DEMOCRATIZING CULTURAL PRODUCTION:

A THEORY CULTIVATED WITH HALLIE FLANAGAN DAVIS

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
AddRan College of Liberal Arts
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my dissertation committee, my mother, and my partner, without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. I would especially like to thank my dissertation director, Ann George for the tireless hours and invaluable feedback and insight she contributed to this project. I would also like to extend gratitude to the New York Public Library for awarding me a Short-Term Research Fellowship, which enabled me to focus my full attention on Hallie Flanagan Davis's archival materials for four weeks. Specifically I would like to extend thanks to Annemarie van Roessel and the staff of the Billy Rose Theatre Division.

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"At a time when all are inquiring how we can make democracy more effective, it is perhaps pertinent to inquire whether the democracies have not neglected the theatre as a powerful force for enriching life."
-Hallie Flanagan Davis, Theatre in a Changing World

Introduction

The year is 1938. It's springtime in New York, but the dry shadows of depression and war push back against everything spring stands for. While walking through a neighborhood in Brooklyn, you see a small, run-down theater advertising performances of a play titled *One-Third of a Nation.* The painful articulation of President Roosevelt's second inaugural address echoes through your mind, "*I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished*." Just below the play's title is a price scribbled in chalk—25¢: a live play for the cheap price of a movie ticket. Curious, you decide to go in. Upon entering the theater, "you would see on the un-curtained stage, no tenement and no rooms but, suspended in space, a strange phantasmagoria of actual objects so gigantic and awesome that it would be difficult to say whether it was real or the materialization of a nightmare" (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 212). Among these objects are a giant, leaking faucet, an overflowing trash can, and a rusty fire escape. The play begins with a fire on stage, and "gradually, through changing light, [you] become aware of these [giant] objects not as a visual pattern but as actual elements of the disease, misery, and crime bred in the slums," elements that, among other things, facilitate fires and make them difficult to escape from (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 212). A few scenes later you watch as a beam of light, sickeningly green in color, illuminates "contagion spreading from the gigantic faucet down to the head of the child" (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 212), causing you to think back to a young girl you saw coughing wildly as she walked down the street with her mother just moments before you entered the theater. You hear a voice over the theater's loudspeaker comparing disease rates in New York City slums to

those of the overall city, "Tuberculosis . . . 129% higher. . . . Diphtheria . . . 97% higher" (Arent 79).[1]

The play continues in a series of montages, a voice over the loud speaker narrating and announcing statistics about slum housing in different cities throughout each scene: "50% of all juvenile delinquency found in eighteen percent of the city area—the slums! Cleveland, Ohio" (Arent 107). You wonder if the statistics are real. As the play nears its end, a man and a woman stand on stage. The woman calls out impassioned words to the audience, "And if we don't make them hear us you're going to have just what you've always had—slums—disease—crime—juvenile deliquence, and. . . and. . ." her voice trails off as chaos and fire once again break out on stage, sirens begins to scream and the loudspeaker announces, "Ladies and Gentleman, this might be Boston, New York, St. Louis, Chicago, Philadelphia, but let's just call it one-third of a nation." The stage goes black and the curtains close (Arent 154). As the house lights come up you inspect the playbill, noticing an address given for more bibliographic information, but also that the play you just watched, clearly driven by the task of making the dangerous conditions of slum housing—and the impacts of those conditions—more visible, *was funded by the government*, put on by part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) called the Federal Theater Project (FTP)—a national-scale project directed by a woman named Hallie Flanagan Davis.[2] You leave the play not only more informed about the dangers of slum housing conditions than you were before, but also more concerned. (*End scene.*)

[1] The play being quoted was written and produced collaboratively with the help of the Staff of the Living Newspaper, but officially authored under the name Arthur Arent.

[2]Hallie Flanagan Davis is most often referred to as Hallie Flanagan. In a letter to her publishers she requests to be referred to as Hallie Flanagan *Davis* so as to reflect bot her first *and* second deceased husband. Her publishers appear to have responded by explaining that Hallie Flanagan was the more recognizable name, as she responds to such a remark in concurrent letters and continues to argue for the right to choose how she's referred to (Letters to Pearce, Duell and Sloan). This work will thus refer to her as she wished to be referred to: Hallie Flanagan Davis.

It is now almost 80 years after *One Third of a Nation* took cities across America by storm.[3] Despite Hallie Flanagan Davis's position as director of the largest and arguably most radical government-funded arts organization in American history (Denning), her influence shaping and promoting the genre of theater in the scene above, and her impressive publication record that, for example, refers to the FTP as "an accurate and brilliant means of communication" needed by democracy (*Arena* 372)—she has rarely been mentioned in the fields of rhetoric or political theory, and remains predominantly associated with the field of theater and artistic production. She belongs to a long list of rhetorically powerful and innovative women, active in 1930s public and civic life, who have been all but erased from history. Ann George, Elizabeth Weiser and Janet Zepernick began the monumental task of recovering some of these women in their recent collection *Women and Rhetoric between the Wars* (2013) and call for other scholars to continue in this effort. George et al. argue that "women between the wars were not only using rhetoric; they were creating rhetorical theories, enacting them, and even writing them down—but they were writing in ways the mainstream either did not see, or did not acknowledge as 'theory'" (George et al. 13). They list Flanagan Davis, along with many other women who did not make it into the collection, as promising sites for future research. This project is in many ways a direct result of and indebted to their work. Like the women recovered by George et al., Flanagan Davis created, enacted, and sometimes even wrote down rhetorical theories, but not typically in ways that have been acknowledged as "theory," which has likely contributed to her relative absence from rhetoric and political theory, until now.

The goal of this project is to yield theories rooted in Hallie Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices, but cultivated through a modern, civic-rhetorical approach to those roots. First I'll

[3] *One Third of a Nation* is said to have been performed to great success in at least 9 major cities and to have reached an estimated 217,000 people in New York City alone (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 217).

briefly explain my choice of the words *roots* and *cultivate*, then my use of the term *civic-rhetorical.* Throughout this project I will use words like *roots* and *cultivate* to invoke an ecological metaphor of theory. In a 2008 article, "The Importance of Harmony: An Ecological Metaphor for Writing," Kristie S. Fleckenstein, Clay Spinuzzi, Rebecca J. Rickley, and Carol Clark Papper propose that approaching rhetorical theories—and especially *multimodal* rhetorical theories—as ecologies of interconnected concepts, rather than contained, distinct categories of concepts may allow our exploration of those theories to be more "harmonious" with their lived nature. Hallie Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices are multimodal, messy, and deeply interconnected. As I attempted to categorize her arguments, I found that they seemed to resist categorization, always overlapping a bit too much with almost every other argument. In order to talk about Flanagan Davis's ideas in any way that does them justice, approaching them through an ecological metaphor (as recommended by Fleckenstein et al.) is therefore necessary. If we imagine them as distinct concepts, we don't get the full picture (or ecosystem).

I use the term *civic-rhetorical*, on the other hand, to refer to theories and practices that ask: *how can approaches to rhetoric and rhetorical education improve civic participation and thereby democratic functioning?* I understand civic-rhetorical theories as the coming together of critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories, which focus respectively on how rhetorical education can improve civic participation in democracy and how rhetorical engagement can improve civic participation in democracy. I construct a lens from these civic-rhetorical theories and use said lens to help cultivate theoretical insights. That is, after I identify and explore Flanagan Davis's root arguments and practices, I apply a civic-rhetorical theoretical framework to those root arguments and practices, so as to translate them into more clearly rhetorical terms and explore their rhetorical implications—to help them grow more obvious

rhetorical fruits. I discuss this lens further in the theoretical framework section near the end of this chapter.

Cultivating Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices into civic-rhetorical theories was a complex process, mostly because of the volume of archival materials available, my desire to allow her arguments to really root the theory I built, and the messy, complex way in which her arguments overlap and connect. I began with several of Flanagan Davis's published works and 46 boxes of her archival materials and used grounded theory methodology to explore and synthesize these materials, attempting to first identify Flanagan Davis's most important and central arguments about how theater, understood rhetorically, could support and improve democracy—better understood as the *keystone* arguments (or species) of her theoretical ecosystem: the arguments whose existence is necessary for the survival of all other arguments.[4] Comparison is crucial in grounded theory, so I then compared these keystone arguments to her arguments about a particular, important genre of theater (the Living Newspaper, described in detail momentarily) to identify what I refer to as micro-features (ways Flanagan Davis saw the FTP improving democracy on the ground-level in individual theaters). Next, I compared Flanagan Davis's keystone arguments to her arguments and practices about the overall *structure* of the FTP, yielding what I refer to as macro-features (ways she saw the FTP improving democracy from the 1000 feet up level, as a nation-wide infrastructure). By comparing her overall arguments about how theater could improve democracy, her arguments about theater could improve democracy from the ground level, and her arguments about how theater could improve democracy from the infrastructural level I am able to reveal a richer, more complete sense of the theories underpinning her work.

[4] Keystone species are species upon which an entire ecosystem largely depends. The health and existence of keystone species has a critical impact on much of the ecosystem in which they reside.

Finally, as mentioned above, I applied a civic-rhetorical lens to the resulting keystones and concepts so as to translate them into rhetorical terms and better explore the rhetorical implications such ideas have. I do this so as to facilitate Flanagan Davis's entry into rhetorical discussions today, where, as I argue, they are increasingly relevant, practical and useful. In other words, I begin this project by synthesizing and identifying Hallie Flanagan Davis's arguments in her own words (the keystone species, micro- and macro-features of the theoretical ecosystem), and gradually, through comparison, analysis, and the application of a rhetorical lens, work to translate (grow) her arguments and their implications into a more fruitful rhetorical theory ecosystem. Flanagan Davis's voice is thus the loudest towards the beginning of this project but mine gets louder and louder as the project nears its end. First, in this chapter I give a brief overview of Hallie Flanagan Davis and the Federal Theatre Project, and then review, more thoroughly, the scholarship written about both. Following this literature review, I discuss my research and analysis process in greater detail and outline the chapters ahead.

Brief Overview of Hallie Flanagan Davis and the FTP

Hallie Flanagan Davis was born Hallie Ferguson in South Dakota in 1890. She majored in Philosophy and German at Grinnell College and was active in Grinnell's drama club. After graduating in 1911, she married and had two children. In 1919, her husband passed away, and in 1922 her eldest son followed. Not long after such tragedy her career as a theater scholar, educator, and director began to take off—and this career had several interesting connections to the field of rhetoric from the beginning. In 1922, she was accepted into George Pierce Baker's esteemed 47 Workshop in dramatic production; Baker was both a theater scholar and rhetorician. His official title at the time was Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard University (Wynstra 22) and

among his many works is a co-authored book titled *The Principles of Argumentation* (1905).[5] Theater scholars and historians alike have noted the significant impacts Baker's workshop had on Flanagan Davis (Bentley, Wynstra). Not long after his workshop, Flanagan Davis was named Vassar College's "Director of English Speech." At the time, Vassar had no separate theater department, and theater scholarship (not practice) was housed under English and Speech studies. While at Vassar, Flanagan Davis was asked to create an experimental theater for the college that not only analyzed but also produced works of theater. She developed said experimental theatre with great success. Soon after (and partially as a result of), she became the first woman to win the Guggenheim Theatre Fellowship, used this fellowship to tour Europe studying different approaches to theater, and wrote a book about the experience called *Shifting Scenes in the Modern European Theatre* (1928), which revealed her particular interest in socially and politically motivated theater. She continued teaching at Vassar until 1935.

In 1935 she was appointed director of the Federal Theatre Project by former college classmate Harry Hopkins (director of the Works Progress Administration) for her experience and expertise with non-commercial and experimental theater.[6] Like other parts of the WPA, the Federal Theatre Project was a relief organization by nature. That is, its primary purpose was to use government funds to put unemployed people (in this case playwrights, actors, costume and set designers, etc.) to work doing socially useful activities (in this case providing inexpensive or free entertainment). Flanagan Davis, however, believed the FTP could accomplish much more—that it could function as a rhetorical medium for supporting and enhancing democracy. She argues, for example, that the FTP was "at once an illustration and a bulwark of the democratic form of government" because it "creat[ed] for our citizens a medium for free expression such as

[5] Co-written with Henry Barrett Huntington.

[6] Experimental theater refers to theater that experiments with form and content, aiming to create new and different experiences and ways of expressing through theater.

no other form of government can assure, and offer[ed] the people access to the arts and tools of a civilization which they themselves [we]re helping to make" (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 373). To put it more simply: she believed it could democratize culture.

Flanagan Davis believed the FTP should provide theater to as many as possible. It had regional offices set up all over the country, and while a good portion of FTP performances were put on in small theaters for a small price, it is estimated that around 65% were put on for free in hospitals, orphanages, prisons, asylums, schools; there's even mention of performances being put on in an old barbershop (Jan 1939 Report). Some plays, like the Living Newspaper *One-Third of a Nation* (described at the opening of this chapter), focused on social and political issues, but the FTP also put on historical plays, children's plays, classical plays, vaudeville and circus performances, and many other varieties of theater. Unfortunately, the life of the FTP was cut short. After less than four years, the project was falsely accused of communist affiliations and goals, and was shut down by the Dies Committee (the first official incarnation of the House Un-American Activities committee, named after Chairman Martin Dies and created for the purpose of investigating activity which was deemed suspicious or anti-American). Flanagan Davis argued eloquently and repeatedly that the FTP was a nonpartisan, *democratic* endeavor before, during, and after the Dies Committee hearings (although she was given very little time at the hearings to speak). Two years after the FTP was shut down, her book *Arena: The History of the American Federal Theatre* was published, chronicling her experiences with the FTP and emphasizing its overall democratic nature and potential. Following the FTP's closing, she returned to teaching and directing College Theater and in 1943 had another book published: *Dynamo,* which explores her ideas on experimental college theatre and the transformative power of youth. The FTP was

never resurrected, despite the efforts of Flanagan Davis and other supporters, who proposed new versions of Federal Theatres and "People's Theatres" for years following the FTP's close.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is often identified as the closest modern entity to the FTP (Bright, Mudarri), but they are quite different in conceptualization and functioning. A document released by the NEA states that, in contrast to the WPA arts projects, "the Arts Endowment was created neither to provide work for the unemployed, nor to deliver a political message" and as such, was not created with the intention of using art to solve social and economic problems, or to engage with politics, but rather with the intention of funding art so as to "enrich a country" (Bauerlein and Grantham). The NEA receives less funding than the FTP received. Between 2013 and 2017 the NEA was allocated just under $590 million: about 73% of what the FTP would have received in its four years if we adjust for inflation.[7] Sadly paralleling the FTP, the NEA is currently under threat from the Trump administration; as of March 2018, their website states that they are still awaiting news of whether or not they will receive government backing for 2018.

Literature Review

Most of the scholarship written about the FTP and Flanagan Davis (across all fields) is predominantly historical in nature; that is, it is written with the intent of providing insight into the FTP as a historical event. Most of this scholarship acknowledges that Flanagan Davis's goals largely shaped the FTP, but rather than focus on her arguments for how to accomplish such goals—as this project does—it usually looks at the degree to which those goals were accomplished in the reality of the 1930s. I believe this approach to the FTP is worthwhile (and discuss it more below), but it is not what I seek to do. The few scholarly works that, like this one,

[7] The FTP received $46 million in its four years, which would be the equivalent of about $810.5 million today.

invoke Flanagan Davis as a site for rhetorical or political analysis focus primarily on one theatrical genre important to Flanagan Davis and the FTP (the Living Newspaper) rather than the focus of this project: Flanagan Davis's views on the FTP and how theater can support democracy more broadly.

Histories of the FTP

The majority of publications about the FTP and Flanagan Davis seek, above all else, to reveal and circulate the history of the FTP. The first of such was Willson Whitman's *Bread and Circuses* (1937), which aimed to chronicle the FTP while it was still alive. Flanagan Davis found this work unsatisfactory and describes reading it as part of what motivated her to write *Arena*, so as to better capture the life of the FTP (Letter to Philip H. Davis). *Arena* (1941), the second major FTP history, includes many insights into Flanagan Davis's theories about theater, but, again, focuses more on chronicling the story of the FTP, its creation, successes, failures, pivotal moments, administrative difficulties and realizations, and finally, its closing. Jane de Hart then wrote *The Federal Theatre Project: 1935-1939* (1967), an academic and historical publication which likewise tells the story of the FTP, drawing on interviews with people active in the FTP, including but not limited to Flanagan Davis. De Hart aims to provide a more politically contextualized account of the FTP, believing distance from the 30s and 40s helpful in understanding the project's short existence. A 1999 film titled *Cradle Will Rock* captured the story of Marc Blitzstein's controversial 1938 FTP play of the same title: a play that was canceled due to the shutting down of the FTP, but put on defiantly by Blitzstein anyway. The film, which was met with mostly positive reviews, also depicts the Dies Committee hearings and the shutting down of the FTP, as well as Flanagan Davis's attempts to fight against such an ending.

