact, a video of U.S. soldiers in the 32nd Airborne in Afghanistan mimicking the dance moves of Beyoncé and Lady Gaga in Lady Gaga's "Telephone" video "went viral" in

¹ Leonardo Avritzer, *Democracy and Public Space in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Jean Graham-Jones, *Exorcising History: Argentine Theatre Under Dictatorship* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000).

² Jeffrey C. Alexander, "From the Depths of Despair: Performance, Counterperformance, and September 11th," in *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*. Edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 93-95.

spring of 2010. In May, NPR reported that more than three million people had watched the video on YouTube.³ Part of the draw of this video, it could be argued, was an element of surprise. The playful, even goofy, quality of the performance stands apart from way soldiers are commonly represented. Also, and perhaps more importantly, YouTube videos that circulate widely often have an amateur, idiosyncratic, mundane, accidental, and mundane quality: cats walk on treadmills, a little boy talks drowsily under the influence of anesthetic.⁴ While videos of *Operation First Casualty* were viewed on YouTube, they did not go viral, I would suggest, because they did not function according to audience expectation for this medium—such as whimsy and idiosyncrasy, and more importantly, amateurism. IVAW performances work on different terms, demanding the sort of attention granted to journalistic reports, and the sort of authority not granted to amateur videos.

In contrast to the performances I study in the last three chapters, in the 1980s ACT UP harnessed professional journalistic and media expertise to gain a voice in national discourse around AIDS, funding for treatment, safe sex, and anti-homosexual discrimination. One significant difference between ACT UP and the groups portrayed in this dissertation is that rather than aim to influence public understanding of an issue already long present on the national stage—such as immigration, poverty, and war—ACT UP in many ways broke the AIDS story. Its members took on the dual roles of activists and journalists, gathering and disseminating information faster and at a higher level of expertise than most mainstream journalists. Because ACT UP counted artists and advertising or magazine professionals among its members, it not

³ See “U.S. Troops Spoof Lady Gaga Video,” on Music News, NPR, May 5, 2010. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126534225> (accessed December 30, 2011). For the original video, see “Lady Gaga ft. Beyoncé,” YouTube.com, March 15, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVBSypHzF3U> (accessed December 30, 2011).

⁴ See Rebecca Greenfield, “The Viral Video Still Rules YouTube’s Most Viewed of 2011,” *The Atlantic Wire*, December 20, 2011. <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/technology/2011/12/viral-video-still-rules-youtubes-most-viewed-2011/46443/> (accessed January 4, 2012).

only remained in control of much relevant and, at the time, new information, but also was able to take the lead in its delivery, hence controlling the message even more.⁵ Living in New York during the late 1980s and early 1990s my college friends and I came to know of AIDS first by the many “Silence=Death” stickers that peppered the city.⁶ In short, members of ACT UP were an elite public, along the lines I have outlined here, but one with a very savvy press department. The professional canniness of ACT UP enabled the group to capture media attention, and in this way they shared some of the successful techniques of the Civil Rights movement. Doug McAdam, in “Movement Strategy and Dramaturgic Framing in Democratic States: The Case of the Civil Rights Movement,” points out that movements utilize media because they lack more direct political influence: “The simple fact is that most movements lack the conventional political resources possessed by their opponents and thus must seek to offset their power disparity by appeals to other parties.”⁷ McAdam states that Martin Luther King and his collaborators successfully manipulated the events for maximum media coverage and audience impact, targeting Birmingham and Selma, Alabama, because the police in those towns were likely to respond more violently and vociferously, and provide the kind of footage would make the news. In 1991, this sense of exasperation at the denial of media attention was expressed when the group broke Dan Rather’s evening monologue on the “CBS Evening News,” one week into

⁵ See Benjamin Shepard, “Introductory notes on the trail from ACT UP to the WTO,” 1-10, and “From Stonewall to Diallo: Benjamin Shepard interviews Sarah Schulman,” 11-20, and L.A. Kauffman, “A short history of radical renewal,” 35-40 in *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*, edited by Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk (London: Verso, 2002).

⁶ Description of outreach materials, including stickers, wheatpaste posters, and other materials are described in a the website for the exhibition “ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987-1993.” Presented by The Carpenter Center and Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, October 15-December 23, 2009. The website also features oral histories from ACT UP participants. <http://www.ves.fas.harvard.edu/ACTUP.html> (accessed January 11, 2012).

⁷ Doug McAdam, “Movement Strategy and Dramaturgic Framing in Democratic States: The Case of the Civil Rights Movement,” in *Deliberation, Democracy and the Media*, edited by Simone Chambers and Anne Constan (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 125.

the Gulf War, with the call “Fight AIDS, not Arabs.”⁸ This act and *Operation First Casualty* share a similar goal—to take the message straight to the center of media dissemination. However, I posit that lack of professional authority thwarted IVAW’s influence in media discourse.

One veterans’ rights organization that does wield influence in political decisions and is also granted airtime on major television news channels is Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. In contrast to IVAW, IAVA is a lobbying group that works on behalf of veterans and does not critique the war itself. IAVA does not challenge the terms of discourse but rather petitions for specific needs within it.⁹ IVAW’s practical demands cannot be addressed by already existing government institutions. IVAW and other groups lack the status and access of media professionals and lobbying organizations, both because of the nature of their demands, and because of their professional status.

Eric Alterman coined the term punditocracy to describe the phenomenon of a monopolization of public discourse by people of certain professions, skills, and status.¹⁰ In 2009, an illegal immigrant and two soldiers with the skill and status of journalists have received significant media attention for expressing their own perspectives on the war in Afghanistan and Iraq and the role, and lack of rights, of immigrants. Former Marine Captain Matthew Hoh was granted a fair amount of authority and attention when his resignation letter was published in *The*

⁸ ACT UP members also broke into the studio of the PBS news show “MacNeil/Leher.” See Tom Shales, “On the Air, The Building Tensions of a Week at War; At the Networks, Protesters Disrupt; Israeli Censors Erupt,” *The Washington Post*, January 23, 1991.

⁹ In “The Vision Thing” Naomi Klein states that the media did not recognize the movement because it sought a hub that connected the spokes of various, disperse groups. “The movement is the spokes,” Klein argues, contrasting the excess of advocacy groups with “unimaginative unions who attach demands to existing structures.” In *From ACT UP to the WTO*, 273.