Several other scholarly works decentralize historical understandings of the FTP by providing histories associated with regions of the project other than New York, people other than

top-level FTP administration and successful playwrights, and theatre units other than the famous Living Newspaper units. Bonnie Nelson Schwartz's *Voices from the FTP* (2003), for example, provides transcripts from interviews found in FTP archives, and the interviewees range from FTP actors to playwrights, to different levels of administration. Elizabeth Osborne's *Staging the People: Community and Identity in the Federal Theatre Project* focuses on five of the FTP regions *outside* New York, exploring how each developed "a relationship with its surrounding community" and what the regional dynamics of those relationships were (8). Barry Witham's *The Federal Theatre Project: A Case Study* (2003) looks specifically at the history of the Seattle unit, and in *Blueprints for a Black Federal Theatre* (1996), Rena Fraden analyzes the FTP's "Negro Units"—their interactions with and impacts on Black communities (expanded on later). [8]

These works all explore the FTP as it happened. In this project my focus is, instead, on the FTP as Flanagan Davis believed it could and should happen. When the works discussed above address Flanagan Davis's goals for the FTP, they do so for the purpose of testing the extent to which those goals were obtained in the reality of the FTP's existence. For example, Fraden analyzes the extent to which the FTP was able to allow Black Americans to create and dictate their own cultural expressions through theater, Witham analyzes the extent to which Seattle was able to "discover its audience" while creating quality theater, and Osborne analyzes the extent to which the FTP allowed different local voices and cultures to come through. Most of these scholars agree the FTP was at least partially successful at accomplishing Flanagan Davis's goals. While these histories are valuable, I'd like to argue that Flanagan Davis's goals for the FTP were much too large to have been accomplished in the short four years of the FTP's life and that it is worth looking into not only what happened when Flanagan Davis's theories were put

[8] In this project I capitalize the word Black (as in Black Americans or Black Theater). I struggled with this choice, acknowledging that capitalization can be seen as problematic in its equating of "blackness" with a country of origin, but a lack of capitalization can be seen as a lack of respect. I chose capitalization out of respect.

into play in the 1930s, but also how Flanagan Davis's theories speak to and might be implemented today.

Flanagan Davis's gender has undoubtedly played a role in the way she has been portrayed historically—and the relative lack of scholarly work on her—and this is evident in several problematic scholarly works on the FTP. For example, Kelly Ronayne, in *Stages of Modernity: The Federal Theatre Project and the New American Welfare* (2009), discusses Flanagan Davis at length in both positive and negative ways throughout her body chapters, but in her conclusion chapter writes that "ultimately, *FDR* and the FTP reshaped American liberalism by expanding the state, renovating the democratic party and helping forge the way for future movements" (106; emphasis added). In her conclusion, she attributes all ultimate credit to FDR (who did very little to actually shape the FTP beyond approving and backing-up its existence) and does not refer to Flanagan Davis once. Even stranger is Kenneth Bright's dissertation, which argues Flanagan Davis was not "devoted to a strict feminist approach to the development of a national theatre organization" (110) and connects this somehow to the argument that Flanagan Davis was responsible for community theater's decline during the life of the FTP. He cites statistics about fewer resident theaters existing at the FTP's close than there were at its inception and asserts that although such a trend "cannot be laid at Hallie Flanagan's doorstep, it is clear that her efforts emanating from a traditionally centralized agency, retarded the growth of the very institutions she sought to foster" (Bright 113)—despite Flanagan Davis's repeated arguments that the FTP must be decentralized, "start in the precinct," and receive local community buy-in to justify continued federal funding. I don't believe Bright's critique is entirely baseless, but I also don't believe it is fair to position such a critique as somehow connected to Flanagan Davis's own feminist ethos. Ultimately, I consider both Ronayne's and Bright's arguments to be flawed

because the *lived* failures of the FTP—as well as its successes—cannot be reduced to the fault or cause of any one person, be that FDR or Flanagan Davis. The FTP employed between 10,000 and 12,000 people in its peak years and reached an estimated 30 million audience members over less than four full years of existence. It was the result of the efforts and shortcomings of many. In this dissertation I do not mean to assign the FTP's successes (or failures) to Flanagan Davis alone nor give her sole credit for the project; I do mean to recover the interesting and valuable insights of an important historical figure, likely overlooked and criticized, in part, because of her gender.

Even when scholars write favorably of her, there are sometimes traces of gendered prejudice. For example, Rena Fraden generally speaks positively of Flanagan Davis and when critical of her, typically includes evidence and balanced statements. However, she also includes in her brief historical overview of Flanagan Davis, strange and irrelevant details such as that Flanagan Davis "would make a series of choices between career and family, always choosing the first over the second" (Fraden 30) while saying nothing similar of the male FTP administrators she discusses. Fraden also writes that "as a female director in a theatrical world dominated by men, she [Flanagan Davis] always nurtured friendships with men in power" (Fraden 30), was "susceptible herself to flattery" and "knew how to give it out" (Fraden 31)—such details, without any context for why they would matter, reveal a level of gendered bias (Flanagan Davis is judged as both a mother and a flirt). Bright, similarly, inappropriately comments on Flanagan Davis's shortcomings as a *mother* when assessing her feminist traits as *director* of the FTP (109).[9] In other words, when scholars recognize her, there is occasionally what feels like a hesitancy to

[9] Joanne Bentley (Flanagan Davis's stepdaughter) wrote a biography about Flanagan Davis, which also occasionally seems strangely focused on Flanagan Davis's shortcomings as a wife and mother. However, these details are far more appropriate within the context of a biography written by a stepdaughter (who, more than others, would have lived experience with Flanagan Davis as a wife and mother, and reason to care and write about such things) than an academic work about the FTP.

give her credit for what she has done. Irrelevant information is given to explain away her success and diminish her credibility, and while it is presented in somewhat round-about, academic language, the message is still the same: she flirted with men to get where she got; she was only successful because she neglected her children and made her husband take on the role of primary caregiver—her ideas and arguments aren't as important as how we judge her personal life as a woman and her inability to live up to the modest, devoted mother trope.

The Living Newspaper

While histories of the FTP don't do Flanagan Davis much justice, there are some scholarly works that do a better job. There is a small amount of rather compelling scholarship on Living Newspapers: a genre of theater critical to this project both because Flanagan Davis helped develop it and because she argued that it was an important—perhaps the most important—part of the FTP. Living Newspapers were, true to their name, plays that sought to dramatize the news. Flanagan Davis believed they should each focus on one social issue, involve thorough historical and contemporary research into that issue, and use montage, parallel structure, and a loudspeaker narrator to explore said issue. The scholarship available on Living Newspapers often comes much closer to giving Flanagan Davis the theoretical credit I argue she deserves and occasionally presents Flanagan Davis's work as explicitly rhetorical and/or civic. These works move away from presenting the FTP as history and assessing the degree to which it lived up to Flanagan Davis's goals, and towards analyses of the features of Living Newspapers and how we can learn from them. Sam Smiley, in a 1968 article titled "Rhetoric on Stage in Living Newspapers," argues Living Newspapers can be best understood as "didactic drama," existing in "the no-man's-land between rhetoric and poetry" (Smiley 29). Smiley sets out to identify the structures of "didactic drama" by analyzing Living Newspaper plays, thus asserting that Living Newspapers can provide insight into the broader concept of rhetorical theater. Similarly, in her

recent dissertation Carol Beth Wynstra argues that rhetorical criticism can help us to better understand instances of socially focused theatre and lists Living Newspapers as one of several examples of theatre that has "assumed the same function as rhetoric" because they are meant to persuade specific audiences in specific contexts (Wynstra 80). She illustrates how analyzing Living Newspapers through a rhetorical lens can help us understand how theater works socially, again acknowledging the value of the Living Newspaper beyond the history of the FTP. Both of these works reveal important traits of Living Newspapers (discussed more in Ch. 3), but they also both rely solely on Aristotle's theories of rhetoric to explore the genre. While this is a wonderful start to exploring Living Newspapers, I do not believe using Aristotle as a rhetorical lens does the genre full justice. I do not mean to imply here that Aristotle's theories are not useful, but rather that Living Newspapers (and Flanagan Davis) can be better understood through modern understandings of rhetoric, which are more dialogic, communal, and inclusive of multimodal communication than those presented by Aristotle.

Another theater scholar, Christine Mudarri, has done great work to bring recognition to Flanagan Davis's influence on the Living Newspaper genre. She overtly argues that Flanagan Davis should be given more credit for developing the genre, calling attention to how, even though Flanagan Davis "began to articulate the forms, derived from techniques learned in Russia, . . . [these] formal characteristics . . . were later attributed to Bertolt Brecht" (Mudarri 1)—here again we see Flanagan Davis's credit being obscured and given to a male (although Mudarri has helped to correct this instance). Mudarri's analysis of the Living Newspaper genre provides insight into Flanagan Davis's views on theater, but, unlike Smiley and Wynstra, Mudarri does not explicitly invoke rhetoric as a lens. She does, however, like Smiley and Wynstra, clearly connect the Living Newspaper genre to democratic functions. Mudarri explains

that "Flanagan sought to establish a theatre that could be truly American in that it would be democratic—representing all voices, and in that it would stimulate independent thought in examination of the ideas brought forward" (11); she reads the closing of the FTP as a commentary on the viability of such a democratic space in the 1930s. Similarly, Smiley claims Living Newspaper plays "might be identified metaphorically as deliberative speeches delivered in the congress of men" (36), and Wynstra states that "the Federal Theatre Project . . . injected art in democracy while at the same time seeking democracy in art" (80).

While the insights of Mudarri, Smiley and Wynstra have proven invaluable for this project, both in their pointing towards Flanagan Davis's civic and rhetorical nature, and in their analyses of certain features of the Living Newspaper genre, my goals still differ from theirs in two important ways. First, while I focus on the Living Newspaper genre in Chapter 3 as an important part of the FTP, the overall goal of this project is to reveal Flanagan Davis's theories about the FTP and the role of theater in democracy more broadly, rather than her theories about the Living Newspaper. The features of Living Newspapers are important to this project, not as ends in themselves, but because they illustrate one way Flanagan Davis's broader goals and strategies for the FTP played out in practice, on the micro- or ground-level of individual theater performances. Second, the scholars discussed in this section (and most in this literature review) are predominantly associated with the field of theater; as such, it should be unsurprising that, as a rhetorical scholar, I plan to draw on more varied and modern rhetorical theory in this project.

Rhetoric and Literature Scholarship on Flanagan Davis

While most of the scholarship on Flanagan Davis and the FTP comes from theater scholars, categorizing said scholarship often proves difficult. Many theater scholars have degrees in literature and work in English departments, and most of the scholars who discuss Flanagan Davis's *rhetoric* are affiliated with literature or theater studies departments. This section

addresses the scholarship on Flanagan Davis and the FTP that appears to come from *within* the field of rhetoric at least to some degree.[10] As mentioned above, George et al. note Flanagan Davis as one of many women from the inter-war period whose recovery may prove worthwhile; this is one of very few direct mentions of Flanagan Davis explicitly in the field of rhetoric. Michael Denning, a historian sensitive to cultural, working-class rhetorics, also briefly discusses Flanagan Davis and describes her as the most radical of the Federal Arts directors, but predominantly in effort to, like previous works discussed, portray history (80).

Of the scholarship that focuses on Flanagan Davis, an article by Kate Dossett (2013) may employ the most rhetorical perspective. She analyzes Flanagan Davis's rhetoric of "social stewardship" during the Dies Committee hearings. While insightful, Dossett deals with Flanagan Davis's rhetoric within the context of the courtroom rather than her ideas about the FTP and how it could improve democracy. I would also like to note here that Rena Fraden's work, discussed above, often takes on a more rhetorical perspective than much of the other scholarship previously referenced. She looks at how the rhetorical concept of "authenticity," used by FTP directors and administrators, worked both to support and silence marginalized voices (FTP actors, playwrights, and audiences), and discusses the "rhetoric of inclusion" which, she argues, was pervasive amongst FTP administrators but wasn't always reflected in their practices (20). While useful, her analysis does not focus primarily on Flanagan Davis's arguments, but rather on the practices of many different FTP directors and administrators (which did not always align with what Flanagan Davis argued).

Finally, David Sheridan, Jim Rodolfo and Anthony J. Michel (who specialize in new media rhetorics) use a Living Newspaper play as an example of multimodal rhetoric

[10] This is not to indicate that the theater scholars who draw on Aristotle do not count as employing important rhetorical perspectives, but, admittedly, framing Aristotle as "fresh tools" (Wynstra 116) indicates a background in theater, rather than one in rhetoric.

characterized by distributed agency and note the potential usefulness of having rhetoric students compose such plays. Sheridan et al. analyze the mystery surrounding a deleted Living Newspaper scene titled "Cotton Patch." While there are clues about why this scene was deleted—it came across as racist—Sheridan et al. argue that we are unable to determine whose agency it was that caused the scene to come across as racist; was it the playwright's, the actors,' the director's? Their work helps to explore how agency within the Federal Theater was not only distributed across many people, but also infinitely more complicated than it may seem (especially when it came to representing marginalized groups). While this helps to reiterate the importance of not equating FTP practice with the agency of any one person (Flanagan Davis or others), Sheridan et al. do not discuss Flanagan Davis or explore how the Living Newspaper was meant to work within the context of the FTP.

No one to date has *explicitly* framed Flanagan Davis as a rhetorician or civic theorist, or used her arguments and practices to cultivate a theory about the rhetorical role of theater in democracy. The goals of this project are therefore, to a) recover Hallie Flanagan Davis for the field of rhetoric, and b) articulate a rhetorical theory, based on Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices about how theater, and specifically the FTP, could improve democracy. Below I expand upon the research and analysis process that led me to such a theory.

Research and Analysis Process

My research and analysis process was largely motivated by grounded theory methodology: an approach to building theories out of large quantities of qualitative data pertaining to practices. I did not start this project with the intention of engaging grounded theory methodology, but as I attempted to articulate my intuitive processes of reading, coding, synthesizing and organizing vast amounts of archival data, it was brought to my attention that I

had already, in many ways, been implementing grounded theory methodology. About halfway through organizing my archival notes and codes, I shifted from unintentionally to intentionally carrying out grounded theory research. Before giving an overview of this methodology and explaining how it worked in the context of my project, I first outline my research questions and objects of study. Following my discussion of grounded theory, I explain the civic-rhetorical lens I employ in this project and why I believe such a lens is useful for cultivating theory with Flanagan Davis.

Research Questions

The primary questions guiding this project are: what are Flanagan Davis theories about how theater can improve democracy, and more specifically, what are her theories about how the FTP could improve democracy? In grounded theory methodology, research questions are meant to emerge from initial data-gathering and analysis. Similarly, my research questions were motivated by my initial research into Flanagan Davis. *Arena* was the first of her books I read, and by the end of the book, it was clear to me she believed the FTP could provide something rhetorical that democracy was missing. In its final pages, for example, she defends the FTP's existence by asking,

> Is not the need of *an accurate and brilliant means of communication* particularly urgent today, when conflicting ideas of government are contending for hemispheres? At such a time, can anyone doubt that democracy—which is never won but always to be won—in order to demand the fullest allegiance from the minds and emotions of men, must be *clearly defined and dynamically articulate*? (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 372; emphasis added)

My main goal in this project, from early on, was to understand Flanagan Davis's arguments about how theater—and specifically the FTP—could work to improve democracy by functioning as such a "brilliant means of communication."

Objects of Study

To answer the questions above, this project looks to both Flanagan Davis's published and archival materials. The timing of the FTP makes issues of censorship a prime consideration, and archival records often provide uncensored documents. The FTP began when the communist party was alive and legal in America, and ended as the Red Scare took hold and communism became a bad word; it began during a time when women, who were gaining social and political agency and equity, would soon be thrust back into more conservative conceptions of gender as the 50s took hold (George et al.). Much of what was acceptable when the FTP began in 1935 was considered dangerous by its closure in 1939 and abhorrent by 1950. Mudarri suggests, for example, that Flanagan Davis may have forgone taking more credit for the Living Newspaper genre in order to decrease how "radical" she appeared before the Dies Committee, stating that if "Flanagan had taken any playwright credit for Living Newspapers during that time, she would have weakened her ability to defend the FTP" (36).

Flanagan Davis's archival materials were therefore critical to this project.[11] She donated to the New York Public Library 46 boxes of personal writing and documents, access to which provided a richer and more complete understanding of her arguments. In addition to containing work that has not been edited or censored, this archival material often presents Flanagan Davis's rhetorical theories from angles not found in her published works. Included in these materials are Flanagan Davis's class notes for courses she taught, as well as drafts and copies of articles and

[11] Thanks to a short-term research fellowship from the New York Public Library, I was able to reside in New York for a month and work full-time exploring Flanagan Davis's archival materials.

newsletters dealing with the FTP, speeches given to FTP directors and administrators, and correspondence with publishers, colleagues, and friends.

The letters found in her archival materials are especially helpful, providing clues into how she might have wanted us to read not only her published materials but also the plays produced through the FTP. For example, she wrote expressing her gratitude to *Arena* publishers Pearce, Duell and Sloan: "I suppose all authors feel great devotion for their publishers. . . . *Arena* is a book on which few publishers would have taken a chance; you not only took that chance but did everything possible to make the book reflect the project in the clearest and most accurate way" (Letter to Pearce, Duell, and Sloan). This letter indicates that *Arena* was most likely not censored to a degree that bothered Flanagan Davis and enables us to more confidently read it as a reflection of her arguments (at least to an extent). Other correspondence includes Flanagan Davis's critiques and opinions on plays—what she thought their weaknesses were and how they could be stronger—providing clues into how to read certain aspects of theater through Flanagan Davis's eyes.