¹⁰ Eric Alterman, *The Sound and Fury: The Making of Washington Punditocracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

Washington Post in September 2009.¹¹ In his letter, Hoh detailed his views on the misguided nature of President Obama's Afghanistan strategy. What separates Hoh from IVAW members is his relatively high status in the military. His resignation letter, therefore, carries more authoritative weight than the several soldiers who are considered AWOL by the military while they work to establish the status of conscientious objector. Matt Mabe, a soldier mentioned in chapter two of this chapter, attended Columbia School of Journalism in between tours, and was presented as an authority on the war and war coverage when he appeared as a guest on National Public Radio's "On the Media."¹² Similarly, *Washington Post* journalist Jose Antonio Vargas published a feature-length article on his experiences after he admitted his long-secret status as an illegal immigrant in the *New York Times*.¹³ Finally, journalist Barbara Ehrenreich took on the role of a poor (or low-income worker) in order to report on the life of one in her book *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*.¹⁴

Media handling of the Occupy Wall Street Movement has indicated that Alterman's insight into the power hierarchy in public discourse still holds and influences the representation of actually existing elite publics. For while members of Occupy Wall Street have published a manifesto, papers such as the *New York Times* have typically depicted its participants as ignorant and unfocused. The large and diverse nature of the movement created what I would characterize as an indeterminacy that proved productive for journalism professionals and other pundits such

¹¹ Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Official resigns over Afghan war," *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, October 27, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/26/AR2009102603394.html> (accessed December 30, 2011).

¹² See "On the Front Lines: Transcript," On the Media, August 7, 2009. Onthemedial.org, <http://www.onthemedial.org/2009/aug/07/on-the-front-lines/transcript/> (accessed January 4, 2012).

¹³ "Pulitzer-winning journalist admits he's an illegal immigrant," MSNBC.com, June 22, 2011. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43499929/ns/us_news-life/t/pulitzer-winning-journalist-admits-hes-illegal-immigrant/#.Tv4YZyNW0SE (accessed December 30, 2011). Jose Antonio Vargas, "My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant," *The New York Times Magazine*, NYTimes.com, June 22, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/magazine/my-life-as-an-undocumented-immigrant.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed December 30, 2011).

¹⁴ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*, (New York: Henry Hold & Co., 2002).

as Nicholas Kristof and Katrina vanden Heuvel, who produced articles and a book and were interviewed as they did the work of interpreting Occupy Wall Street in the public sphere.¹⁵

As I worked on the final chapter of this dissertation, the Occupy Wall Street movement began to have the sort of effect on public discourse that Avritzer and Graham Jones ascribe to activist theatre and performance in Argentina, bringing previously neglected or under-reported aspects of the economic crisis, and a suppressed moral argument, to the fore. Avritzer describes the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, who stood in the plaza to draw attention to family members and others who had gone missing or been “disappeared,” as expressing a moral claim that had previously been repressed by an oppressive regime. Avritzer’s work on “participatory publics” could be seen as grounding Arendt’s ideas of councils and elite publics in real world contemporary examples. Public space is, for Avritzer, where identities are presented, and it “provides a political realm with actors and deliberative processes that can further democratize political practice.”¹⁶ Avritzer’s *Democracy and Public Space in Latin America* (2002) describes a pervasive assumption in participatory democracy: the need to insulate decision-making elites who do the work of deliberation from the rest of the public, and mass society’s corruption of political decisions. Neither of these, he argues, applies to Latin America, and he posits the appearance of grassroots organizations in public space as both the historical exception that disproves the rule, and as a solution to the field’s impasse in the face of mass society and

¹⁵ Nicholas D. Kristof, “Advice for the Wall Street Protesters,” *The New York Times*, October 2, 2011. <http://video.nytimes.com/video/2011/10/02/opinion/100000001084589/advice-for-the-wall-street-protesters.html?scp=1&sq=kristof%20advice%20occupy%20wall%20street&st=cse> (accessed January 5, 2012). Katrina vanden Heuvel, “The occupy movement can’t be sprayed away,” *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2011. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-occupy-movement-cant-be-sprayed-away/2011/11/21/gIQAPYallN_story.html (accessed January 5, 2012). Katrina vanden Heuvel, *The Change I Believe In: Fighting for Progress in the Age of Obama* (New York: Nation Books, 2011). See also Eric Randall, “There’s No End of ‘Unsolicited Advice’ for Occupy Wall Street,” *The Atlantic Wire*, October 26, 2011. <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/national/2011/10/theres-no-end-unsolicited-advice-occupy-wall-street/44185/> (accessed January 5, 2012).

¹⁶ Avritzer, 39.

representative government.¹⁷ Arendt described totalitarianism as a loss of space in which difference can appear, as the dictatorial state presses society into a “band” of unreflective sameness. In Graham-Jones’s work on theatre in Argentina under dictatorship, theatre is described as the space in which the restrictive and repressive “band” was objectified and made available for reflection and resistance.¹⁸

As the Madres continually occupied public space, their performance acted as a generative signifier, drawing the attention and interpretations of professionals in human rights and other civic organizations—professionals with access to and influence within a national and global public sphere. Similarly, the Tea Party Movement began with protests in public space, expressing the values and policy demands they saw as absent in contemporary U.S. governance. The Tea Party has shifted away from public protest and, like Occupy Wall Street, has become an aspect of public discourse surrounding the 2012 presidential elections.¹⁹ Doris Sommer’s introduction to *Cultural Agency in the Americas* uses the Foucauldian concept of the “hegemonic two-step” to describe the complex relationship she sees at work in many of the chapters that follow, covering a diverse array of activism in Latin America in the late twentieth century.²⁰ Both *Cultural Agency in the Americas* and *Cultures of Politics/ Politics of Cultures* feature detailed descriptions of grassroots organizations and the previously marginalized people who gain entry to the political sphere through collective action.²¹ They focus on the goals of the group, and the trajectory of the group towards marginalization, containment, absorption into hegemony, or a dialogic relationship in which the group’s interaction with state or hegemony

¹⁷ Ibid, 12-13.

¹⁸ Graham-Jones.

¹⁹ Joshua Kucera, “The Seeds of Discontent,” *U.S. News and World Report*, June 1, 2010.

²⁰ Doris Sommer, ed. *Cultural Agency in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 12.

²¹ Sonia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino and Arturo Escobar, eds., *Cultures of Politics/ Politics of Cultures* (Boulder: Westview University Press, 1998).

brings foundational changes. We might see the back-and-forth among the large-scale groups of The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, news media, and presidential elections as this “hegemonic two-step.”