In addition to providing insight into how Flanagan Davis felt about her published works and the plays put on by the FTP, these letters also help to situate her among her contemporaries. As Gesa Kirsch reminds us in *Beyond the Archives: Research as Lived Practice*: "it is the researcher's job to put these documents into a meaningful context" (24). The archives contain correspondence between Flanagan Davis and Eleanor Roosevelt, Muriel Rukeyser, T. S. Eliot and Malcolm Cowley, for example, which helps to establish Flanagan Davis's relationships to other major 1930s political figures and artists. Putting Flanagan Davis in conversation with her contemporaries allows us to begin to weave history around her and thus weave her *into* history, positioning her as an active and influential participant in society rather than as an add-on:

someone who exists in the historical record but who doesn't shape or interact with society outside of her immediate sphere of influence. As Lu Ming Mao states in the published round-table discussion "Octalog III: The Politics of Historiography": "the art of recontextualization means negotiating, both dialectically and perpetually, between developing a localized narrative and searching for its new and broader significance within and outside its own tradition" (Murphy et al. 120). While the localized narrative I explore is centered on Flanagan Davis and the FTP, I argue that its broader significance lies in what it contributes to democracy and civic-rhetorical understanding.

More than anything else, though, I draw on Flanagan Davis's archival materials so as to better understand her arguments and how those arguments might speak to the present. Here I align myself with Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch, who phrase eloquently one of the ultimate benefits of archival work: "if we consciously and carefully activate the materials in the archives, we might discover ways to address the present scholarly moment meaningfully and announce the near future insightfully" (337). In this project, *activating* Flanagan Davis's archival materials means cultivating them from stories and arguments bound to the 1930s into a theory capable of being transported to today's context. I now turn to a discussion of grounded theory methodology and how it helped me to accomplish such theory-building.

Constructivist/ Feminist Grounded Theory Method

Sociologists Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser first articulated grounded theory research methodology in 1967. They sought to provide a methodology (complete with step by step methods) for building theories inductively from large sets of qualitative data. The inductive nature of grounded theory research is intended to mitigate the researcher's influence over the results, allowing things such as hypotheses, coding schemes, and theoretical frameworks to emerge over the course of the study, dictated by the data and results of the research rather than

the researcher's initial ideas about it. In fact, many grounded theorists consider *emergence* to be one of the most important principles of grounded theory (Bunn, Glaser). The large qualitative data sets used in grounded theory research typically involve data about *practices*: for example, interviews with medical professionals about their personal practices in specific patient situations. Grounded theory methodology involves comparing and analyzing data about such practices so portable theories—condensed, context-cognizant syntheses about what experts do in the face of [insert situation being studied here]—can *emerge*.

While Flanagan Davis occasionally writes in a way that could be considered "theoretical," more often her theories are implied in her statements about goals and practices. There are clues indicating Flanagan Davis may have been "tempt[ed]" to write her theories down but believed her time was better spent writing stories of practice, which she seemed to believe were more valuable. In a letter to Malcolm Cowley, she asks, "don't you think it immoral of you to tempt me to write about my own ideas of 'what the theatre would be like in Utopia' when I am trying to write what it was like under the far from Utopian Federal Theatre?" (1940). Similarly, in a letter to her husband Philip Davis, she asserts that "we are more apt to get something out of a great flood of people's experience than out of a previous, anemic drop of art theory" (1936). As such, it is not surprising *Arena* reads more like a narrative about experience than a theoretical treatise, making it an excellent place to begin uncovering Flanagan Davis's own civic-rhetorical practices regarding the FTP but not a book about her theories per se.

I therefore began this project with a large set of data about Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices and used grounded theory methodology to transform these arguments and practices into a theory. However, while grounded theory is often used to explore archival data, it is not typically applied to data about only one person. More commonly, grounded theory methodology

is applied to sets of data containing the perspectives of many different people, so as to build theory based on the practices and insights of many and potentially overcome individual error or hypocrisy, highlighting comparison between participants as an important aspect of analysis in grounded theory. My task differs here; rather than attempting to build theory grounded in the lived practices of many, I aim to build theory grounded in a single person's goals and practices. In doing so, I do not wish to imply that Flanagan Davis is the only person whose arguments and practices regarding the FTP or civic-rhetorical theater may provide useful insights nor that her practices are infallible, but rather that her arguments are *important and compelling enough,* and spread out across a large enough of set of materials, that constructing them into portable theories, capable of being carried into the present is worthwhile. Engaging in comparison thus looks a little different in this project than in more standard grounded theory projects: I compare Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices about theater and democracy overall (keystones), to her arguments about the Living Newspaper genre (micro-features), to her arguments about the structure and organization of the FTP (macro-features).

More specifically, my research aligns with what is referred to as "second generation" grounded theory, which takes on a constructivist epistemology as opposed to the more positivistic epistemology found in some (usually older) works of grounded theory. Jenny Bunn, an archival and records management specialist, explains how second generation grounded theory acknowledges that the researcher's perspective will always influence the theories yielded to some degree, no matter how inductive or grounded the research process is (Bunn 518). Like other second generation grounded theorists, in acknowledging the influence I will certainly have over the results of this project, I do not mean to imply that I have foregone any attempt at objectivity. Rather, I both attempt to limit my influence over Flanagan Davis's arguments and

acknowledge that I will not be able to do so completely. I do not aim to recover Flanagan Davis's theories in any objective manner but rather work to cultivate a theoretical ecosystem *with her,* drawing on her arguments and practices as the keystone species, roots and soil of the ecosystem (what we begin with and what everything grows from and depends on) and gradually adding in my own voice and modern rhetorical understanding as the project progresses (aiming to support and develop the ecosystem without altering it too greatly). I believe Flanagan Davis would, overall, agree with the theory presented by this project. However, because I read her arguments and practices through a rhetorical lens and add in elements of very current rhetorical theories, I don't believe she would have articulated her ideas in the language I use, especially towards the end of this project.

As a result of how well constructivist grounded theory facilitated the work of this project, I propose that it is equipped to accomplish feminist rhetorical research and specifically research aiming for something in between *feminist recovery* and *theory generation from said recovery*. Nursing researchers Marilyn Plummer and Lynn E. Young argue that second generation grounded theory aligns with many feminist research principles, specifically in its acknowledgement of the role of the researcher, its denial of objective reality, and its privileging of lived practice in the building of theory (307). I'd like to add to this that grounded theory is also equipped to help recover the theories of women (and other marginalized groups) who historically did not often write in ways acknowledged as theory but who did often engage in practices motivated by unique and important theoretical positions. I believe this is true *if* there is a) a large amount of data available that can be used for purposes of comparison, and b) evidence that the originators of the theory want or would have wanted their theories known (such as the

case with Flanagan Davis, who referred to theory writing as something that appealed to her but she could not prioritize).

Second generation grounded theory provides us with a way to better work *with* the people we aim to recover to cultivate their arguments and practices into theories. Of course, this is not to say we should force all insights to conform to the academically accepted manner of writing theory nor that we should only value the insights conforming to such standards; there is great value to challenging the canon and discourse of academic theory, to challenging the value of abstracted, "context-independent" theory. However, there is also value in reaching back into history and working with women and minorities to bring their valuable, overlooked ideas to the academic table and give them credit for the insights they contribute to our world. I believe in doing so, we can potentially challenge the canon and discourse of academic theory *from within* by bringing attention to the valuable theories we can spot if we broaden our ideas about where we might find theories and what they might look like. Such results, however, would depend not only upon the research giving ultimate credit to those who provide the roots of the theory but also explicitly revealing that its insights are not possible without an expanded view of what counts as theory. As such, I request that the ultimate credit for this project go to Flanagan Davis and would like to note that this project is not possible without an expanded view of theory.

As aforementioned, my research process actually did not begin with the intent of using grounded theory methods. My lived research processes in the archives, however, more or less mirrored, from the beginning, the processes recommended by grounded theorists. Grounded theory methods begin with researchers open-coding their data without a hypothesis. That is, the researcher starts by reading data line by line, coding each piece. Throughout this process, the researcher writes memos: notes about emerging connections between codes. After reading over

codes and memos and contemplating their connections, the researcher combines the most intimately connected codes into *concepts*: ideas more complete than any single code. For example, as I read and coded archival materials, I noticed the repetition not only of the phrases "dangerous theater," "for theater to be worth its salt, it must have in that salt a sprinkling of gunpowder," and words relating to gunpowder metaphors, like "explosive" and "shatter," but also the repeated argument that theater was a "creative force" working against "destructive forces" like war. I coded for all of these phrases separately, but in looking over my memos, it became obvious that they were all connected conceptually. When I brought these codes together, they revealed that Flanagan Davis saw theater as a medium for social change, specifically in its ability to question or "shatter" what is accepted as "normal" and provide new ways of seeing the world: a *concept* more complete than any of the phrases or *codes* above. (This process of comparing and combining codes into concepts will be explained more thoroughly in chapter 2.)

Once the researcher has connected codes into concepts, she then must organize concepts into *categories*, which together create a *theory*. I began this process in chapter 2, attempting to locate Flanagan Davis's most important and repeated arguments about how theater could improve democracy. I ended up with eight keystone concepts. Four of them addressed what could be understood as theatrical conditions Flanagan Davis believed must be met for theater to support and enhance democracy. The other four addressed what could be understood as specific ways the FTP could support and enhance democracy, or rather, specific civic trajectories it could have. I therefore organized these keystone concepts in two categories: *theatrical/rhetorical conditions* and *their resulting civic trajectories*. However, I would like to reiterate here that these concepts should be conceived of as part of a theory ecosystem—messy, interconnected and interdependent—rather than as eight distinct concepts divided cleanly into two categories of

four. I have gone through many, many different organizational schemes before arriving at those presented in this project, and I believe those presented in this project are only satisfactory with the added implementation of the ecological metaphor (recommended by Fleckenstein et al.).

As noted above, grounded theory research requires a continual and in-depth process of comparison (Bunn, Glaser). In light of such, and in attempt to bring different levels of Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices into the theories I build, I do not stop at identifying the eight keystone concepts above. Instead, I go on to explore her arguments about both the features of the Living Newspaper (micro-features) and the features of the broad structure and organization of the FTP (macro-features), identifying these features through a process similar to the one described above (coding, then comparing and combining codes) but with a more specific coding scope (respectively: codes related to Living Newspapers and codes related to FTP structure and organization). I refer to these as *micro*- and *macro*-features so as to imply a relationship between the two: micro-features explore how to improve democracy on the ground level, and macro-features explore how to improve it from the 1000 feet up, organizational perspective, but they are both part of the same theory-ecosystem, both theoretically reliant on the same keystone species and, I would add, both reliant on each other to some degree. I continually compare these micro- and macro-features with the eight keystones previously discussed so as to explore the intersections between Flanagan Davis's arguments about theater as a democratic institution, and her arguments about how the FTP could work at both the micro (individual performance) and macro (national organization) level. These comparisons, in addition to being a critical component of grounded theory methodology, are also helpful for exploring her arguments as an ecosystem: a complex network of interconnected concepts.

Up to this point in my process (in alignment with grounded theory methodology), the focus has been on Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices in her own terms. However, the purpose of this project isn't only to synthesize and organize Flanagan Davis's own arguments but also to translate them in such a way as to illuminate the democratic and rhetorical insights we can glean from her work. As such, the next stage of my research process involves applying a civic-rhetorical theoretical framework, discussed below.

Theoretical Framework

This project employs what I refer to as a *civic-rhetorical* theoretical framework, which asks us to read Flanagan Davis's arguments about how theater can improve democracy as arguments about how rhetoric can improve democracy. This lens draws on rhetorical approaches to civic participation, specifically critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories. Critical literacy pedagogies ask how it is we can best educate people to question power structures and engage in thoughtful democratic decision-making. Public sphere theories, on the other hand, ask how approaches to rhetoric can improve civic participation. Because this is a grounded theory research project, the theoretical framework doesn't explicitly come into play until the second half of this dissertation and was developed out of the initial results of my analysis, rather than being put into place before I began the research (as I will discuss further in chapter 2).

I employ a civic-rhetorical lens for primarily two purposes: first, to translate Flanagan Davis's arguments into rhetorical terms to make it easier to put them into conversation with other rhetorical theories, and second, to explore the rhetorical implications of her arguments and thereby illuminate their relevance for today. This lens is, therefore, not used to *identify* Flanagan Davis's arguments, but rather to translate and explore them—to flesh out their rhetorical insights and implications.

Below, I first explain what it means to read Flanagan Davis's theories in terms of critical literacy pedagogies, then what it means to read them in terms of public sphere theories. This requires giving a brief overview of critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories, their main objectives, questions and tensions. I will discuss concepts from critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories in more depth in the chapters following this one; in this chapter I give an overview of these areas of inquiry so that, when later in-depth discussions arise, those discussions can be connected back to larger conversations rather than seeming random or disjointed. Before that, however, I'd like to note two important qualities of these areas of inquiry.

First, critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories overlap in many meaningful ways, and drawing definite lines around them is a somewhat arbitrary endeavor. Many critical literacy pedagogues see the classroom as a space for enacting public sphere theories and asking students to directly engage in "public" communication capable of extending beyond the walls of the classroom, and many public sphere theorists explore the kinds of education (via classroom or media) that would be needed to improve civic engagement. Patricia Roberts-Miller, for example, asks us to see how different approaches to public sphere communication yield different and potentially conflicting approaches to rhetorical education (*Deliberate Conflict*). While I discuss critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories separately in the overview that follows, I see them as intimately linked. This link is partially why I refer to the combination of the two as simply *civic-rhetorical theories:* I believe it is more useful to understand them as part of the same area of inquiry than it is to see them as distinct.

Second, both areas of inquiry are generally considered to have started more than 25 years *after* Flanagan Davis was appointed Director of the Federal Theatre Project. Public sphere theory is often said to have formally begun in 1962 with Jurgen Habermas's *The Structural*

Transformation of the Public Sphere, and critical literacy pedagogies in 1968 with Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* As such, most (but not all) of the theories I use to explore Flanagan Davis's arguments were written after the FTP closed (rhetorical theories not quite available in the 1930s).However, there are a couple of contemporaries of Flanagan Davis who have been noted in retrospect as important critical literacy pedagogues and public sphere theorists active *before* the more formal establishment of either: John Dewey (Aronowitz and Giroux, Stob) and Kenneth Burke (Enoch, Stob).[12] If Dewey and Burke were engaging with debates that were in many ways ahead of their time, Flanagan Davis was doing so right along with them.

Reading Flanagan Davis's theories as critical literacy pedagogies:

Reading Flanagan Davis's theories as critical literacy pedagogies means reading theater performances as moments of education for civic engagement, reading theater audiences as students, and theater workers as teachers. Some of the main questions that critical literacy pedagogies explore are: *what does improved civic engagement look like, how can rhetorical education inspire such improved engagement, how can rhetorical education help citizens to protect and ensure their right to a voice/vote, how can it help them to identify power structures, what does a democratic classroom look like, and how can teachers avoid being authoritarian*? It is generally agreed upon by critical literacy pedagogues that students should leave the classroom better able to think for themselves, rather than conforming to a specific mold of what the teacher thinks is best, and that universities should be spaces for engaging with conflict and for actively and thoughtfully *producing* rather than passively *reproducing* culture, positioning the classroom as a kind of public sphere in itself (Giroux, Shor, Weisser).

[12] There is extensive evidence that Dewey and Flanagan Davis knew of and supported each other. Dewey funded one of the FTP's productions—a play called Chalk Dust about education (*Arena*), and archival documents reveal that he signed petitions against the closing of the FTP. Flanagan Davis's teaching notes from the mid-forties to mid-fifties mention Dewey on multiple occasions. There is little to no evidence she and Burke were acquainted, although Malcolm Cowley does boast about Flanagan Davis's insightfulness to Burke in a 1941 letter.

As Linda Adler-Kassner explains, one of the core components of critical pedagogies is the exploration of the relationship between the self and the outside world, and how that relationship changes (24). Freire refers to such understanding as *conscientization* or critical consciousness (54) and suggests that teachers help students develop critical consciousness by posing problems related to important topics in students' lives and having them write about those problems (79). In her chapter titled "Critical Pedagogy: Dreaming of Democracy," Ann George presents a different approach to helping students to gain critical consciousness; she enlists Burke's theory of terministic screens to help students understand the ways we process and make sense of inputs from the external world.

One of the most important debates in critical literacy pedagogies involves the relationship between teachers and students. Freire criticizes what he calls "the banking method" of teaching: a method that positions students as empty banks into which the intellectually superior, authoritarian teacher deposits knowledge, where the teacher always knows best (72). Freire, and most critical literacy pedagogues since, argue against the banking method and more traditional, unidirectional understandings of the teacher/student relationship in favor of more dialogic, democratic relationships between students and teacher, in which the knowledge of both teacher and student is valued and respected. Gerald Graff and Ira Shor, for example, aim to involve students in co-creating their own educational experiences. Graff does so by engaging students in discussions about important conflicts within the university, inviting them into the actual university "polis" and giving them a chance to participate (*Beyond the Culture Wars*), and Shor by inviting students to speak out against assignments and work to collaboratively change their course when they felt unsatisfied by how it was going (*When Students Have Power*).

Much of this attention to the student/teacher relationship comes from a desire not to wield complete power over students similar to how authoritarian and oppressive systems do. Freire argues that the topic of oppression should be directly addressed in the classroom as an important way of making students aware of and able to notice it. While the specifics of discussing "oppression" in the classroom have been much debated by critical literacy pedagogues, most seem to agree that teachers should be aware of their position of power and work to mitigate their own authority somehow. Many of the debates about teaching the concept of "oppression" actually center on trying to avoid the "teacher knows best" mentality. Gregory Jay and Gerald Graff, for example, argue that teachers often present the categories of oppressed and oppressor as stable: categories the teacher knows and the students must learn, which begins to sound similar to the banking method. As an alternative, they argue for engaging students in exploring major conflicts within the university, for allowing students into the world of university decision-making—a world that impacts them but they are often left out of; a world Jay and Graff claim is less likely to be overly politicized or simplified by the teacher (*A Critique of Critical Pedagogy*). Other critical pedagogues argue, on the other hand, that the privileging of academic discourses and issues can prevent students from being able to fully engage in the world outside academia and claim that asking students to engage with life and "the public" *outside* the university is necessary if we want to challenge the authority of academic discourse (Sheridan et al.; Weisser).

Jeff Smith points to another important problem with "radical" pedagogies that, as Ann George argues, is also a relevant criticism for *critical* pedagogies. This problem also centers on how to ensure the teacher isn't controlling the classroom in an authoritarian manner: what if students don't want to collaborate in the co-creation of a class or university or culture? What if they don't want to learn to question authority but rather to succeed under that authority, to

potentially one day become that authority (George 101)? Does the teacher do students a disservice by teaching what the teacher wants and not what students want (and may need to succeed financially)? If the teacher decides teaching students to question authority is important enough to include in the curriculum, what happens if those students question the teacher's authority to decide such? This reveals the main catch-22 or double bind I'd like to identify in terms of critical literacy pedagogies: dialogic, democratic rhetoric requires the audience (or students) to contribute in certain ways but *what if they don't want to?* What happens when an audience says "no thanks, we came here to let you tell us what to think/vote/etc."? Is it more democratic to take their word on what they want or to force them into more dialogic engagement?

Reading Flanagan Davis's theories as critical literacy pedagogies means asking how her arguments connect and compare with those made by other critical literacy pedagogues, but also, what the implications of her arguments are in terms of the relationship between speakers and audiences (teachers and students). If, like Freire, Flanagan Davis advocates for helping audiences identify oppression, how does she advocate deciding who is being oppressed and who is doing the oppressing—and who gets to determine that? If Flanagan Davis advocates teaching through problem-posing, which problems does she pose, and how does she suggest the audience approach such problems? Does she argue for teaching audiences to be aware of the relationship between themselves and the outside world (critical consciousness), and if so, how? These questions will be explored in chapters 3, 4, and 5 as I work to establish Flanagan Davis as a critical literacy pedagogue.

Reading Flanagan Davis's theories as public sphere theories:

Reading Flanagan Davis's theories as public sphere theories means reading theater performances as calling to and shaping the ways publics form, understand themselves, and

communicate. Before giving an overview of public sphere theory, I should explain, briefly, what the term "public(s)" refers to in the context of this project. Public sphere theorists generally do not agree on what makes or qualifies a *public* or *publics*, but in broad terms publics can be described as unstable, impermanent groups of people who are connected by something. Dewey argues that publics come into being as the result of some negative experience (108) while Michael Warner argues that they come into being simply by being addressed (67). The Green Party is thus a kind of public, but a local activist group or online support-community would also be kinds of publics, and according to Warner, so are the fans of different TV shows. Within the field of rhetoric, publics are often defined and analyzed by their communication and decision-making styles, preferences, goals and values. (Long, Roberts-Miller, Warner).

An overarching theme of public sphere theory is the search for the qualities and types of communication best suited to facilitate democratic decision-making. For example, Jurgen Habermas's foundational text outlines several rules of what he calls the liberal or bourgeois public sphere: the privileging of calm, critical-rational debate over emotional or passionate debate; the bracketing of private interests; focusing on "public" issues; and the moving toward consensus. Many public sphere theorists since have criticized these rules for their tendency to exclude many people from the discussion, for example, those who are impacted by issues to such a degree that they cannot engage in calm, unemotional debate, or those whose problems are considered by many to be private, such as domestic abuse or LGBT rights (Fraser, Warner). This concern—over who and what is being excluded by certain rules of debate and how we can make public sphere communication more inviting to all—is central to modern public sphere theory.

Exploring all of the different goals, strategies and rules noted by public sphere theorists is unfortunately beyond the scope of this project. Luckily, in *Deliberate Conflict,* Patricia Roberts-

Miller provides a useful heuristic for analyzing public sphere communication using two axes: the irenic/agonistic axis and the expressive/deliberative axis. Her irenic/agonistic axis looks at the degree to which a public sees more value in obtaining consensus and agreement (irenic) or in bringing different opinions together (agonistic) (Roberts-Miller 11). For example, my polite Southern family is very irenic and would do almost anything to avoid conflict (there is a "no politics" rule at all family gatherings). Most rhetoric graduate programs, however, are probably (or at least idealistically) more agonistic: seeing value in debate and the interaction between different perspectives. The expressive/ deliberative axis on the other hand, refers to the degree to which communication is for the purpose of "individuals expressing themselves" (expressive) or to "establish mutually binding policy" (Roberts-Miller 12). For example, the officers of a student organization coming together to update bylaws would be deliberative public communication, but the Occupy movement—an international social movement against wealth inequality, started in 2011—involved largely expressive communication; its goal was to make the voices of the "99%" audible, to *express* their perspectives, but as a movement, it was critiqued for its lack of clarity about any overarching policy arguments or solution-oriented goals (White). Roberts-Miller argues that publics can fall anywhere on these two axes; a public can be irenic and expressive (an AA meeting), irenic and deliberative (a jury), agonistic and expressive (a diverse art gallery), or agonistic and deliberative (a lively and divided but respectful town hall meeting).

I explain (and will later employ) this two-axis heuristic because it brings up many core issues in public sphere theories and as such, is a useful lens through which to read Flanagan Davis's arguments. On the surface, these axes help to identify and categorize the goals of public communication—how much does a public value consensus versus the bringing together of different ideas, policy-creation versus expression?—but they have many implications beyond

this. For example, the concept of consensus brings up important questions for public sphere theorists: if disagreement is *not* valued, what happens when disagreement occurs? The potential for censorship and minority-silencing here are great and must be attended to. If consensus is valued above disagreement: why? If disagreement is valued more, then how is it handled? How does it remain respectful? What is disagreement meant to yield? Who decides the rules of engaging disagreement? Who do those rules leave out? While expressive communication often comes with fewer rules, allowing a greater number of people to participate, it does not *necessarily* require people to think about or engage with different perspectives. What dangers does that present? If engaging with difference respectfully isn't required by rules, will it happen? These axes are loaded with implications about how inclusive or exclusive public communication is as well as what kind of results it may yield.

Perhaps the ultimate catch-22, or paradox, of public sphere theory is this: the more rules and regulations assigned to public communication, the greater the risk of people being excluded from entry into that communication; the fewer rules and regulations assigned, the greater the risk of low quality outcomes such as minimal to no conversation between people who have different opinions or high levels of manipulation between groups. Roberts-Miller, while clearly favoring agonistic, deliberative rhetoric in the context of democratic decision-making, acknowledges this catch-22 and the inability of any one type of public sphere rhetoric to yield the best results in all contexts. She argues that an awareness of this catch-22, as well as the benefits and dangers each type of public communication presents, is important to teaching or enacting any kind of successful public communication (Roberts-Miller, *Deliberate* 224).

The axes above imply certain things about rhetor/audience relationships (for example: irenic spheres will want audiences to all agree; agonistic spheres will appreciate audiences

differing in opinion). However, I'd like to take a moment to look further at how the rhetor/audience relationship is discussed in public sphere theory. The main question about the speaker/audience relationship brought up public sphere theory is actually quite similar to that brought up by critical literacy pedagogies: how dialogic is the relationship? The least dialogic rhetor/audience relationship would be one in which the rhetor has no concern with the perspectives or needs of the audience, desiring only to make the audience believe whatever the rhetor wants them to believe. The most extreme versions of this kind of speaker would fall into the category of *demagogue*: a speaker who employs whatever persuasive rhetorical strategies are available, regardless of how ethical or how they impact the audience, so as to achieve some desired results (Roberts-Miller, *Demagoguery*). A demagogic relationship would be categorized as irenic and deliberative: seeking consensus on decisions that yield positive results for one person or small group of persons. On the opposite side, the *most* dialogic relationship would be a highly agonistic one, one in which the lines between speaker and audience blur: both parties talk, listen, and value what the other says. I believe the term "invitational rhetoric" is useful here. Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin propose that not all rhetoric is for the purpose of persuasion and argue instead for the existence of *invitational* rhetoric: rhetoric that invites audiences into dialogue and problem-solving. While the word "dialogic" implies two-way conversation, the concept of invitational rhetoric goes a step further to require that both parties are invited into the meaning-making process and thus, are taken seriously.

It is important to note, however, that public sphere theory actually focuses less on how individual rhetors speak to audiences (or publics) and more on how different groups (or publics) speak to each other. The concept of "in-group/ out-group rationality" helps to explain the dangers of what happens when groups or publics *don't* communicate with each other and instead

focus only on the needs, desires, and opinions of their own group—that is, when groups or publics are invitational or dialogic with people in their "in-group" but dismissive of the opinions of people who are not in said "in-group" and thus are part of the "out-group." In-group/out-group rationality is characterized by not only aligning oneself with the opinions of one's in-group and viewing one's in-group with unwavering favor but also by positioning oneself against the opinions of any out-group and judging out-group members through a disproportionately strict and often unreasonable set of standards. In-group/out-group rationality is considered one of the biggest dangers posed to public sphere communication because it yields decision-making based predominantly (if not solely) on group identity rather than evidence, logic, or debate, and thus has a high potential for pitting groups against each other and a low potential for producing policies capable of benefitting all involved. In other words, in-group/out-group rationality prevents dialogue across difference and creates an "us versus them" atmosphere rather than encouraging rhetorical exchange as a means of coming to group decisions. Demagogues are known for encouraging this in-group/out-group orientation to decision-making, as it makes different groups easier to manipulate (Roberts-Miller, *Demagoguery*).

Reading Flanagan Davis's arguments through a civic-rhetorical lens thus involves asking how Flanagan Davis saw the FTP working to create consensus (irenic) and/or to engage different opinions (agonistic), how she believed the FTP could be an expressive endeavor and/or perhaps one meant to yield conclusions about mutually binding policy (deliberative), along with all of the questions and concerns outlined above, such as what she believed the rules of communication should be, who was invited or excluded by those rules, how invitational (dialogic) versus unidirectional she structured the FTP to be, and what her orientation to in-group/out-group rationality was. As I explore Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices in the remaining

chapters, I will refer back to the language of critical literacy and public sphere theory used here, and will expand upon concepts that speak to her arguments.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter 2, I use grounded theory methods to identify eight concepts that I argue are the keystone species of Flanagan Davis's theory ecology. Four of those concepts can be understood as theatrical conditions that must be met in order for theater to have a positive impact on democracy, and the other four can be understood as different trajectories theater can take in order to improve democracy. I do not bring the civic-rhetorical lens discussed above into this chapter, as the goal of this chapter is to articulate the keystones of Flanagan Davis's arguments in her own terms. These keystones guide my analysis throughout the remaining chapters and in later chapters are explored for their rhetorical insights.

Chapter 3 also employs grounded theory, but this time to identify the main features of Living Newspaper plays which, in addition to being attributed largely to Flanagan Davis, are said to have "best reflected Flanagan's philosophy of theatre because they educated audiences, dramatizing matters of public concern such as drought, public health, housing" (Mudarri 25). In this chapter, I read the features of the Living Newspaper genre (micro-features) for any insights they provide into the conditions and trajectories outlined in chapter 2. In addition, I read Living Newspaper micro-features through the civic-rhetorical lens outlined above, so as to translate those micro-features into more rhetorical terms and explore their rhetorical implications. Reading Living Newspapers as such reveals how Flanagan Davis believed theater could improve democracy on the ground level, in theaters with live audiences.

In Chapter 4, I then expand my focus to Flanagan Davis's arguments about the FTP as an infrastructure: her arguments about the breadth and variety of performances she believed should

be put on by the FTP, how those performances should be determined, and what such a breadth and variety could amount to—in other words, her arguments about the FTP's macro-features. Similar to chapter 3, this chapter analyzes how macro-features speak to the keystone concepts outlined in chapter 2 then reads macro-features through a civic-rhetorical lens (again so as to translate features into rhetorical terms and explore their rhetorical implications). This chapter helps to reveal how Flanagan Davis saw the FTP working, not only as a space for individual moments of civic engagement and education, but also as an infrastructure for the *continual facilitation of such*. Neglecting to analyze the FTP as such a means or infrastructure would be to overlook some of the most potent elements of Flanagan Davis's theories.

Chapter 5 discusses the implications that the results of this research may have, not for the FTP or the 1930s, but for today. I argue that the theory ecosystem identified by this project, rooted in Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices, and developed through the application of a civic-rhetorical lens, is just as relevant today as it was in the 1930s and provides a heuristic through which to analyze how current media-sharing platforms work to democratize culture and how they might do such work more effectively. I assert that rhetoricians have a key role to play in helping students and citizens understand multimodal rhetorical expressions as cultural materials and that the theory constructed in this project can help us to encourage and engage such understanding.

Chapter 2: Locating Flanagan Davis's Keystones Arguments

"I sometimes feel I will go crazy not being able to make this project what it should and might be."
-Hallie Flanagan Davis[13]

Introduction

In this chapter I identify Flanagan Davis's eight most central and important arguments about how theater—and specifically the Federal Theatre Project—could improve democracy. I refer to these as *keystone* arguments or concepts because all of her other arguments and concepts seem to depend upon them for survival. These eight arguments appear throughout her archival and published materials in many different contexts and combinations; their explicit repetition, as well as their tendency to undergird many of her other arguments, has led me to identify them as the most important components of how she understood the relationship between theater and democracy, and, moreover, how she understood theater's potential for improving democracy.

Four of these keystone arguments reveal different theatrical conditions Flanagan Davis believed must be met in order for theater to be capable of improving democracy. She argued that, in order to improve democracy:

1. Theater must be of, by, and for broad, varied audiences,
2. Theater must involve research and interpenetrate different fields,
3. Theater must translate life and reactions to the changing world into narrative struggles presented through bodies, and
4. Theater must inspire, in audiences, a balance between empathy and aesthetic distance.

The remaining four keystone arguments focus, not on what theater must do in order to improve democracy, but rather, *how* theater might improve democracy, or rather, the trajectories through which theater might support and facilitate democratic ideals. Flanagan Davis argues that, if the

[13] Letter to Philip H. Davis

above four theatrical conditions are met, theater will be able to improve democracy by functioning as:

1. A medium for civic education,
2. A medium for civic engagement,
3. A medium for protection against threats such of fascism and dictatorship, and
4. A medium for social change.

Flanagan Davis does not argue that if the four theatrical *conditions* are met theater will automatically achieve these latter four civic trajectories. Instead, she positions the four theatrical conditions as prerequisites that are necessary but not sufficient for the civic outcomes she sought. Before I begin unpacking these four theatrical conditions and four civic trajectories (the focus of this chapter), I expand on the methodology I use in this chapter: how I arrived at these eight keystones. Finally, at the end of this chapter I give a brief overview of the theatrical context in which Flanagan Davis was creating and enacting these keystone arguments so as to briefly situate her ideas within the larger field of theater, as well as in relationship to her contemporaries (again, in attempt to weave her into history, but also because this project is intended for those in the field of rhetoric who may be unfamiliar with the history of theater, and I believe such contextualizing information helpful for grounding into this project).

Research and Analysis Process

Grounded theory methodology guides much of my research process in this chapter. As I noted in chapter 1, grounded theory research is typically employed when there is a large set of data available and a desire to turn said data into a workable theory; this project began with such a large set and such a desire. While Flanagan Davis did not write down her theories about a "Utopian" Federal Theater—despite being asked to by Malcolm Cowley—she did write a lot,

and a significant amount of her writing is available either published or in library archives. Flanagan Davis's three published books,[14] several published articles, and 46 boxes of archival material donated to the New York Public Library make up my data, both for this chapter and this project in general.[15] The question motivating my search throughout this data was: what did Flanagan Davis argue about how theater, and specifically the FTP, could improve democracy? As I moved through her materials, noting different arguments and metaphors related to how she saw theater engaging with democracy, I began to accumulate a vast amount of claims and roughly thirty different codes for them, which were almost all connected in various complicated, important ways. Grounded theory methodology provided a way to organize such messy, interconnected codes and claims into the eight keystones (and two categories) explored here.