Yet, the groups I study in this dissertation, small enough to share experiences and knowledge towards the formation of information, expressions, and demands that they themselves represent, without the need for further interpretation, remain marginalized. Two directions in scholarship suggest remedies for this. Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Philip Green advocate for government institutionalization of activism, and Avritzer likewise argues for government-structured support of public activism.²² Due to the fact that democratic communication is hindered by undemocratic monopolization of influence by large media corporations, Green suggests that the U.S. could amend this through state media sponsorship of non-corporate organizations.²³ In order to equip those who do not gain the access and skills of those who enter media or politics professionally, Jill Dolan argues that college should train students in advocacy and performance.²⁴ Following Dolan, this college training would enable more effective access to the new media (such as YouTube and blogs, etc.), so that rather than the task of framing and interpretation of activist messages being taken up by an elite public of media professionals, more elite publics can advocate on their own behalf. Dolan suggests that theatre departments in colleges are especially equipped and appropriate to teach these skills, as well as an inclusive, reflective approach to discussing divisive issues critical to democracy.

²² Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Ethno-Techno: Essays on Performance, Activism, and Pedagogy* (London: Routledge, 2005); Philip Green, *Primetime Politics: The Truth about Conservative Lies, Corporate Control, and Television Culture* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

²³ Green, 10 and 17.

²⁴ Jill Dolan, “Rehearsing Democracy: Advocacy, Public Intellectuals, and Civic Engagement in Theatre and Performance Studies,” *Theatre Topics* 11, no. 1 (March 2001): 1-17.

In a recent article, published in the *Journal of Public Deliberation*, scholars describe an experiment in which they moderated group discussions of divisive issues in order to alter participants' perceptions of the opposing argument, and thus help the group find common ground.²⁵ The outcome of this study is heartening, as the scholars state that their participants were able to find key common values and goals across liberal and conservative lines. In some aspects the study profiled in the journal succeeds in ways similar to the performances of Hughes and Martínez. However, the "experimental groupings" took place as part of scholarly research.²⁶ Similarly, scholars argue that public speaking courses, a feature of general requirements in U.S. undergraduate programs teach a responsible and reflective approach to democratic judgment and discourse.²⁷ A large portion of the articles in the *Journal of Public Deliberation* focus on deliberative democracy in local governmental organizations, such as community boards, and nongovernmental organizations, such as Rotary Clubs and wikis.

As I argue in chapter four, it is difficult to see the influence of the approach to democratic discourse that these local organizations foster on debates on a national scale. Because they do not teach theatre, performance, or other forms of activist representation, outreach, or advocacy, these local organizations do not work to bridge the gap between elite publics and dominant professions. The unevenness of influence between the mass distribution of terms,

²⁵ See Jacob Z. Hess and Nathan R. Todd, "From Culture War to Difficult Dialogue: Exploring Distinct Frames for Citizen Exchange About Social Problems," in *Journal of Public Deliberation* 5, no. 1 (2009), <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol5/iss1/art3> (accessed January 29, 2012).

²⁶ Walter Benjamin uses the term "experimental groupings" to describe the shifting roles and dynamics possible in the theatre portrayed in the Nature Theatre of Oklahoma in Franz Kafka's novel *Amerika*. "Frankz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 119-20.

²⁷ Martin Carcasson, Laura W. Black, and Elizabeth S. Sink, "Communication Studies and Deliberative Democracy: Current Contributions and Future Possibilities," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 6, no 1 (2010), <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol6/iss1/art8> (accessed January 29, 2012); Andre Diaz and Stephen Hiroshi Gilgrist, "Dialogue on Campus: An Overview of Promising Practices," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 6, no. 1 (2010), <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol6/iss1/art9> (accessed January 29, 2012).

characterizations, narratives, and the performances of elite publics seems unbridgeable. Yet, in tracking the articulations of identities, shared knowledge, and ethical claims and the impediments to their entry and influence in the public sphere, this dissertation serves as a tragic democratic performance on its own terms. As such, I hope to contribute not only an analytic framework linking activist theatre with mass media and national discourse, but also to have provided a model of performativity: the process of reading this dissertation may grant a sense of the fallibility and partialness of one's own perspective, as did the process of its writing.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Translated by Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazon. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Alcoff, Linda. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique* 20, no. 5 (1991): 5-32.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C., Bernard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast, eds. *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Alterman, Eric. *The Sound and Fury: The Making of Washington Punditocracy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Alvarez, Sonia, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar, eds. *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures*. Boulder: Westview University Press, 1998.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Arendt, Hannah. "Action and the Pursuit of Happiness," paper for the 1960 meeting of the American Political Science Association, page 1. Accessed on line via The Hannah Arendt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., there titled "Action in the Pursuit of Happiness" (Series: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975, n.d.).
- Between Past and Future*. New York: Viking Press, 1968.
- "The Image of Hell." *Commentary* 2 (1946): 291-95.
- The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

- On Revolution*. London: Penguin Classics, 1991.
- Reflections on Literature and Culture*, edited by Susannah Young-Ah Gottlieb. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- Aune, James Arnt. “‘Only Connect’: Between Morality and Ethics in Habermas’ Communication Theory.” *Communication Theory* 17 (2007): 340-47.
- Avritzer, Leonardo. *Democracy and Public Space in Latin America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Barber, Benjamin. *Strong Democracy: participatory politics for a new age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Barnes, Julian E., Ned Parker, and John Horn. “‘The Hurt Locker’ Sets Off Conflict.” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 2010.
- Barnett, Clive. *Culture and Democracy: Media, Space, Representation*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972.
- Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, eds. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Benhabib, Selya. *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*. Lanham: Rown & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.
- Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.
- The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne. London: LLB, 1977.
- Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Edited by Peter Demetz. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books, 2007.
- Berlant, Lauren. “Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding).” *Compassion: The*

- Culture and Politics of and Emotion*, edited by Lauren Berlant, 1-14. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Boal, Augusto. *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*. Translated by Adrian Jackson. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Bobbio, Noberto, *The Future of Democracy: a defence of the rules of the game*. Edited by Richard Bellamy, translated by Roger Griffin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- and Alain Accardo. *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Translated by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Boulanger, Ghislaine and Charles Kadushin, *The Vietnam Veteran Redefined: Fact and Fiction*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986.
- Bradley, A.C., "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, 69-98. London: Macmillan, 1965.
- Brennan, Teresa. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Brim, Orville Gilbert *Look At Me! The Fame from Childhood to Death*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009.
- Brown, Melissa T. "Gender, "Military Recruiting, and the Iraq War." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, August 27-30, 2008.
- Butler, Judith. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Calhoun, Craig, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1992.
- Carcasson, Martín, Laura W. Black, and Elizabeth S. Sink. "Communication Studies and Deliberative Democracy: Current Contributions and Future Possibilities." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 6, no. 1 (2010). Accessed January 29, 2012. <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol6/iss1/art8>.
- Carpignano, Paolo. "The Shape of the Sphere: The Public Sphere and the Materiality of Communication." *Constellations* 6, no. 2 (1999): 177-89.

Castoriadis, Cornelius. "The Greek Polis and the Creation of Democracy," in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, edited by David Curtis, 81-123. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

-----*The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987.

Cave, Damien. "Man Down, When One Bullet Alters Everything." *The New York Times*, Middle East section, January 29, 2007. Accessed January 31, 2012.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/29/world/middleeast/29haifa.html?pagewanted=all>.

Chambers, John Whiteclay. "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate in America, 1930-1941." *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 36, no. 1 (2006): 44-57.

Chambers, Simone, and Anne Constanin, eds. *Deliberation, Democracy, and Media*. Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2000.

Chiba, Shin. "Hannah Arendt on Love and the Political: Love, Friendship and Citizenship." *The Review of Politics* 57, no. 3 (Summer, 1995): 505-35.

Colleran, Jeanne A. "Disposable Wars, Disappearing Acts: Theatrical Responses to the 1991 Gulf War." *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 4 (2003): 613-32.

Community Action Partnership. "Fact Sheet," CommunityAction.com. Accessed November 18, 2010.
http://www.communityactionpartnership.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18&Itemid=47.

Connolly, William E. *The Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

-----*Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Considine and Considine, Certified Public Accountants. *Financial Statement, Invisible Children, Inc. Statement of Financial Position, June 30, 2009 and 2008*. (San Diego, CA), 2009. Accessed January 28, 2012.
http://cloud.invisiblechildren.com/media/financials/ic_2009_financial_statement.pdf.

Coole, Diana. "Rethinking Agency: A Phenomenological Approach to Embodiment and Agentic Capacities." *Political Studies* 53 (2005): 124-42.

Corrie, Rachel. *Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998.

- , Alan Rickman, and Katharine Viner. *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006.
- Control Room*. Directed by Jehane Noujaim. New York: Magnolia Pictures, 2004. DVD.
- Critical Art Ensemble. *Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2000.
- Crossley, Nick and John Michael Roberts, eds. *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Sociological Review, 2004.
- Debray, Régis. "Socialism: A Life Cycle." *New Left Review* 46 (2007): 5-28.
- Deleuze Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. New York: Viking, 1977.
- DeYoung, Karen. "U.S. Official resigns over Afghan war," *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, October 27, 2009. Accessed December 30, 2011. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/26/AR2009102603394.html>.
- Diaz, Andre and Stephen Hiroshi Gilgrist, "Dialogue on Campus: An Overview of Promising Practices." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 6, no. 1 (2010). Accessed January, 2012. <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol6/iss1/art9>.
- Dickson, Keith. "Brecht, an Aristotelian malgré lui," *Modern Drama* 11, no. 67 (1968): 111-21.
- Disch, Lisa Jane. *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Dolan, Jill. *Geographies of Learning: Theory and Practice, Activism and Performance*. Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.
- "Rehearsing Democracy: Advocacy, Public Intellectuals, and Civic Engagement in Theatre and Performance Studies." *Theatre Topics* 11, no. 1 (March 2001): 1-17.
- Donaldson James, Susan. "Grief for War Dead Shrouds Casket Photo Ban." *ABC News/Politics*, February 17, 2009. Accessed June 15, 2011. <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=6891970&page=1>.
- Dowd, Maureen. "Why No Tea and Sympathy?" *New York Times*, August 10, 2005. Accessed June 1, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/10/opinion/10dowd.html>.
- Dunn, John. *Democracy: the unfinished journey, 508 BC to A.D. 1993*. New York:

- Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Durham Peters, John and Peter Simonson. *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts, 1919-1968*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002.
- Draper, Ronald P. *Tragedy: Developments in Criticism: A Casebook*. London: Macmillan, 1980.
- Easterling, P.E. *The Cambridge Companion to Tragedy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Malden: Blackwell, 2003.
- Eco, Umberto. *Apocalypse Postponed: Essays by Umberto Eco*. Edited by Robert Lumley. Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1996.
- Edmondson, Laura. "Marketing Tragedy and the Theatre of War in Northern Uganda." *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 3 (October 2005): 451-74.
- "Of Sugarcoating and Hope," comment in *The Drama Review* 51, no. 2 (2007): 200.
- Eighner, Lars. *Travels with Lizbeth: Three Years on the Road and on the Streets*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Elster, John. ed. *Deliberative Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. New York: Henry Hold & Co., 2002.
- Enslar, Eve. "Eve Enslar: Teenage Girls Guide to Surviving Sex Slavery." YouTube. Accessed November 30, 2011.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-Tiad_JQCw&feature=related.
- I Am An Emotional Creature: The Secret Life of Girls Around the World*. New York: Villard, 2010.
- Euben, J. Peter. *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- The Tragedy of Political Theory: The Road Not Taken*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- , John Wallach, and Josiah Ober, eds. *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

- Fallon, Siobhan. *You Know When the Men Are Gone*. New York: Amy Einhorn Books, 2011.
- Farrar, Cynthia. "Power to the People," in *The Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, edited by Kurt A. Raaflaub, Josiah Ober and Robert Wallace, 170-96. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Feaver, Peter D., Christopher Gelpi, and Jason Reifler. "Photos of military caskets might not increase war opposition." *The Seattle Times*, February 7, 2009. Accessed June 15, 2011. http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2008794948_opinb28feaver.html.
- Fitzgerald, John J. "The Winter Soldier Hearings." *Radical History Review* 97 (Winter 2007): 118-22.
- Fletcher, John. "Identity and Agonism: Tim Miller, Cornerstone, and the Politics of Community-Based Theatre." *Theatre Topics* 13, no. 2 (2003): 189-203.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.
- Fraser, Nancy and Axel Honneth. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso, 2003.
- Friedman, Lawrence J., and Mark D. McGarvie, eds. *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Fung, Archun and Erik Olin Wright, eds. *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. London: Verso, 2003.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism: New Perspectives on the Past*. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- Gerould, Daniel C. "The Americanization of Melodrama," in *American Melodrama*, 7-29. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983.
- Gettleman, Jeffrey. "U.N. Envoy Meets with Ugandan Rebel," *The New York Times*, November 13, 2008.
- and Eric Schmitt. "U.S. Aided a Failed Plan to Route Ugandan Rebels," *The New York Times*, February 6, 2009. Accessed November 18, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/07/world/africa/07congo.html?pagewanted=1>.
- Giannachi, Gabrielle. *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Gilmore, Inigo and Teresa Smith. "If You Start Looking at Them as Humans, Then How