Most of Flanagan Davis's archival and published materials span the years 1928 to 1954, which includes several years leading up to and during the Federal Theatre Project, its closing, and roughly 14 years of her teaching and directing at Vassar and Smith Colleges for women after its close. The materials are predominantly textual but include occasional sketches and photographs. They contain everything from personal correspondence with family and colleagues, to drafts for speeches and lectures, to suggestions for friends about plays they were writing, to Federal Theater Project reports and playbills. They contain not only fond letters and positive reviews from then President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, but also from Albert Einstein's assistant, noted authors T.S. Eliot, Muriel Rukeyser, Susan Glaspell, W.E.B. Du Bois and Eugene O'Neil, and esteemed literary critics Malcolm Cowley, Brooks

[14] *Shifting Scenes of the Modern European Theatre* (1928)*, Arena: The History of the American Federal Theater* (1941)*,* and *Dynamo* (1943)

[15] I was able to look through 44 out of 46 boxes she donated; the two I didn't look at included correspondence and financial records from the Mellon Foundation about a Theatre Research Project, and Marionette scripts. These two boxes came in last in terms of which I thought would intuitively include Flanagan Davis's theories, but this is not to say they couldn't have provided great insights.

Atkinson, and Burns Mantle. Overall, her archival materials paint an image of an intelligent, thoughtful and dedicated woman who received impressive praise from colleagues, critics, and students. A woman who journaled poetically about landscapes as she traveled to different regions in America, who was well aware of the dangers of fascism and the red scare, and who believed, at a core level, in the democratization of both politics and culture, and the power of art to aid in such democratization.

As discussed in chapter 1, grounded theory methodology asks researchers to open-code data and write memos—thorough notes—about emerging trends and connections between codes, to analyze codes and memos, and then to combine interrelated codes to create concepts. In the previous chapter I use the example of the phrase or code *dangerous theater*, which taken alone could mean many things. It isn't until looking at its entanglement with other repeated phrases (codes) that it takes on any specific meaning. When combined with the codes *explosive, sprinkling of gunpowder, shatter accepted patterns,* and *creative force against destructive forces*, *dangerous theater* takes on a more nuanced meaning: theater that is threatening because it is asks audiences to critique social norms and create new ways of understanding, or in other words—theater capable of inciting social change (explained in more depth in this chapter's section on social change). Most of this chapter involves such a process of comparing codes and memos in attempt to more fully understand Flanagan Davis's arguments and metaphors.

Attempting to combine and categorize all the codes I wound up with was quite messy: Code A would seem to fit in with and speak to Code B in some significant ways, but also with Code C in some significant ways; then Code C and A would appear with Code D, but Code D was too distinct from Code B for them all to work as one group, but too similar to C to be really distinct. As can be seen above, the dangerous theater example involves no less than five codes at

once, and some of those codes appear in other concepts as well. I believe this illustrates the cohesiveness and complexity of Flanagan Davis's arguments and the potential in paying attention to them, to unwinding them and seeing how they fit together. However, I also believe it reflects a trend in multimodal rhetorical theory identified by Fleckenstein et al.—a resistance to being contained in neat, distinct categories. Many of the phrases Flanagan Davis repeats contain parts of other repeated phrases, and many documents contain several codes all at once, connected almost always in different ways. As a result, the keystones presented here should not be understood as distinct categories but parts of an interconnected theory ecosystem. For example, most keystone concepts connect in some way to the idea of empathy and/or critical inquiry. I identify the balance of empathy and critical inquiry (discussed on its own terms by Flanagan Davis) as its own keystone, not despite its interconnectedness to all of the other keystones in this chapter, but rather *because* of it. If I were to write down each of the eight keystones on a piece of paper and draw lines between all of the keystones that connect or overlap (both in archival mentions and in conceptual relations), there would be lines going between every keystone to every other keystone, similar to figure 1. These eight keystones do not fit neatly into containers but rather overlap and rely on each other to create the most crucial components for the "ecosystem" of concepts explored in this project.

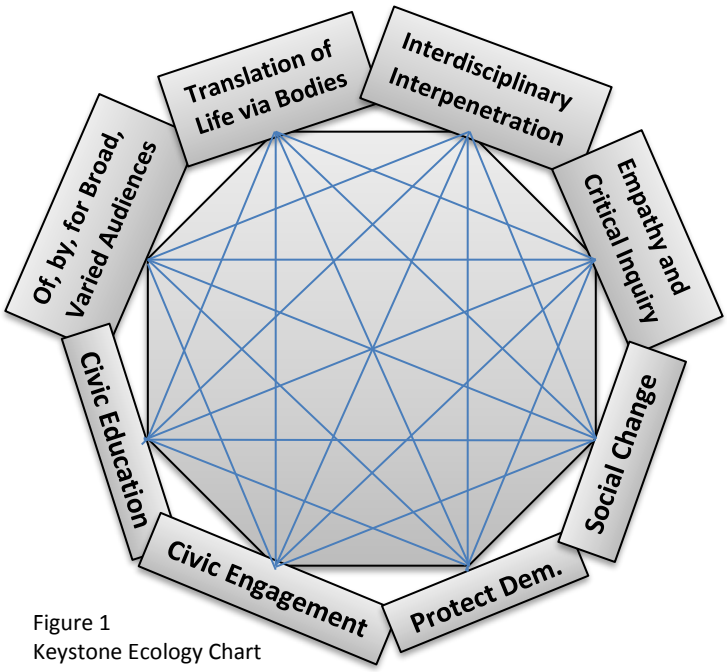

Figure 1
Keystone Ecology Chart

As previously discussed, approaching the theories generated in this project through an ecological metaphor has proven useful, as such a metaphor is "harmonious" with the way the concepts present themselves: messy, interconnected, and resistant of compartmentalization. Fleckenstein et al. argue that this harmony is necessary because "without such alignment, the knowledge we create and the applications derived from that knowledge are flawed: limited, reductive, and subject to misleading clarity. . . . Counterintuitive though it may be, complex, diffuse, and messy phenomena require—must harmonize with—complex, diffuse, and messy research methods" (Fleckenstein et al. 389). They also identify "new media writing and new 'performance literacies'" as particularly likely to be harmonious with an ecological metaphor of research (Fleckenstein et al. 389). While theater is certainly not *new* media in the sense that its history dates back at least as long as Western civilization, it does involve multimodal performance. As such, the concepts in this chapter are, like new media concepts, best understood as part of a theory ecology or ecosystem—as the keystone concepts that must persist in order for a theory ecosystem to stand a chance at survival.

The civic-rhetorical theoretical framework explained in chapter 1 does not come into play in this chapter. Said theoretical framework—which draws on critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories—was largely created because of its compatibility with the four civic trajectories discussed in this chapter. (Flanagan Davis believed the FTP could function as a medium for civic education, civic engagement, the protection of democracy, and social change; critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories are concerned with the same civic trajectories as outcomes.) Because my theoretical framework is largely drawn from the results of this chapter, I do not apply it in this chapter but delay applying such a framework until the latter stages of my research process (the conclusions of chapters 3 and 4, and all of chapter 5). This

delaying of theoretical framework application is recommended by many grounded theorists (Bunn, Glaser), but also helps me to first, identify Flanagan Davis's arguments as the keystones and roots of the theory being cultivated *before* translating said keystones and roots into more rhetorical terms. Throughout this chapter I consciously refrain from making comparisons to or drawing on rhetorical theories (even though many of the concepts below scream out from the page "Rhetorical!"). Thus, the keystones, as explained in this chapter, are predominantly discussed in terms of Flanagan Davis's own arguments, but as the chapters of this project progress, these keystones will be explored more and more through a rhetorical lens and consequently, through more and more rhetorical language.

Theatrical Conditions Necessary

I now turn to the theatrical conditions Flanagan Davis argues must be present in order for theater to help improve democracy. Found throughout her published and archival materials are arguments that theater must:

1. Be "of, by, and for" broad, varied audiences
2. "Translate ideas and emotions" about changing life into stories of struggle through bodies
3. Involve research and "interpenetrate" different fields
4. Balance "empathy"/ "identification" with "aesthetic distance"/ "critical spirit"

Another instance of messiness: I had originally considered the above four concepts to be sub-goals, rather than theatrical conditions. Flanagan Davis clearly wanted to create a theater "of, by, and for" broad audiences; it was, in a sense, a goal she wanted to accomplish. The same can be said of all four of these theatrical conditions. I then chose to frame them as strategies rather than sub-goals (as means rather than ends) because they speak to concrete steps and choices Flanagan Davis believed were important to the dramatic *process*, while the four trajectories speak of

broader civic outcomes sought out. I then shifted from referring to them as strategies to referring to them as conditions because I believe this more adequately describes the relationship they have to the resulting civic trajectories (they do not directly yield them, but they make it possible to facilitate them). These conditions are (perhaps unsurprisingly) very rhetorical in nature and indicate that Flanagan Davis's view of theater was audience-oriented, transdisciplinary, and blurred the lines between fiction and nonfiction.

Of, by, and for Broad, Varied Audiences

Flanagan Davis frequently asserts that, in order to accomplish anything significant, theater must be made available and relevant to much broader, more diverse audiences than it was at the start of the FTP. Ideally, she argues, theater should be made relevant somehow to all Americans. In addition to her argument that theater should be "of, by and for the people," there are many phrases informing this section, all coded for their references to *audience*.[16] I have grouped these references into two main arguments: 1) theater's success is limited by the size and variety of its audiences, and 2) theater workers must study and listen to—that is, construct a dialogic relationship with—their audiences. Again, this was both a kind of goal in itself (theater should reach large audiences) and a condition necessary for theater's ability to accomplish larger social and political goals.

First I'd like to expand upon the idea that theater's success is determined by not only the audience's reception, but also its size and diversity. In a speech given during the first two years of the FTP, Flanagan Davis proclaimed that "the theater has never been greater than its audience. When audiences have been big, varied, and exciting, plays have been big, varied, and exciting" ("Birmingham Address"). Thus, like many rhetoricians, she positions audience as a crucial

[16] Quoting and altering the phrase "of, by, and for the people" was not something unique to Flanagan Davis in the 1930's. W.E.B. DuBois, who she worked with, is also quoted as referring to the need for theater "of, by, for and most importantly near every day, common black people" around the same time.

component for the success of any theatrical production. In fact, her theories on theater place audience—and, hence, rhetoric—at the very core. On numerous occasions she describes the audience as a co-creator of the play's production: "a play is a ball thrown to the audience—and the audience must catch the ball. The audience shares in creation. The play lives only in the receptivity of the audience" ("Difference" 3). She thus positions plays as moments of rhetorical exchange with an audience—the more numerous, varied and exciting the audience, the more numerous, varied and exciting the resulting possible rhetorical exchanges.

She argues that, at the start of the FTP, theater in America had a serious problem of audience. Rather than "big, varied, and exciting," she describes theater in 1935 America as "small and precious" because it only appealed to small, precious audiences ("Birmingham Address"). She explains how theater in America had existed, for the most part, on a specific ten blocks of Broadway Ave, inaccessible to many because of location and to many more because of cost. However, she also explains how Broadway Theater was inaccessible to most audiences in terms of its *content*, which she describes as concerned predominantly with the "petty love affairs" and struggles of the upper classes, struggles not familiar or relevant to most Americans at the time (Flanagan Davis, "Constructivism"). She claims that radio and film developed *as a result* of theater's decline in accessibility rather than the other way around (that radio and film *caused* the decline of the theater), asserting that the people had every right to abandon the theatre because the theatre had, in many ways, already effectively abandoned the people.

Flanagan Davis tasked the FTP with solving this problem, with making theater available and relevant to broader audiences so as to yield broader possibilities. Reflecting on the FTP after its close, she described it as a "blue print for the future of the arts in America . . . in which the theatre will not be, on Broadway or off, the preoccupation of the idle, the cult of the queer, or the

possession of those who have the price, but developed in the interest of the general welfare" ("Theatre as Communication" 6). The FTP had offices and performances all over the country, making theater accessible nationwide. In addition, 60-65% of FTP performances were free, and most others cost less than 35 cents, making them accessible to many socioeconomic groups who had no prior access to theater and aligning the cost of theater attendance more closely with that of a movie. Perhaps more impressively, many FTP performances were put on in asylums, hospitals, orphanages, and prisons, thereby extending the FTP's audience to people unable to physically attend theatrical performances because of mobility restrictions (Jan 1939 Report).

However, Flanagan Davis didn't believe making theater available in terms of location and cost would suddenly and magically draw audiences out. As noted above, she thought the content of plays needed to be relevant to broader audiences. She argues that to determine and produce relevant plays, theater workers must establish and maintain a dialogic relationship with audiences. She asserts that audiences should be "studied" in various ways, that new plays and playwrights be developed across the country through contests; and thus, that the performances put on by the FTP be not just *for* the people, but also *of* and *by* the people—inspired by the content the people wish to see and the content they produce.

Flanagan Davis advocates several ways of studying (or developing dialogic relationships with) audiences. She recounts stories of FTP workers asking local people in different towns what they want out of theater. In one example she describes how many people in a small town requested plays that would memorialize their town's history and how the FTP set up a "historical theatre" troupe there to embark on such a mission—this is one way she envisioned theater workers studying and talking with audiences. She also advocates surveying audiences after plays for not only their reactions to what they saw, but also what they'd like to see next. In addition,

she argues for "studying audiences" in a more academic sense, specifically focusing on the study of audience psychology. She advises students of theater to "get a sense of working with and for them. Get a sense that it will take everything you've got and more to make a full impact on those audiences" ("Theatre in the Modern World") and explains that "knowledge of psychology is essential for any person working in the theatre. . . . As students of theatre you can never afford to be bored by human beings or uninterested" ("General Meeting" 3). It is also worth noting that she specifically points to the importance of studying of group psychology, as theater typically speaks to groups of people: "people do not act in a group as they act individually: they are more receptive, more easily stirred, more naïve, or more antagonistic (scattered qualities also multiplied)" (Flanagan Davis, "Empathy and Aesthetic Distance" M15).

Creating a theater "of, by, and for" broad, varied audiences, for Flanagan Davis, required a very rhetorical and dialogic approach to theater—one in which studying and engaging audiences was a very central focus. The FTP appears to have been successful at engaging broad, varied audiences, as it is estimated that, during the FTP's four years of existence, over 30 million Americans attended at least one FTP performance. If the FTP had also been successful at making those plays not only for, but *of and by* broad, varied Americans, then its performances would have been reflective of the expressions, reactions, and desires of a great many Americans.

Importance of Research and the Interpenetration of Theater and Different Fields

Flanagan Davis uses the word "interpenetration" to describe the relationship she believes theater must have with the changing world around it and places special emphasis on documented research and interdisciplinarity. Her argument for interpenetration can be summarized as such: research into current events and various fields of inquiry should be inserted into (and thereby shape and motivate) theatrical productions, and theater should likewise insert itself into current events and various fields of inquiry (thereby shaping them as well). Her choice of the word

interpenetration is interesting, and looking more closely at her coded phrases, "theater must grow up" and "respond to the changing world," along with "many fields of thought," helps to clarify the relevance of this term for Flanagan Davis.

The choice of the word *interpenetration* is likely connected to Flanagan Davis's belief that theater had been separated—both in lived practice and in the eyes of the general American public—from the socio-political world and from different academic fields of research. In a speech to FTP directors and administrators, she discusses theater as problematically confined from the rest of the world: "We live in a changing world; man is whispering through space, soaring to the stars in ships, flinging miles of steel and glass into the air. Shall the theatre continue to huddle in the confines of a painted boxset?" ("Is this the Time and Place?"). I understand her choice of the term interpenetration as related to this "confinement" of theater: theater must penetrate through the walls separating it from the outside world, both by inserting itself into discussions outside of itself and by inserting discussions outside of itself into the theater, making those walls permeable and eventually disintegrating them.

There are many examples of how the FTP was interpenetrated with current events, but perhaps the most direct and compelling come from Living Newspaper plays, which involved extensive research into social issues and usually featured arguments about current legislation. For example, *One Third of a Nation* covers the history of landlord/tenant/housing regulations and legislation, their tendency to fail at bringing real change, and the need for new, different legislation. *One Third of a Nation* was thus injected with many facts and events related to housing legislation and conditions. In addition, by increasing audience awareness and advocating certain positions on those issues, the play also actively injected theater into conversations about

housing legislation. It thus stood to change the social conversation on slum housing (what audiences knew and discussed) but also related behaviors (how audiences voted).

Flanagan Davis also explicitly and frequently argues that, in addition to interpenetrating current events, theater should interpenetrate many diverse academic fields and disciplines, positioning theater as a space for interdisciplinary collaboration and expression. She describes how the physical sciences could be asked to collaborate, not just for research for scriptwriting, but also for insights into new lighting techniques, new audio projection concepts; how history, psychology, and sociology could collaborate, again not just for researching scripts, but also for understanding how to connect with audiences, how to portray modern human experiences. It is also important to bring up here that Flanagan Davis attempted to make documentation of such interdisciplinary research available to audiences of the FTP and argued for the importance of such.[17] She appeared to understand that evidence and documentation were not only her best defense against accusations of spreading propaganda but also that they improved the educational potential of the FTP significantly.

However, because interpenetration is a dialogic strategy, it not only means that many different fields should contribute to theatrical productions, but also that theater should contribute to those fields as well; this is perhaps the hardest component of interpenetration to visualize in practice, but it is also one of the most interesting. Flanagan Davis explains how the FTP's "hand marionettes [were] being used in hospitals for the exercise of the paralyzed hands of crippled children" and reports that the FTP had "such a beneficial effect on the inmates of hospitals, reformatories, insane asylums and prisons that the directors of these institutions urge us to send them more companies" ("Birmingham Address" 13). She wasn't alone in believing the FTP

[17] Many Living Newspaper scripts have 5+ pages of bibliography.

showed promise in aiding other fields. In a speech delivered at a women's exposition, she quotes feedback received from other professionals:

> A surgeon at a hospital in New York wrote in to ask whether or not we could increase the number of marionette companies playing in the wards. "I cannot over emphasize," he wrote, "the therapeutic value of these entertainments for our clinical cases." A girl's school reformatory writes that the acting laboratories . . . are invaluable to her in assisting diagnosis, and begs for as much help in this connection as we can give her. The Warden of Sing Sing asks for more appearances saying that the morale is enormously helped by such entertainment. (Flanagan Davis, "Women's Exhibition" 3)

Flanagan Davis believed the FTP was only beginning to understand the services it could provide by way of therapy and rehabilitation and, if it had lived on, would have continued contributing in new ways to diverse fields. Before moving on to the next keystone condition, there is one more critical point about interpenetration I'd like to discuss.

Flanagan Davis argues that theater should work to explore and reveal the *relationships* between fields, that theater's "ability to integrate many fields of thought" was part of its educational value ("Plan for Smith Theatre"). She positions theater as not only interdisciplinary, but as a space for the coming together and synthesis of different fields: "in the theatre many separate subjects such as literature, music, history, sociology, dance, and design can be presented in such a way as to give the student an awareness of their *essential relationship"* (Flanagan Davis, "Plan for Smith Theatre"; emphasis added). In other words, Flanagan Davis believed theater should not only interpenetrate other fields, but also help other fields to interpenetrate each

other. She presents theater as, thus, not only interdisciplinary but transdisciplinary: able to not only speak with many fields (inter), but also to help different fields speak to each other (trans).

Relatedly, Flanagan Davis describes theater as concerned with "wholeness rather than bits." By "wholeness" she refers to both the coming together of different information and fields of inquiry (as discussed in this section), as well as the coming together of different parts of the human (mind, body, imagination and emotion, discussed in the section that follows). She asserts that "education has as its greatest and most prevalent danger the loss of the whole sense of life in isolation, in cutting of life into too small particles" (Flanagan Davis, "Director as Teacher"). Her concept of wholeness takes on a very broad meaning here, one that, rather than attempting to define what wholeness is in terms of ideas, disciplines or humans, presents a critique of the acts of breaking down and categorizing. This is not to say Flanagan Davis ever outright refutes these acts or diminishes the value of them but rather positions them as practices we should pay attention to: practices that may need to be *balanced* by different practices that work towards wholeness. She believes theater can help achieve this balance, in part, by putting different fields in conversation with each other. By putting different fields into conversation, interpenetration stands to enable the development of new solutions that may go undiscovered if disciplines remain divided (a stimulus for positive social change).

Translation of Life through Bodies

Interpenetration can be understood as a kind of relationship between life and theater, one way Flanagan Davis argues the two must interact with each other for theater to improve democracy. In addition to her many arguments for interpenetration, she positions the relationship between life and theater in other notable ways. At some points she describes theater as a "*presentation* of life," sometimes as a "*translation* of ideas and emotions"; sometimes she argues "theater *is* life," at other times that it should "*create* life" or stir life up. While some of these

phrases may seem contradictory at first, as this section reveals, they are all compatible parts of the same argument; theater should not aim to mirror life, but to translate experiences of life into something new—a presentation of life. In this section I first combine the above quoted phrases to outline Flanagan Davis's arguments about what, specifically, should be translated into what to create theater. Then, I look at her arguments about the medium through which this translation process should happen: the "whole human."

In a 1942 speech to students and faculty, Flanagan Davis argues that "the creation of life is the essence of all real theatre" ("Energy into Power") and that creating life is different than trying to reflect or represent it. She explains in her teaching notes that while "the representational stage [realism] copies reality; the presentational stage competes with reality by setting up a new reality" ("Theatre Design" 2), and she makes her preference for the latter clear. She mirrors this sentiment in a letter to a colleague in which she offers feedback on a script, by stating "plays can't be about something. They have to be something" (Letter to Albert Divine) and when she quotes Olivia Larken's assertion that the "artist is not outside the world, but in it more deeply" (Flanagan Davis, "Untitled Notes"). In saying plays can't be *about* something and the artist is not *outside* the world, Flanagan Davis asserts that plays are not replications of life as viewed from an objective outsider, not slices of life imitated and carried to different locations. Rather, they are unique moments or perceptions of life itself.

In fact, her teaching materials following the FTP's close reveal that she did not believe it possible to view life objectively, as an outsider. In a lecture (dating somewhere between 1942 and 1954) she argues "real" theater people train themselves "daily" in being aware of the subjective lenses through which they view the world:

> An artist looks at a tree. The tree is the objective element. It exists apart from him. It is his material. It is so colored however by his subjective approach to it. . . . Whatever it is to him, his subjective feeling about it, affects his painting. . . . This objective material of the theatre lies all about us: in people, in plays, in the whole world of nature and man. As young and impressionable workers in that field you have subjective reactions to all of these things. You are aware of them and if you are a real theatre person you are training this awareness daily. (Flanagan Davis, "Nature of the Theatre Medium")

However, when she argues that theater is a translation of life, she does not only mean that theater is objective reality translated through subjective views of the world. She advocates a much more intentional process of translation; an awareness of subjective lenses is only a prerequisite.

While interpenetration positions all current events and fields as material for theater to draw from, translation reveals, more specifically, what Flanagan Davis believed theater should focus on and how it should present said focus—translating "ideas and emotions of the changing world in terms of a changing theatre" ("Experimental Theatre" 9). The phrase *in terms of a changing theater* is likely intended to mean that theater should continue experimenting with different forms, different ways to communicate through the stage.[18] She therefore argued theater should be concerned with changes in the world, as well as changes in the "available means" of theater, so to speak, lest theater be ignored: "in an age of terrific implications as to wealth and poverty, as to the function of government, as to peace and war, as to the relation of the artist to all these forces, the theatre must grow up. The theatre must become conscious of the implications

[18] "Available means" is a reference to Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as identifying the available means of persuasion.

of the changing social order, or the changing social order will ignore, and rightly, the implications of the theatre" (Flanagan Davis, "Is this the Time and Place?").

But let's take a step back: translating changes in the world in terms of a changing theater means incorporating new forms of theater, but what does translating in terms of just *theater* mean? Flanagan Davis defines theater as always involving some kind of social struggle and an attempt at resolution or rather "social conflict in which conscious will is exerted" but also asserts that this struggle should be rooted in a character's life in such a way as to inspire some kind of emotional response from the audience ("Dramos: the What of a Play"). Translation into theater, for her, thus involves translating ideas and emotions about the changing world into some kind of personal narrative or story about struggle. She also argues that translation into theater involves symbolic communication: "so great is the reliance of drama on symbol, and so urgent the need to speak dramatically through symbol, that the measure of a dramatist or director may almost be said to be the measure of his vocabulary of symbols" (Flanagan Davis, "Symbol in Drama"). A play Flanagan Davis wrote titled $E=MC^2$ (1948) works to illustrate this process of translation. The change depicted by the play is the development of atomic energy, and the struggle depicted is the debate over what atomic energy might be used for (powering and developing civilization or intensifying war and destruction) along with the fears and anxieties related to said struggle. This debate is translated into a story about a character named Atom, an anthropomorphized atom, who starts out relatively unknown and becomes wildly popular, with different important people and groups fighting over her and trying to claim her as their own. Her powerful, unstable and easily excitable nature is featured throughout the play as a reason for concern. Thus, the play is not an imitation of the current changes, struggles and fears around atomic energy in real life, but a symbolic portrayal of them. The fact that the atom is symbolized by a human in the above

example is likely very meaningful for Flanagan Davis, who positions the medium of the whole human as a key component in the theatrical translation process.

Similar to her argument for "wholeness" and the coming together of different fields, Flanagan Davis places great importance on theater's use and understanding of the medium of the "whole" human: "not just mind but mind plus imagination plus emotion plus body" ("Director as Teacher"). She describes the process of dramatic translation as one in which "the word may become flesh" ("Rhythm of Anybody's Personality" 9), in which the ideas and emotions of a changing world are translated into a narrative about struggle through human bodies. She argues that this aspect of translation is connected to theater's ability to inspire empathy and thus stands to improve understanding across difference: "the art of theatre uses the medium of living people: one empathizes more completely than in any other artistic medium. Herein lies the power and the danger of the theatre as an art form" (Flanagan Davis, "Empathy and Aesthetic Distance" G4).

Flanagan Davis positions the whole human as not just the coming together of mind, body, emotion, and imagination, but also the understanding of the relationships between those components. She argues that students of theater "need to know that in pain and in reflection the body is restrictive, the gestures recessive . . . that in joy, exaltation, the body is expansive . . . need to know the natural and physical accompaniments of feelings and emotions in individuals, in mobs, in normal, and abnormal psychosis" (Flanagan Davis, "Director in Relation to Audience"), connecting emotional and mental states to bodily ones. Thus, translating ideas and emotions *through* humans involves an awareness of not only mental, emotional, and embodied states, but also how those states are connected to and impact each other.

Reviews of the FTP indicated that such emotional, embodied presentation was often extremely effective. Langdon Post, housing and labor adviser to FDR, proclaimed the play *One-*

Third of a Nation (centered on exploring the conditions of slum housing in America and referenced at the opening of this project) "performed as it was tonight, can do more to convert people to proper housing than all the shouting I have done in the past three years" ("Speech to FTP Summer" 3). He describes how the play "reveal[ed] in stark realities the human misery which our society has created by . . . cruel and stupid exploitation" and how it "gain[ed] its effect by skillful presentation" (Langdon Post, *Review*). Dorothy Canfield also praises the effectiveness of the FTP's presentational style:

> The point is that here—unbelievable, formidable—is something new, a way of presenting complicated political and industrial questions which holds the attention of ordinary men and women vastly more than any other way that has ever been devised. It is compelling: the impression it makes is of startling vivid-ness, its potentialities for good—and evil—are hair-raising (qtd. in Flanagan Davis, "The Living Newspaper Lives").

Thus, the process of translation works, in part, to transform information about the changing world into something that successfully holds an audience's attention: fleshy, embodied, emotional struggle. This ability to hold the audience's attention would likely improve the FTP's overall potential to impact audiences in meaningful ways (to educate them, for example).

The FTP, while based on extensive research from life and fields outside itself, did not aim to merely present research, but to translate it into a narrative about struggle, riddled with symbols and communicated through whole human bodies. It was therefore, not fully fiction or nonfiction, but somewhere in between, skirting the line between creative nonfiction and arts-based research. Flanagan Davis also believed this process of translation was capable of inspiring

social change in a way that more realistic theater wasn't, by showing people new ways of understanding the world: a theater of possibilities, rather than a theater bounded by reality.

Balancing Empathy/Identification and Aesthetic Distance/ Critical Inquiry

So far I have discussed Flanagan Davis's arguments that, in order to improve democracy, theater must be of, by, and for broad, varied audiences, interpenetrated with life, and must translate changing emotions and ideas into narrative struggles through human bodies. This section discusses a final condition, one that echoes an important duality found throughout Flanagan Davis's arguments. She argues that to improve democracy, theater must inspire a balance of empathy and aesthetic distance in audiences, or in more rhetorical terms, must balance strategies for audience identification with strategies for critical inquiry. While Flanagan Davis occasionally directly discusses the necessity of balancing both these concepts, more often she discusses the concepts separately.

First I'd like to look at how she explains empathy working in theater. I've already discussed her belief that the medium of whole humans is related to theater's ability to inspire empathy, but what does she believe inspiring empathy looks like? She relates the concept of empathy to theater's ability "to train us to share the experience of others emotionally if not actually" stating that "perhaps in that way we may come to understand that unless we work to extend to others the basic freedom which we accept as part of our birth right, we cannot talk in any sensible way about rebuilding the world" ("Our Firm Estate" 2). She, interestingly, also presents this "sharing of experience" as something all humans want and, thus, as a desire intrinsic to human nature: "theatre affords an enlargement and intensification of human experience. Everyone wants more life than he can crowd into one lifetime" ("Theatre 1950"). Thus, the "empathy" she advocates for through theater is perhaps better understood as a sharing and thus enlarging of experience which, while not always emotionally enjoyable, she believes is

universally desired and critical for rebuilding the world in such a way that grants all humans equal freedoms.

Flanagan Davis specifies that theater workers and audience members alike are included in this expanding of experience. The audience's inclusion in this is so important that she defines the success of a play as based on its ability to do so: "to the extent that the outcome of the struggle engages the emotions of the audience, the play is successful" ("Dramos: the What of a Play"). She argues this is what the audience wants, what it "pays its money for: to feel emotion" ("Emotion in Acting"). She does not see this emotional experience as an end to itself but rather as something capable of "affecting the activities of men" (Flanagan Davis, "The Arts in Wartime" 7).

She occasionally refers to empathy using the phrase "magical acts of identification"—a reference to a poem by W. H. Auden. She argues that "art has the power to make people identify themselves with what they hear or behold" and asserts that "these 'magical acts of identification' . . . can . . . be invoked to make us a part of lives dissimilar to our own but necessary for us to understand" (Flanagan Davis, "General Meeting"). Flanagan Davis's use of the term *identification* is relevant, as identification is a major concept in modern rhetorical theory most often attributed to Kenneth Burke. For Flanagan Davis, the terms identification and empathy are similar because they both refer to experiences of communion, of coming together and understanding between speaker and audience; she seems to use them interchangeably. I don't explore the significance Flanagan Davis's concept of identification has for the field of rhetoric until chapter 5, after a more thorough analysis in the following two chapters of how she saw identification and empathy working in the FTP. I comment on this overlap here only because it is too obvious to pass over without mention.

Flanagan Davis does not define ideal theater as that which causes the audience to fully empathize and identify with what is on stage but rather as that which achieves a balance between empathy and something called *aesthetic distance* with the audience ("Empathy and Aesthetic Distance"). Aesthetic distance, most associated with Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), refers to the distance between one's lived reality and the reality presented by a piece of art. Some modern theater scholars, most notably Bertolt Brecht, are known for theories about "violating" the concept of aesthetic distance by positioning the audience at such a distance that they are prevented from fully empathizing with the characters or becoming emotionally submersed in their world. Brecht argues this accomplishes something he calls "alienation effects," which force the audience to read the play critically and inquisitively, rather than emotionally or passively ("A Short Organum"). This connects to another of Flanagan Davis's frequently discussed phrases: the "free, enquiring, critical spirit." Moving audiences to critical inquiry is commonly positioned as the goal of aesthetic distance in theater; Flanagan Davis likewise saw aesthetic distance as a strategy for "keeping alive" the "free, inquiring, critical spirit" she believed was central to democracy ("Why Not Here?" 6).

I'd like to pause here to note that her approach to aesthetic distance, while similar to Brecht's alienation effects, wasn't exactly the same. She was a contemporary of Brecht, taught him to her students, and was undoubtedly familiar with his discussions on aesthetic distance and alienation. She echoes his goal of "alienation effects" to some degree in her discussions of aesthetic distance by positioning aesthetic distance and empathy as opposites: "the forms of drama most unfavorable to empathy are most favorable to aesthetic distance" ("Empathy and Aesthetic Distance"). However, Brecht specifically calls for alienation effects as a way to avoid engaging the audience's emotions, believing such emotional engagement to be manipulative.

Flanagan Davis still wanted to engage the emotions of the audience, but she also wanted them to pause and think—to critically inquire into the emotional experiences and information being processed. I think both Brecht and Flanagan Davis had a similar goal of not manipulating their audiences, but Flanagan Davis didn't seem to believe that stirring up emotions in audiences was necessarily manipulative *so long as the audience was also asked to critically inquire into the play's meaning.*

Aesthetic distance and alienation effects are often associated with minimalist and surrealist styles of theater: styles that prevent the audience from reading or understanding the stage as a direct visual representation or sample of reality. Minimalism and surrealism, instead, ask the audience to understand the stage as a symbolic presentation of a reality, full of metaphors to be interpreted for what they present rather than passively absorbed as a voyeur—both minimalism and surrealism are what Flanagan Davis refers to as *presentational* forms of theater (theater which aims to present new moments of life rather than realistically represent prior moments) and as such fall into the category of theater she argues for in the keystone condition just before this one. Given her preference for presentational forms, I think it is safe to say that for Flanagan Davis, a good balance between empathy and aesthetic distance would fall just slightly heavier on the side of aesthetic distance (my research in chapter 3 on Living Newspapers confirms this).