- You Gonna Kill Them.” *The Guardian*, March 28, 2006. Accessed October 18, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/mar/29/usa.iraq>.
- Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.
- Goldhill, Simon. “Civic Ideology and the Politics of Difference, Once Again.” *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 120 (2000): 34-56.
- Reading Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Gómez-Peña, Guillermo. *Ethno-Techno: Essays on Performance, Activism, and Pedagogy*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Graeber, David. “An Army of Altruists: on the alienated right to do good.” *Harpers Magazine* (January 2007): 31-38.
- Graham-Jones, Jean. *Exorcising History: Argentine Theater Under Dictatorship*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Cultural Writings*. Edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Translated by William Boelhower. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Gravel, Pierre and Timothy Reiss. *Tragedy and the Tragic in Western Culture*. Montréal: Déterminations, 1983.
- Green, Philip. *Primetime Politics: The Truth about Conservative Lies, Corporate Control, and Television Culture*. Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2005.
- Greenblatt, Christopher. “What is the history of literature?” *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3. (Spring 1997): 460-81.
- Greenfield, Rebecca. “The Viral Video Still Rules YouTube’s Most Viewed of 2011.” *The Atlantic Wire*, December 20, 2011. Accessed January 4, 2012. <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/technology/2011/12/viral-video-still-rules-youtubes-most-viewed-2011/46443/>.
- Grumbrecht, H.U. and K.L. Pfeiffer. *Materialities of Communication*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Guterman, Gad. “Without Papers: Legal Identity, Legal Consciousness and Performance.” Dissertation, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2010.
- Gutmann, Amy and Dennis Thompson. *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Political communication in mass media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research." *Communication Theory* 16 (2006): 411-26.

-----*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

-----*The Theory of Communicative Action*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1983.

Haedicke, Susan C. and Tobin Nellhaus, eds. *Performing Democracy: International Perspectives on Urban Community Based Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

Hall, Edith. *Inventing the Barbarians: Greek Self-Definition Through Tragedy*. London: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Hall, Stuart. "Blue Election, Election Blues," *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*. London: Verso, 1988. 30-35.

Halliwell, Stephen. *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth-Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 149-81. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000.

Harrison, Mary-Catherine. "The Paradox of Fiction and the Ethics of Empathy: Reconceiving Dickens's Realism." *Narrative* 16, no. 3 (2008): 256-78.

Harwood, Matthew. "Pinkertons at the CPA." *Washington Monthly* online, April 2005. Accessed June 16, 2011.

<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2005/0504.harwood.html>.

Hayduck, Ronald. *From Act Up to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in an Era of Globalization*. London: Verso, 2002.

Hedges, Michael and James Pinkerton. "New York Times Posts Video of Dying US Soldier." *The Houston Chronicle*, January 13, 2007.

Held, David ed. *Prospects for Democracy: east, west, north, south*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Hess, Jacob Z. and Nathan R. Todd. "From Culture War to Difficult Dialogue: Exploring

- Distinct Frames for Citizen Exchange About Social Problems.” *Journal of Public Deliberation* 5, no. 1 (2009). Accessed January 29, 2010. <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol5/iss1/art3>.
- Hill, M.A. *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, New York: St. Martins Press, 1979.
- Hinchman, Lewis P., and Sandra K. Hinchman, eds. *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*. Albany: University of New York Press, 1994.
- Hirst, Paul. “Associational Democracy,” *Prospects for Democracy: east, west, north, South*. Edited by David Held, 112-36. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Hitt, Christopher. “Ecocriticism and the Long Eighteenth Century.” *College Literature* 31, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 123-47.
- Honig, Bonnie, ed. *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*. University Park: The Pennsylvania Park University Press, 1995.
- House, Humphrey. *Aristotle’s Poetics: A Course of Eight Lectures*. London: R. Hart-Davis, 1956.
- Hughes, Aaron. “Iraq Trip Report Back: Humbling.” *The Veteran* 9, no. 21 (Spring 2009). Accessed October 18, 2011. <http://uslaboragainstar.org/article.php?id=19378>.
- Hume, David. “On Tragedy,” in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, Volume 3. Edited by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose. London: Longman, Green, 1882.
- Ignatieff, Michael. “Is Nothing Sacred? The Ethics of Television,” *Daedalus* 114, no. 4 (Fall, 1985): 57-78.
- Invisible Children, Inc. “A ‘This Bill Just Past’ dance-party playlist.” Accessed May 10, 2010. <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2010/05/a-this-bill-just-passed-dance-party-playlist/>.
- “About Us,” from “Media Kit.” Accessed March 27, 2009. Invisible Children online.
- “The bill: what you need to know.” Accessed November 17, 2009. <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2009/11/the-bill-what-you-need-to-know/#more-1282>.
- “Campaigns: We Want Obama.” Accessed August 28, 2010. <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/obama>.
- “Chicago’s Displace Me,” Youtube. May 1, 2007. Accessed November 18, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZG4D4eVc9x0&feature=related>.

- “Displace Me 2007.” Accessed December 12, 2011.
<http://www.invisiblechildren.com/media/videos/detail.php?id=1171733986>.
- “Divine dissatisfaction, blessed unrest.”
<http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/?p=3490>. Accessed December 16, 2009.
- “Exhibition.” Facebook.com. Accessed July 9, 2011.
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Invisible-Children/10313003972697>.
- “Global Night Commute Commercial,” April 20, 2006. Accessed December 13, 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iHJPuthO7M>.
- “The Invisible Children Albany NY part 1.” YouTube, May 1, 2009. Accessed July 10, 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4MWHnOU9g>.
- “Invisible Children Global Night Commute Musical,” April 25, 2006. Accessed May 12, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWACLKaOC08>.
- “Invisible Children: Rough Cut (Parts 1-6).” Youtube.com. Accessed November 17, 2010.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qds5MQCqWnk&feature=related>.
- “Obama administration eases restrictions on child soldiers.” Accessed November 18, 2010.
<http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2010/11/obama-administration-eases-restrictions-on-child-soldiers/>.
- “The Official Rescue Plan.” YouTube, March 27, 2009. Accessed November 18, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvAkYUeBJ-I>.
- “Rebuilding schools in war-torn northern Uganda with help from people just like you...” Accessed September 26, 2011. <http://s4s.invisiblechildren.com/overview>.
- “The Rescue: Denver-Senator Mark Udall’s Office pledging support to help Invisible Children.” Youtube, April 25, 2009. Accessed November 21, 2010.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQ2g1CP4bro>.
- “The Rescue Invisible Children Albany NY part 1,” YouTube. April 25, 2009. Accessed November 21, 2010.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4MWHnOU9g>.
- “The Rescue: Los Angeles 2009-With Kristen Bell’s Speech.” Youtube, April 25, 2009. Accessed November 21, 2010.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9PMJUQRPg8>.

- “So you’re having a house party,” Invisible Children blog, May 24, 2010. Accessed November 18, 2010. <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2010/05/so-youre-having-a-house-party/>.
- “Training Manual: The Rescue. For IC staff, Assistants, Roadies, and City Leaders. Your complete manual for April 22nd to 25th.” April 22, 2009. Accessed May 10, 2010. <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/theMovement/resources/browse.php?topic=20>.
- “World Tour 2007: The Invisible Children Update.” Youtube, January 22, 2007. Accessed November 18, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b_hyJOggZQ&feature=channel.
- “Iraq Veterans Against the War Lead Thousands in Protest March to Democratic Convention.” *Democracy Now*, August 28, 2008. Accessed June 16, 2011. http://www.democracynow.org/2008/8/28/iraq_veterans_against_the_war_lead.
- Iraq Veterans Against the War. “GIs Take Manhattan: Operation First Casualty.” YouTube, June 5, 2007. Accessed June 16. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BabrfOC0cbM>.
- “IVAW Timeline.” IVAW.org. Accessed October 19, 2011. <http://ivaw.org/about/history>.
- “Operation First Casualty 1—Washington DC.” YouTube, posted June 22, 2007. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QY-azB55ds&feature=related>. Accessed June 21, 2011.
- “Veterans to Travel to Iraq for Labor Conference,” March 4, 2009. Accessed June 12, 2011). <http://ivawarchive.org/files/Press%20Release%20--%20Iraqi%20Labor%20Conference.pdf>.
- Isaac, Jeffrey C. “Oases in the Desert: Hannah Arendt on Democratic Politics.” *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 1 (March 1994): 156-68.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.
- Jaspers, Karl. *Tragedy is Not Enough*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1952.
- Jezebel.com. “Eve Ensler’s New Monologue Will Take Your Breath Away.” December 13, 2009. Accessed March 29, 2010. <http://jezebel.com/5153081/eve-enslers-new-monologue-will-take-your-breath-away>.
- Jones, John. *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Joseph, Miranda. *Against the Romance of Community*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

- “Junkyard,” YouTube, December 14, 2009. Accessed January 28, 2012.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tnkf0IRIDv8&feature=related>
- Kant, Immanuel. “On the modality of the sublime in nature,” in *The Critique of Judgement*, 77-79. New York: Cosimo Inc., 1914.
- Kaufman, Walter Arnold. *Tragedy and Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Kennelly, Jacqueline. “Acting Out in the Public Sphere: Community Theatre and Citizenship Education.” *Canadian Journal of Education* 29, no. 2 (2006): 541-62.
- Kershaw, Baz. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. “Ancient Tragical Motif as Reflected in the Modern,” in *Either/Or*, 111-33. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Kitto, H.D.F. *Greek Tragedy, A Literary Study*. London: Methuen, 1961.
- Knauer, James T. “Rethinking Arendt's *Vita Activa*: Toward a Theory of Democratic Praxis,” *Praxis International* 5, no. 2 (July 1985): 185-194.
- Knopf, Christina M. “Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, or Sailor? Military Identity as Influence in the Public Sphere,” paper presented at the National Communication Association Conference, February, 2011.
- Kokesh, Adam. “A Typical Sunday with The DC Chapter of IVAW house,” Youtube, February 26, 2008. Accessed June 27, 2011.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPyTPkjJuJs>.
- Konstan, David. *Friendship in the Classical World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Pity Transformed*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2001.
- Krause, Sharon. *Civic Passions: Moral Sentiment and Democratic Deliberation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- “How Deliberation Feels,” conference paper presented at Law and the Emotions: New Directions in Scholarship, University of California, Berkeley, February 8-9, 2007. 17-18. Accessed November 7, 2011.
http://www.law.berkeley.edu/institutes/cs/sl/lawemotion_conference/PublicDeliberation_abstract.pdf.

- Kristof, Nicholas D. "Advice for the Wall Street Protesters." *The New York Times*, October 2, 2011. accessed January 5, 2012.
<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2011/10/02/opinion/100000001084589/advice-for-the-wall-street-protesters.html?scp=1&sq=kristof%20advice%20occupy%20wall%20street&st=cse>.
- "How to Save the World." *Outside Magazine*, November 30, 2009. Accessed November 21, 2011. <http://outsideonline.com/outside/culture/200912/nicholas-kristof-philanthropy-advice-1.html?page=1>.
- Kruks, Sonia. "Spaces of Freedom: Materiality, Mediation, and Direct Political Participation in the Work of Arendt and Sartre," *Contemporary Political Theory* 26, no. 5 (2006): 469-91.
- Kucera, Joshua. "The Seeds of Discontent." *U.S. News and World Report*, June 1, 2010.
- Kuftinec, Sonja. *Staging America: Cornerstone and Community-based Theater*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 1985.
- Lane, Jill. "Digital Zapatistas." *The Drama Review* 47, no. 2 (2003): 129-44.
- "Preaching, Protest, and Postindustrial Flanerie." *The Drama Review* 56, no. 1 (Spring, 2002): 60-84.
- Laslett, Peter and James S. Fishkin, eds. *Debating Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Lévy, Pierre. *Collective Intelligence; Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspac*. Paris: Plenum Press, 1997.
- Liebman, Stuart. "Triumph of the Will." *Cineaste* 4, no. 27 (Fall 2002): 46.
- Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922.
- Lugones, María. "Playfulness, "World"-Traveling, and Loving Perception." *Hypatia* 2, no. 2: (Summer 1997): 161.
- Lyn, Thomas. "Shooting game gives a taste of real combat," *The International Herald Tribune*, May 3, 2011.
- Mabe, Matt. "One of Us." *Columbia Journalism Review*, August, 2009. Accessed