To summarize this section, Flanagan Davis argues that, in order to create positive civic change, theater must identify with audiences and enable them to share in the experiences of—or in other words, empathize with—others, but also keep the audience at enough of a distance that they don't become leisurely viewers and instead remain engaged, critically questioning the performance and symbols in front of them. By balancing these strategies, Flanagan Davis

believes theater is capable of creating understanding across difference, but also of fostering critical inquiry amongst audiences. I now turn to the civic trajectories made possible by the above four conditions.

Civic Trajectories Made Possible by the Above Conditions

The FTP was part of the Works Progress Administration.[19] As such, it was designed—by persons other than Flanagan Davis, such as then President Roosevelt and WPA Director Harry Hopkins—to use government money to pay unemployed people to do socially useful things, and in the case of FTP specifically, to pay theater workers to provide affordable—often free—entertainment. Flanagan Davis frequently stressed that these were the foremost goals of the project, stating, "whatever it may be or may become, [the FTP's] deep and not-to-be forgotten immediate significance for American life is that "papa's got a job" ("Papa's got a Job" 7). The FTP was, therefore, intended to improve democracy in several ways Flanagan Davis had little to do with: helping alleviate unemployment and providing affordable entertainment, effectively aiming to raise the quality of life for those in lower socio-economic brackets with government funds. My research reveals four additional ways or trajectories Flanagan Davis believed the FTP could improve democracy. She believed it could function as the following:

1. a medium for civic education
2. a medium for civic engagement
3. a medium for protecting democracy
4. a medium for social change

In this section I explore these four civic trajectories. First, however, I'd like to note that my repetition of the word "medium" above is intentional, meant to reflect Flanagan Davis's own

[19] The WPA was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation, intended to help alleviate the effects of the depression.

language choices, which often include references to the FTP as a *means* or *medium*. For example, in the final pages of *Arena* she asks, "is not the need of an accurate and brilliant means of communication particularly urgent today, when conflicting ideas of government are contending for hemispheres?" (372) and implies the FTP could become such a means. She states that in "creating for our citizens a medium for free expression such as no other form of government can assure, and offering the people access to the arts and tools of a civilization which they themselves are helping to make, [the FTP] is at once an illustration and a bulwark of the democratic form of government" (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 373). Here we see her positioning theater, and specifically the Federal Theatre Project, as a communicative means, expressive medium or protective structure (bulwark), as a kind of tool meant to consistently enable certain rhetorical goals (relating to communication and expression). This led me to think of the FTP as a kind of rhetorical *infrastructure.*

I define a rhetorical infrastructure as an organization or structure meant to facilitate broad, public communication. By *broad, public communication* I mean that rhetorical infrastructures are meant to be accessible to as many as possible and meant to facilitate communication, not only with people already known, but also with strangers. I use the word *infrastructure* because it implies a system through which something is distributed or transported, like a system of roads or pipes—or roots—except the FTP was meant to transport communication rather than oil, lumber, water, nutrients, etc. While letters and written-on pieces of paper might be a *medium* of communication, the postal service, for example, is a *rhetorical infrastructure* that enables the transportation of such a medium. Social media sites, email hosts, and internet providers would be rhetorical infrastructures, as would bulletin boards. A political or *civic*-rhetorical infrastructure would then be a rhetorical infrastructure intended to facilitate

specifically civic communication, or rather, communication designed to improve civic engagement and democratic functioning. While the term "civic-rhetorical infrastructure" is my own, I believe Flanagan Davis would agree that the FTP was meant to be a civic-rhetorical infrastructure. I will discuss this idea of the FTP as infrastructure more in chapter 4. For now, imagining the FTP as an infrastructure is important because it helps to explain how Flanagan Davis believed the FTP could improve democracy: she believed the FTP's power was in its ability to continually facilitate and support a large amount of expression and communication over time and across space, not only in its ability to connect with individual audiences.

Medium for Civic Education

The first way Flanagan Davis argued the FTP could improve democracy is by functioning as a medium for civic education. She occasionally directly states that theater is intimately connected to civic education; in a 1943 speech given at a church service she states, "to illustrate [our] freedom, its history, its many aspects, its problems, to do what we can to preserve that freedom and to educate people to value it—this is perhaps the greatest function of the theatre in a democracy today" (Flanagan Davis, "Theatre in a Changing World"). However, my understanding of this trajectory is predominantly motivated by a combination of three phrases I coded for: 1) theater is a "medium of understanding," 2) theater should "keep alive the free, critical, enquiring spirit," and 3) theater should "make people think."

First I'd like to discuss instances of the phrase *medium of understanding*. In several places Flanagan Davis writes: "in order to make our kind of government work, the people must participate. They can't participate unless they understand. And the arts are mediums of understanding" ("The Arts and Democracy")—thus positioning the kind of understanding arts facilitate as somehow related to civic participation. Flanagan Davis often repeats the above assertion after stating that "art in democracy is not a luxury but a necessity," indicating that the

civic education provided by art was not only useful but *necessary* for democracy's functioning ("Opening Notes"; "The Arts in Wartime" 8; "Unity Church").

Other incarnations of the phrase *medium of understanding* reveal Flanagan Davis's belief that theater was specifically capable of educating people to understand people and groups very different from themselves. She argues, "We shall need when this war ends . . . to understand each other, peoples, races, individuals—and the arts are mediums of understanding" ("The Arts in Wartime" 8). Relatedly, she also claims the FTP "stood from first to last against reaction, against prejudice, against racial, religious, and political intolerance" (qtd. in "Poughkeepsie Courier Review"). Theater's ability to facilitate understanding across difference comes up over and over again in Flanagan Davis's writings, sometimes referred to as understanding, but also sometimes as empathy, identification, or a sharing of emotional experience, as discussed above. She compliments her students on their "tolerance, respect for the opinions of others, ability to differ without malice and without persecution" and argues that "these are qualities needed in the world today" (Flanagan Davis, "Education for Use" 2).

Flanagan Davis also frequently argues the FTP should work to "keep alive the 'free, enquiring, critical spirit'"; this is the second code that speaks to her goal of civic education and is intimately related to the third code: "make people [audiences] think." What both of these codes—found in articles she wrote during and after the FTP's life, but also in memos to FTP workers and in her teaching notes—ultimately reveal, is that Flanagan Davis believed theater should educate people by inspiring them to think critically and question, rather than educating them by convincing them to adopt any one particular view. She was aware such an education might be perceived, by those in power, to be dangerous:

> They were afraid of the Federal Theatre because it was educating the people of its vast new audience to know more about government and politics and such vital issues of the day as housing, power, agriculture, and labor. These issues were dealt with only in a small fraction. . . . Still, the powers opposing the Federal Theatre do not want even 10% of the plays offered to people in our democracy to be the sort to make people think. They are afraid, and rightly so, of thinking people. "Such men are dangerous." ("Untitled Refutation" 4)

Her lesson plans further attest to her view of theater as education meant to inspire questions and thinking, rather than confident knowing: "a play always involves a question. In fact the art of play writing consists of raising questions in the minds of the audience. Sometimes the questions are answered. Sometimes they are left suspended in air. But always a question is raised" (Flanagan Davis, "The What, Who, and Why of a Play").

To summarize, Flanagan Davis believed the FTP could educate audiences to a) better understand and empathize across difference and b) ask questions and critically think about "vital issues of the day" —both skills she felt were necessary for political participation. All four of the theatrical conditions explained above are necessary for such education. Theater must be of, by, and for broad, varied audiences, as well as researched and interdisciplinary, or else the education it can accomplish becomes limited and its quality less reliable. Theater must also translate life through bodies or risk not engaging or educating audiences at all. Finally, if empathy and aesthetic distance are not balanced as strategies for relating to the audience, then audiences will either passively accept all of the information given to them (making them vulnerable to manipulation and coercion) or feel distanced and disconnected from the materials.

Medium for Civic Engagement

Flanagan Davis argued the FTP could improve democracy not only by educating citizens, but also by directly engaging those citizens in democratic activity. There are hints throughout her archival materials indicating she saw the FTP as a medium not only of learning and thinking but also of *doing.* For example, she argues, "in this year 1943 understanding is not enough. Action is needed. We want increasingly to use different races, different political faiths and different religious ideas to strengthen the broad foundation of our work, and to enrich the quality of our life together" (Flanagan Davis, "Hiller Foundation" 1). My argument that she saw the FTP as a medium for civic engagement is based primarily on the coming together of three phrases I coded for: her argument that the FTP offered "people access to the arts and tools of a civilization which they themselves are helping to make" and her descriptions of theater as a medium for "the natural expression of free people" and as a "means of communication."

As quoted above, Flanagan Davis argued that the FTP gave "people access to the arts and tools of a civilization which they themselves are helping to make," which implies that something about the FTP provided citizens a route to *produce* civilization, not just learn about it. Flanagan Davis actually describes this quality of the FTP—its ability to distribute access to cultural production—as what made the FTP unique and democratic. In *Arena* and elsewhere, she defines the difference between "*National* Theatres" and her vision of a "*Federal* Theatre" as having to do with *who* gets to dictate and express culture through theater. In National Theaters, she argues, governments ultimately determine, from the top down, which plays reflect the culture of their country. To be a *Federal* Theatre people all across the country would have to be involved in determining, from the bottom up, which plays reflect the culture of their country. She explains:

> Ours is not a national theatre in the sense that we are called upon to decide what themes, actors, or methods of production are representative of our vast country

> and our diverse population. Federal Theatre is rather, as its name implies, a federation of many, each responsible for exploring its own human needs, and its own dramatic possibilities, each seeing its activities as a part of a nation-wide pattern. ("Democracy and the Drama" 824)

Thus, in saying the FTP gave people "access to the arts and tools of a civilization," Flanagan Davis likely meant that the FTP gave people access to determining what kinds of theater would represent their culture (how she thought this access should be distributed is a very long discussion, taken up in chapter 4). The next code explored here is very similar; Flanagan Davis argues that the FTP was meant to be a "medium of free expression," something that gave voice to "the rhythmic and natural expression of a free people" (Flanagan Davis, "Experimental Theatre"). She does not describe the FTP as a place for citizens to directly engage with policy-building but with culture-building through expression.

She also argues the FTP could be "an accurate and brilliant means of communication," especially necessary during times of conflict and division (*Arena* 372). She writes, "In a world in which, to save our lives, we must learn to understand people and peoples, the theatre is suddenly seen to be what it always has been in its great periods, a means of communication" (Flanagan Davis, "Theatre as Communication" 1). It is easy to see how theater might express things *to* an audience, but the phrase "means of communication" implies more than one-way expression. As I discuss above, audiences were asked to respond to plays through surveys and to make themselves heard both within and outside the theater. Audiences were thus, through FTP plays, invited into larger social conversations—invited to help share their own expressions and help determine which expressions were featured through the FTP.

Hence, Flanagan Davis argued that the FTP could engage citizens in the following democratic activities: expressing and thus contributing to building culture, and participating in (listening and responding to) social, cultural, and political conversations taken up through plays. Again, all four conditions are necessary for the FTP's functioning as a medium for such civic engagement. Being "of, by, and for" broad, varied audiences allowed the FTP to engage many different voices in the conversation; being well researched and interdisciplinary allowed the FTP to ensure a certain quality of evidence was present in these expressions. Theater translating reactions to the changing world ensures that cultural expressions stay fresh, engaging with new ideas and discoveries. Balancing empathy and aesthetic distance would theoretically, if effective, cause audiences to engage with cultural and socio-political expressions and conversations with a mixture of understanding and critical inquiry.

Protective Force for Democracy

Flanagan Davis also believed the FTP could improve democracy by protecting it from threats of fascism and dictatorship. Her references to the FTP as a *bulwark* are only one indicator that the FTP was seen as a viable defense against tyrannical forms of government. Critics also fervently praised the FTP's ability to work against fascism: a *New Masses* review by author and critic Alvah Bessie described the FTP as "anti-fascist with a vengeance," and author/critic Lady Ann Fremantle asserted that the project was "a complete answer to both fascism and communism." Both comments demonstrate that the FTP's goal of working against fascism was clear at the time, not only to Flanagan Davis but to others as well. In addition, exploring two of Flanagan Davis's phrases—"it can happen here" and "theater of the workers"—helps to reveal how she saw the FTP working to protect democracy.

Perhaps Flanagan Davis's most direct statement about protecting democracy from threats of fascism and oppression appears in a letter written to prominent theater critic Burns Mantle

during the FTP's House Un-American Activities Committee court hearings at the end of 1938. She asks Mantle to "keep the Dies brief in case I am whisked away by the American Chekka on some dark night" and asserts that "*it can happen here*—but only after you and I and quite a few others have done all in our power" (Letter to Burns Mantle; emphasis added).[20] The phrase "it can happen here*"* is a reference to *It Can't Happen Here,* a Sinclair Lewis novel meant to educate readers about the first signs of a rising dictator, to teach them that fascism doesn't appear with a label on it or with guns blazing, but often with smiles and celebrations. In several places, Flanagan Davis and others write "it *can* happen here" as a way of acknowledging that the rise of a dictator in America was indeed possible. Thus, her argument that it could "happen here" only after she and others have done all in their power directly reveals her intention of fighting against fascism and dictatorship, as well as her understanding of the FTP as a force against such threats.

Lewis's novel was adapted into a play (by the same title) and was performed by FTP troupes in twenty-one cities across the country. A large percentage of the archival materials that discuss protecting democracy against fascism (both those written by Flanagan Davis and by critics) reference these performances. Flanagan Davis explains the relevance of the play:

> We want to do "It Can't Happen Here" because it is a play by one of our most distinguished American writers, . . . because it is a play about American life today, based on a passionate belief in American democracy. The play says that when dictatorship comes to threaten such a democracy it comes in an apparently harmless guise, with parades and promises; but when such a dictatorship arrives the promises are not kept and the parade grounds become encampments, . . . because . . . we, as American citizens and as workers in a theatre sponsored by the

[20] Dies brief refers to the materials for the Dies Committee hearings in which the FTP was accused of communist associations and shut down.

> government of the United States, should like to do what we can to keep alive the "free, enquiring, critical spirit" which is the center and core of a democracy. ("Why Not Here?" 6)

Here she connects the choice of this play with the goal of protecting democracy from fascism and oppression, but also with another, previously discussed phrase found in her materials: "to keep alive the 'free, enquiring, critical spirit.'" Here the goals of civic education and protection of democracy blur together, as Flanagan Davis positions education that inspires critical thinking and questioning as integral to democracy's protection.

Although it was perhaps the most noted and important, *It Can't Happen Here* wasn't the FTP's only play to engage with content about fascism and dictatorship. Another play titled *Professor Mamlock* received significant attention for its anti-fascist educational value, and many of the FTP's Living Newspaper performances called into question traits associated with fascism and dictatorship, such as greed, large gaps in wealth and power, and a disproportionate focus on military. Flanagan Davis thus tasked the FTP with providing citizens plays whose content would educate them to be able to question leaders and identify oppression.

Flanagan Davis's references to the FTP as a "theatre of workers" also provide insight into how she believed the FTP could protect democracy. She argues that the FTP gave workers a voice, thereby ensuring the struggles common to working-class persons were heard and amplified: "the theatre being born in America today is a theatre of workers. . . . Its object is to create a national culture by and for the working class of America. Admittedly a weapon in the class struggle, this theatre is being forged in the factories and mines" (Flanagan Davis, "Theatre in a Changing World" 11).[21] The FTP was a "theater of the workers" in several ways. Most

[21] Her language here closely resembles the motto of a communist writer's organization from the 1930s known as John Reed Clubs, which reads "Art is a class weapon" (George and Selzer 20).

obviously, it was a relief program, meaning the majority of the people working with the FTP were previously unemployed and from the working classes, and these people were asked to participate in shaping the FTP's theatrical expressions. However, it was also a theater of the workers in that the working classes were the intended audiences; most performances were cheap or free, often put on in places like orphanages and prisons, and were intended to be relevant to the working classes—concerned with their experiences. Flanagan Davis asserted that these working class audiences were to be studied, surveyed and listened to by FTP employees so as to enable the creation of theater capable of speaking for the working classes to the best of its ability, perhaps not literally "forged" in the mines, but inspired by and catering to people who work in the mines.

Thus, the FTP worked to protect democracy from threats of fascism by producing plays that educated audiences about oppressive government regimes and by acting as a voice for the working class so as to help prevent their exploitation. It is worth noting here that, because theatrical performances involve a physical meeting of people, working-class theatre also becomes a physical space ripe for protest and riots, and thus a potentially more "dangerous" form of communication than pamphlets or books read in solitude. Flanagan Davis was undoubtedly aware of this. Here again all four conditions are necessary for this trajectory: being of, by and for broad audiences is necessary to ensure information about resisting fascism is spread to many, but also to ensure the voices of working classes all over are able to be heard. Research and interdisciplinary knowledge can help to better inform approaches to resisting fascism, but also provide a solid basis for identifying systemic issues like rampant poverty, dangerous conditions within the slums, and wage gaps. Translating this information through bodies and stories about struggle makes the information likely more compelling, relatable, and enjoyable to consume,

more like informative leisure and less like studying—something specifically likely to be helpful for those with little free time for keeping up with politics and social issues. Finally, balancing empathy and aesthetic distance here enables both empathy for the working classes and critical inquiry of those in power.