- February 13, 2010. http://www.cjr.org/feature/one_of_us.php.
- Malstrom, Erik. "The Two Worlds of the Citizen Soldier." *The New York Times*, February 6, 2010. Accessed June 14, 2011. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/06/the-two-worlds-of-the-citizen-soldier/>.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.
- Martínez, Rubén. *Border Ballad*. Unpublished manuscript, sent to author May 2006.
- Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail*. New York: Picador, 2002.
- "Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail." Humanitas Series, University of California Santa Barbara, January 22, 2002. DVD.
- "LA Needs Two Big Papers." *The Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 2007. Accessed September 25, 2009. <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-op-martinez15apr15,1,4544197.story>.
- The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City, and Beyond*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.
- "Visions in the Desert: Searching for a Home in the American West," presented by the Library Foundation of Los Angeles, July 30, 2009. Podcast. Accessed March 12, 2010. <http://events.lapl.org/podcasts/PodcastView.aspx?pid=266>.
- McChesney, Robert. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- McAdam, Doug. "Movement Strategy and Dramaturgic Framing in Democratic States: The Case of the Civil Rights Movement," in *Deliberation, Democracy and the Media*, Simone Chambers and Anne Constan, eds., 117-34. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.
- McKinley, Jesse. "Theatre Addresses Tension Over Play." *New York Times*, March 16, 2006.
- Meier, Christian. *The Greek Discovery of Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Milne, Drew. "Theatre as Communicative Action," *Comparative Criticism* 14 (1992): 114-34.
- Minow, Martha. "Foreward: Justice Engendered," *The Supreme Court 1987 Term*, 101,

- no. 10, 14, in *Law and Morality: Readings in Legal Philosophy*, David Dyzenhaus and Arthur Ripstein, eds. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001, 1996. 231-41.
- Mitchell, Elvis. "Man, All They Wanted Was to Go Buy a Trailer," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2001.
- Mogelson, Luke. "A Beast in the Heart of Every Fighting Man," *The New York Times Magazine* online, April 27, 2011. Accessed January 29, 2012.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/magazine/mag-01KillTeam-t.html?pagewanted=1>.
- Moeller, Susan. *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Mogelson, Luke. "A Beast in the Heart of Every Fighting Man." *The New York Times Magazine*, April 27, 2011. Accessed January 29, 2012.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/magazine/mag-01KillTeam-t.html?pagewanted=1>.
- Mouffe, Chantal, ed. *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso, 2000.
- Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*.
New York: Verso, 1992.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Birth to Presence*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Nichols, Sharon L. and Thomas L. Good. *America's Teenagers—Myths and Realities: media images, schooling, and the social cost of careless indifference*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.
- Nicola, James C. Statement on New York Theatre Workshop website, March 3, 2006. Accessed March 3, 2006. <http://www.nytw.org/>.
- Nehamas, Alexander. "Plato's Pop Culture Problem, and Ours." *The New York Times*, August 10, 2010. Accessed January 14, 2012.
<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/29/platos-pop-culture-problem-and-ours/>
- Nussbaum, Martha. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.

- Oakeshott, Michael Joseph. *On Human Conduct*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- “Obama reviewing ban on photos of military coffins.” *USA Today*, February 10, 2009. Accessed June 15, 2011. http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-02-10-obama-coffins_N.htm.
- Ober, Josiah and Charles Hedrick, eds. *Demokratia: A Conversation on Democracies Ancient and Modern*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Okin, Susan. *Women in Western Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- “On the Front Lines.” On the Media. National Public Radio. August 9, 2009. Podcast. Accessed August 23, 2009. http://www.onthemedial.org/topics/iraq-middle_east/1.
- “Operation First Casualty.” *The Washington Post*, March 19, 2007. Accessed January 31, 2012. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/video/2007/03/19/VI2007031901446.html>.
- Oprah.com. “Invisible Children,” April 20, 2011. Accessed September 26, 2011. <http://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/Invisible-Children>.
- “Oprah Rescue Us- Chicago Rescue,” Youtube, April 30, 2009. Accessed November 18, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MC0hBf6wtI&playnext=1&list=PL3209EC4FF725FD78&index=6>
- Orr, John. *Tragic Drama and Modern Society, Studies in Sociological and Literary Theory from 1870 to the Present*. London: Macmillan, 1981.
- Page, Benjamin I. *Who Deliberates? Mass Media in Modern Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Paolucci, Anne and Henry Paolucci. *Hegel on Tragedy*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1962.
- Parker, James. “The Jackass Effect.” *The Atlantic*, August 30, 2010.
- Parsons, Claudia. “Iraqi union leader urges opposition to oil law.” *Reuters*, June 18, 2007.
- “Peace, Love, and Cake,” YouTube, December 29, 2009. Accessed November 17, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et-5C1tib50>.
- Perlsetin, Rick. “What’s the Matter With College? The New York Times Essay Contest.” *The New York Times*, July 2007. Accessed May 10, 2010.

- <http://www.nytimes.com/marketing/collegeessay/>
- Peters, Bernhart. *Public Deliberation and Public Culture: The Writings of Bernhardt Peters, 1993-2004*. New York: Palgrave, 2008.
- Pfister, Joel and Nancy Schnog, eds. *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Pirro, Robert. *Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Tragedy*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000.
- “Václav Havel and the Political Uses of Tragedy.” *Political Theory* 2 (2002): 228-58.
- Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners. “Poverty Simulation,” YouTube, January 13, 2007. Accessed April 10, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fMA6qAQnzU>.
- “The Portrait from Iraq—How the Press Has Covered the Events on the Ground.” Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, published December 19, 2007. Accessed September 12, 2009. <http://www.journalism.org/node/8996>.
- Putnam, Robert D., Lewis M. Feldstein, and Donald J. Cohen, eds. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003.
- Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Renewal of American Community*. New York: Touchstone, 2000.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. London: Continuum, 2000.
- Randall, Eric. “There’s No End of ‘Unsolicited Advice’ for Occupy Wall Street.” *The Atlantic Wire*, October 26, 2011. Accessed January 5, 2012. <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/national/2011/10/theres-no-end-unsolicited-advice-occupy-wall-street/44185/>.
- Rankin, Bruce H. and James M. Quane. “Neighborhood Poverty and the Social Isolation of Inner-City African American Families.” *Social Forces* 79, no. 1 (September 2000): 139-64.
- Rao, Vijayendra and Michael Walton, eds. *Culture and Public Action*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Reshaur, Ken. “Concepts of Solidarity in the Political Theory of Hannah Arendt.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique* 25, no. 4 (December 1992): 723-36.

- Rocco, Christopher. *Tragedy and Enlightenment: Athenian Political Thought and the Dilemmas of Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Roderick, Ian. "Bare life of the virtuous shadow warrior: The use of silhouette in military training advertisements." *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 23, no. 1 (February 2009): 77-91.
- Rojas, Clara Eugenia. "The "V-Day" March in Mexico: Appropriation and Misuse of Local Women's Activism." *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 217-27.
- Roosevelt, Ann. "Robotics Offers Promise of Relief for Soldiers, White Paper Says," *Defense Daily*, April 1, 2009. Accessed January 30, 2012.
<http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/hottopics/Inacademic/?verb=sr&csi=156292>.
- Rorty, Amélie. *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Rosenthal, Anton Benjamin. "Spectacle, Fear, and Protest: A Guide to the History of Public Space in Contemporary Latin America." *Social Science History* 24 no. 1 (2000): 33-73.
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques. "Letter to D'Alembert," *Politics and the Arts*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960.
- On the Social Contract*, in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau The Basic Political Writings*, translated and edited by Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc, 1987.
- Rozario, Kevin. "'Delicious Horrors': Mass Culture, The Red Cross, and the Appeal of Modern American Humanitarianism." *American Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2003): 417-55.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Sandel, Michael J. *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1996.
- Savran, David. *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Schaffer, Amanda. "Not a Game: Simulation to Lessen War Trauma," the *New York Times* online, August 28, 2007. Accessed July 19, 2011.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/28/health/28game.html>.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

- The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publican Europaeum*.
New York: Telos Press, 2003.
- Segal, George. *Tragedy and Civilization*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Shaffer, Marguerite S. *Public Culture: Diversity, Democracy, and Community in the United States*. University of Pennsylvania Press: 2008.
- Shales, Tom. "On the Air, The Building Tensions of a Week at War; At the Networks, Protesters Disrupt; Israeli Censors Erupt." *The Washington Post*, January 23, 1991.
- Shapiro, Ian. *The State of Democratic Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Shepard, Benjamin and Ronald Hayduk, eds. *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*. London: Verso, 2002.
- Silk, M.S. and J.P. Stern. *Nietzsche on Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Sir! No Sir!* Directed by David Zeiger. Los Angeles: Displaced Films, 2005. DVD.
- Sitton, John F. "Hannah Arendt's Argument for Council Democracy." *Polity* 20, no.1 (Autumn 1987): 80-100.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2003.
- Sommer, Doris. *Cultural Agency in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Spelman, Elizabeth V. *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.
- Spencer, Charles. "Passionate Portrayal of an Insecure Idealist." *The Daily Telegraph*, London, April 4, 2006.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Stahl, Roger "Why We 'Support the Troops:' Rhetorical Evolutions." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 533-70.
- States, Bert O. "The Actor's Presence, Three phenomenal modes." In *Acting (Re) Considered*. Edited by Philip B. Zarrilli. London: Routledge, 1995.

- Steele, Bob. "Man Down: Balancing Truth and Harm." Poynter Institute, February 7, 2007 (updated March 3, 2011). Accessed June 16, 2011. <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/everyday-ethics/80592/man-down-balancing-truth-and-harm/>.
- Steiner, George. *The Death of Tragedy*. New York: Knopf, 1961.
- Sternberger, Dolf. "The Sunken City: Hannah Arendt's Idea of Politics." *Social Research* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 132-46.
- Stillman, Sarah. "The Invisible Army." *The New Yorker*, June 6, 2011. Accessed June 27, 2011. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/06/06/110606fa_fact_stillman.
- Sunstein, Cass. *Republic.com 2.0*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- On Rumors: How Falsehoods Spread, Why We Believe Them, and What Can Be Done*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009.
- Suro, Roberto, ed. *A Report on the Media and the Immigration Debate*. Governance Studies at the Brookings Institute. September 2008. Accessed October 31, 2009. http://www.brookings.edu/events/2008/0925_media_immigration.aspx
- Swofford, Anthony. *Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicles of the Gulf War and Other Battles*. New York: Scribner, 2003.
- Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Thomas, Laurence. "Moral Deference," *African American Perspectives and Philosophical Traditions*. Edited by John Pittman, 233-50. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. New York: New York Review of Books, 2008.
- Tronto, Joan. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethics of Care*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- "Uganda; Surrender or Face International Force, Museveni Tells Kony." *Africa News*, May 23, 2006.
- The U.S. Army. "Army of One," 2003. DVD.
- U.S. Labor Against the War. "IVAW Attends First Iraqi Labor Conference—Iraqi Unions Announce New Federation," March 2007. Accessed June 15, 2011.

<http://www.uslaboragainstawar.org/article.php?id=18661>.

The U.S. Marines. "Films Videos & Commercials," in *Marines: The Few The Proud*, 2008. DVD.

"The Vagina Monologues-A teenage girl's guide to surviving __Slavery monologue by Nina Dawson." YouTube. March 22, 2010. Accessed January 28, 2012.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZYoPTeM2LA>.

Vanden Heuvel, Katerina. *The Change I Believe In: Fighting for Progress in the Age of Obama*. New York: Nation Books, 2011.

-----"The occupy movement can't be sprayed away." *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2011. Accessed January 5, 2010.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-occupy-movement-cant-be-sprayed-away/2011/11/21/gIQAPYaiIN_story.html.

Vargas, Jose Antonio. "My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant." *The New York Times Magazine*, June 22, 2011. Accessed December 30, 2011.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/magazine/my-life-as-an-undocumented-immigrant.html?pagewanted=all>.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre and Pierre Vidal-Naquet. *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. New York: Zone Books, 1988.

Vetlesen, Arene Johan. *Perception, Empathy, and Judgment: An Inquiry into the Conditions of Moral Performance*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

Vickers, Brian. *Towards Greek Society: Drama, Myth, Society*. London: Longman, 1979.

Villa, Dana. "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere." *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 3 (September, 1992): 712-21.

Walsh, David. "Connected," in "Top Networking Initiative." *Defense Technology* 3, no.1 (January 1, 2009): 83.

Watkins, Sheana and James Sherk. "Who Serves in the U.S. Military? The Demographics of Enlisted Troops and Officers." The Heritage Foundation, Leadership for America website, August 21, 2008. Accessed June 14, 2011.
<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2008/08/who-serves-in-the-us-military-the-demographics-of-enlisted-troops-and-officers>.

"We want Obama Blitz." Youtube, October, 16, 2009. Accessed January 28, 2012.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PO3oQOH2TDw>.

- Weiss, Judith et al. *Latin American Popular Theatre: The First Five Centuries*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1993.
- Weiss, Phillip. "Too Hot for New York." *The Nation*, April 3, 2006. Accessed April 16, 2012. <http://www.thenation.com/article/too-hot-new-york>.
- "Will.i.am, Come to the rescue." YouTube, April 15, 2009. Accessed January 28, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_WhI77152g&feature=channel
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Modern Tragedy*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1966.
- The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*. New York: Verso, 1989.
- Winker, John J. and Froma I. Zeitlin, eds. *Nothing to Do With Dionysus: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Young, Iris Marion. "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy." *Political Theory* 29, no. 5 (October, 2001): 670-90.
- Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Wolin, Sheldon. "Democracy in the Discourse of Postmodernism." *Social Research* 57 (1990): 5-30.
- Zerilli, Linda M. G. "We Feel Our Freedom: Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt." *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (April 2005): 158-88.