Medium for Social Change

It was not a stable notion of democracy Flanagan Davis believed the FTP should protect, but rather a dynamic one. She describes democracy as "never won, but always to be won" ("The Arts and Democracy") and believed the FTP should work to facilitate, among other things, social change. In other words, she saw part of democracy's strength (and art's strength) as its ability to change, its compatibility with a changing world. Flanagan Davis viewed the Federal Theatre Project—and perhaps theater in general—as a medium for social change, compatible with democracy's dynamic nature. I base this argument off of her use of the phrases referring to the FTP as "dangerous" and "explosive," its potential to "shatter accepted patterns," and its potential to act as a "creative force" working to rebuild society and culture "against the destructive forces" of war, prejudice, book burnings, etc. She positions the FTP as an infrastructure capable not only of inspiring audiences to challenge current ways of being, but also of helping audiences envision and build new ways of being, and seems to put roughly equal importance on both endeavors. Thus, my argument that the FTP was meant to work as a medium for social change reflects both the criticism/deconstruction of society and the exploration/creation of it. Below I first explore the coded phrases related to the FTP's ability to challenge and then its ability to create.

Flanagan Davis repeatedly refers to theatre as *dangerous*, so much so that other scholars have noted the trend (Kazacoff, Sweigart-Gallagher, Witham). The more time I spent with her archival materials, the more I could hear the tongue-in-cheek wit of this word; she believes theater is perceived as dangerous by those in power because it is capable of facilitating

significant social change. As noted before, Flanagan Davis clearly states her belief that opponents of the FTP saw danger in its ability to educate and engage audiences in "government and politics and . . . vital issues of the day," as well as its ability to "make people think" ("Untitled Refutation" 4). She argues that the FTP stood to create a more informed, engaged citizenry, capable of creating change and that some government officials found this threatening. This is the first quality of the social change she argued the FTP could accomplish: it would likely have negative impacts on—and be perceived as dangerous by—people who benefit from an uninformed and passive citizenry.

In many places Flanagan Davis refers to theater as dangerous in tandem with the argument that "any theatre worth its salt must have in that salt a sprinkling of gunpowder" ("Shotgun Wedding"; "Women's City"; "Regional Staff Talk" 7; "Federal Theatre"). In roughly half of the instances either of these phrases appears, the other phrase also appears, indicating that Flanagan Davis saw the danger of theater as being closely related to its explosive potential. In a speech titled "Shotgun Wedding," she clarifies what she means by explosive: "It is the essence of art that it shatter accepted patterns, advance into unknown territory, challenge the existing order. Art is highly explosive" (Flanagan Davis, "Shotgun Wedding" 2). Thus, Flanagan Davis positions theater (and art more broadly) as a medium capable of calling into question what is considered normal, and thus, a force of social and cultural critique.

Flanagan Davis also asserts that theater's involvement or "interpenetration" in various aspects of public life is part of what makes it dangerous. In a document labeled only "Federal Theatre," Flanagan Davis leads up to the gunpowder phrase by saying: "the various forces of civic, educational and industrial life interpenetrate the theatre, just as the theatre, if it is any good, must interpenetrate civic, educational and industrial life. Some of this interpenetration will

be dangerous" ("Federal Theatre" 6). At a talk with regional staff, she repeats the gunpowder phrase yet again, after arguing, "Whatever else we do, it is our primary obligation to produce plays dealing with *actual* problems of America *today*. Only through such plays can we make our Federal Theatre what it certainly must be—a force helping to shape the cultural pattern of America today. Of course, such plays are explosive" ("Regional FTP" 6). In all of these passages, Flanagan Davis positions theater's danger and explosiveness as coming from its ability to interact with real-world, current problems impacting life outside of the theater. She puts special emphasis on the "dangerous" power of engaging with economic issues, arguing that the Federal Theatre, born "of economic conditions," had "not only a right but a necessity to do what it can to remedy those conditions," again followed by the word dangerous and the gunpowder phrase (Flanagan Davis, "Women's City Club" 9).

While the words *danger, explosive,* and *gunpowder* all have connotations of shattering and breaking apart, Flanagan Davis interestingly positions theater as a creative force working to balance and oppose destructive forces. She writes in meeting notes for her students in 1940:

> This is the supreme contribution that the arts can make to democracy; they oppose against the destructive forces without and within a positive creative force, a formidable upthrust of power. The arts, and among them the art of theatre, is a life force against the death forces of ignorance, greed, fear, hate and prejudice. These destructive forces are at work; books have been burned, scholars driven from their homes, libraries, museums, churches bombed. . . . All the more reason then that our schools, colleges, museums and libraries, the citadels of our democracy, should develop the arts, not as decorations, but as activities vital to the growth of

> people fit to build—and preserve—their own culture. (Flanagan Davis, "Experimental Theatre" 4)

Thus, she does not see art as merely disruptive, but rather capable of helping to continually build culture and society, even as it challenges and deconstructs it. She also, in the passage above, defines theater's creative push as working in opposition to certain forces, here referred to as "death forces" and "destructive forces." She describes these forces as "ignorance, greed, fear, hate and prejudice" and relates them to the bombing of libraries and churches and the burning of books. She thus insinuates that the FTP would work *for* informed awareness, generosity, trust, and understanding, as well as the preservation of history and art.

She clarifies that it is not only theater workers or artists but also audiences who participate in these acts of cultural preservation and creation. She claims that in "listening to these words, looking at an art exhibit, hearing a symphony, seeing a play, we become bigger than we are. We become better citizens, better workers, better lovers. We share in a creative act" ("Experimental Theatre" 2), indicating that the moment of creation, for Flanagan Davis, lies in the exchange or experience of art, not only in its composition. This helps to reveal how she saw the FTP giving people "access to the arts and tools of a civilization"—by making theater available to diverse audiences she felt she was letting them in on *a creative act* they deserved to be in on: building and changing society.

In sum, Flanagan Davis believed theater should be dangerous and explosive in the sense that it should inspire people to think critically and question what is considered "normal," but also should help to create culture, counterbalancing culturally destructive forces like war. She believed such a theater was integral to democracy, arguing that, "unlike forms of government which insist that art follow prescribed formulae, religious or political, that art be kept within

bounds. . . . [Democracy] realizes that it is the essence of art that it exceeds bounds, shatter accepted patterns, advance into unknown territory" (Flanagan Davis, "The Arts and Democracy")—in other words, stimulate social change. A theater of, by, and for broad audiences is theoretically necessary for stimulating social change that takes into account the lives and perspectives of many, and a theater based on interdisciplinary research is theoretically necessary for stimulating informed social change based on evidence rather than unfounded ideals or the lies of a demagogue. Translating changing life through bodies directly speaks and engages with *changes* in society; and lastly, balancing empathy and aesthetic distance is necessary for getting audiences to approach social changes with understanding and care for people different than they, but also with a critical lens in place.

Flanagan Davis thus argued that the FTP could function as a medium of communication and expression—or, rather, as a rhetorical medium—working to facilitate civic education, civic engagement, the protection of democracy, and social change. This is what led me to develop the civic-rhetorical theoretical framework I apply in the next three chapters. Critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories are, at their root, concerned with how rhetorical mediums can facilitate the same four civic trajectories. Critical literacy pedagogies are primarily concerned with facilitating civic education in the classroom, and public sphere theories with facilitating civic engagement through social, public, or political platforms. However, as noted before, these areas of inquiry often overlap. Critical literacy pedagogies often seek to stimulate civic engagement through the classroom, and public sphere theories often discuss the importance of education for meaningful engagement. In addition, both areas of inquiry seek out, as ultimate goals, the protection of democracy and stimulation of democratic social change—both possible only with an informed and engaged citizenry. A lens comprised of both critical literacy

pedagogies and public sphere theories therefore provides insight into how rhetoric accomplishes all four of the civic trajectories outlined above, and it is well-equipped to provide insight into how Flanagan Davis understood rhetorical theater accomplishing the same four trajectories. While I do not apply this lens until later chapters, I recall it here to illustrate its connection to Flanagan Davis's keystone arguments.

Flanagan Davis's Theatrical Context

Before making some concluding statements about the keystones above, I would like to give a brief overview of the history of socio-political theater (focusing in on the 1930s) so as to contextualize those keystones. The 1920s-50s (when Flanagan Davis was most active) were marked as a particularly explosive socio-political time for theater in America, but theater scholarship indicates that theater may have always known itself as a place to work out culture and identity. Flanagan Davis was not working in isolation developing and enacting her theories but rather had a field positioned behind her that was also exploring how theater could contribute to positive social and political change. Like many of her contemporaries, Flanagan Davis believed theater could educate people about social and political issues, and could inspire critical thinking and questioning in its audiences. However, unlike most of her more well-known contemporaries, Flanagan Davis was not only a woman, but a woman who was given a chance to enact her theories through a nationwide, government-funded arts project for four years. She wrote and directed plays and contributed to the creation of a genre of theatre, but also envisioned and began creating a political, rhetorical infrastructure through the FTP.

Background on Socio-Political Theater

The argument that theater is political is not new or radical within the field of theater studies. Neither is the argument that theater is meant to have an impact on audiences and is thus

ultimately rhetorical (although the word "rhetorical" is rarely used explicitly in theater scholarship the same way it is used in rhetorical scholarship). Social change and audience agency have become important topics of conversation within the field of theater since the 1930s and especially with the creation of the sub-field of Applied Theater, considered to have formally started in the 60s and 70s. Applied Theater refers to theatrical performances done explicitly for purposes of service and social justice. Augusto Boal, considered one of the founders of Applied Theater asserts that "the argument about the relations between theatre and politics is as old as theatre and . . . as politics" (Boal 2). Many major theatrical movements throughout history have been discussed as explicitly political and implicitly rhetorical.

Boal's work titled *Theater of the Oppressed* (1967) chronicles his perspective on the relationship between theater and politics, starting with Aristotle and working up through his own time and place: Brazil in the 1960's and 1970's. Boal argues that the way Aristotle discusses theatrical catharsis corresponds with an understanding of theater as politically coercive: an experience seeking to purge audiences of thoughts, urges and emotions not valued by tradition or mainstream society (22). [22] Moving forward in history, Boal positions Machiavellian or Bourgeois Theater (roughly sixteenth through nineteenth centuries) as also politically conservative, not because it purges undesirable thoughts but because it reinforces the ideal of the completely humanized, individual male protagonist and the bourgeois values associated with such an ideal (55).

However, to say Boal's historical understanding of politics in theatre is accepted by the field as a whole would be a gross error. Many theatre scholars argue that theatre in the time

[22] Catharsis refers to the purging of emotions, often considered a desired result of watching theatrical performances and specifically identified as such by Aristotle.

periods discussed above was far more politically radical than Boal's depiction. Flanagan Davis herself describes theater in antiquity as progressive:

> The Greek poets . . . dramatized democracy, they kept people thinking along democratic lines—that is, along lines of the free, inquiring spirit. This was true not only when Aeschylus eulogized democracy in *The Persians*, when Sophocles called out against tyranny and dictatorship in *Antigone*, and when Aristophanes challenged the existing order. It was true in a larger sense because all Greek plays were concerned with the people and the best interests of the people, sometimes explicitly as in *Oedipus*, but always implicitly, through the medium of the chorus. Through the chorus, the people were always present—and that is the way art must function in a democracy. ("The Arts and Democracy")

Likewise, in the introduction to her 2014 publication *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World 1649-1849* (2014), Elizabeth Maddock Dillon argues that what Boal refers to as the Bourgeois Theatre was actually a space for the expression and performance of different class identities: "a space where common (and elite) people gathered with regularity, and, thus, a space at which the body of the people was literally materialized. . . . The people not only gathered at the theatre, but also performed themselves as a people in the space of the theatre" (4). Dillon discusses "scenes of riots and riotous participation that occurred in theatres around the Atlantic" to highlight theater's ability to stir audiences into action rather than submission (6).

Both Flanagan Davis and Dillon paint a history in which the theatre, whether through the chorus or the audience, acts as a way for "the people" to represent themselves in an avenue other than voting. Dillon explicitly argues that "to limit representation to suffrage alone is to foreclose

arenas of cultural contestation and meaning making that have political force and value" (9) and that to understand how theater functioned politically requires expanding our view of political representation. Dillon's view of Renaissance theatre is, however, actually not completely at odds with Boal's. While Boal focuses on the ways traditional views are perpetuated *on-stage* in these times, Dillon looks at how "the people" are able to materialize and express themselves as *audience members*. If the audience's views are traditional, then they may agree with what is presented on stage, but if audiences do not agree with what is presented on stage, they could engage in what Dillon refers to as "riots and riotous participation." Whether we look at Greek and Renaissance theatre as coercive and traditional or as radical sites for public expression, it is important to note that theatre here is consistently positioned as a space where culture is expressed, worked through and/or debated. This remains consistent as we move into discussions of modern theatre and Flanagan Davis.

According to Boal, the relationship between theater and politics takes a radical turn in the early twentieth century—right around the time Flanagan Davis was most active (and coincidentally when the "New Rhetoric" began).[23] Boal describes this turn as epitomized by Bertolt Brecht's concept of the Epic Theatre (1930). Brecht's Epic Theatre directly opposes the idea of a passive or coerced audience by explicitly aiming to incite audiences into critical thought rather than catharsis or predominantly passive responses (Boal 80). Brecht often aims to distance or alienate audiences with his plays, believing plays should be "combative" and push audiences to try to solve important problems (Brecht, *Modern Theatre* 17). As discussed above, Brecht's concept of aesthetic distance seems to have had a substantive influence on Flanagan Davis, particularly because she saw critical thought as necessary to democracy. Flanagan Davis's

[23] The correlations between the history of rhetoric and the history of theater, as noted by Meredith Love in her recent article *A Relevant Past: Re-Membering Rhetoric and Performance,* have very intriguing overlaps.

keystones indicate that she fits in well with other famous 1930s theater-focused intellectuals, both because she believed theater should interact with socio-political issues and because she believed it should incite critical thinking among audiences.

American theater in the 1930s is characterized by increased engagement with pressing socio-political questions and specifically with issues connected to the experiences of historically disenfranchised groups, including movements such as the Harlem Renaissance and playwrights such as Susan Glaspell and W. E. B. Du Bois. Theater in the early twentieth century was specifically notable as a tool for Black Americans to express their own perspectives and experiences, for example, with lynching plays—plays composed and performed to reclaim the stories of lynching victims.[24] Flanagan Davis's keystones also indicate that she fits in well with this 1930s theater trend: she believed theater should help to create understanding across difference and stand against prejudice. In addition, she argued for the importance of specific theatre troupes in the FTP designated for the exploration and celebration of Black American experience and culture, as well as the overall integration of the FTP.

Flanagan Davis's ideas were thus compatible with some of the major trends in theater during the 1930s (she believes theater should inspire critical thought, but also create understanding across difference and provide a way to amplify the voices of marginalized groups). Additionally, the idea that theater is somehow connected to cultural expression and production is not unique to Flanagan Davis and seems to be a long-running trend in the field of theater. There are many other aspects of Flanagan Davis's arguments, however, which are unique and compelling, related to infrastructure, organization, decentralization, research, and patterns.

Problematic Binaries and Burke

[24] Koritha Mitchell's *Living with Lynching* is a great resource for more information on lynching plays.

When the field of theater is acknowledged as rhetorical, it is often presented along the lines of a problematic binary I'd like to discuss here before moving on. This problematic binary seems to continually present itself in arguments about the political and rhetorical implications of art; it is a binary that, as I hope to demonstrate in the following chapters, Flanagan Davis's arguments innovatively work to avoid. This binary reduces art into either the category of "applied," specific, radical, and politically subversive art or "pure," universal, traditional art, which is typically supportive of or neutral with regard to current political systems. Kenneth Burke writes about this binary in his article "Calling the Tune," in which he expresses concern that "the distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' art . . . has tended to force the artist into a choice between advertising (wherein he is a spokesman for the values, ideals, and expectancies of commerce), or advertising-in-reverse (that usually goes by the name of 'propaganda')" ("Calling" 274). Eli Rozik, in an article titled "Notes on the Need for a Rhetoric of Theater," seems to take for granted that these are the only two options, asserting that "the 'sacred cows' of . . . a community are always tested by performance texts under extreme fictional conditions, whether the intention is to eventually *reaffirm or confute* them" (19; emphasis added). Boal also tends to describe theater as either affirming current values (Aristotle's Coercive Theater, Bourgeois Theater) or upsetting them (Brecht's Epic Theater, Boal's Theater of the Oppressed). I would argue that Flanagan Davis's work positions theater in a way that resists this binary, by focusing on representing and identifying with diverse, varied audiences rather than any one political or cultural perspective.

William B. Worthen's *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theater* (1992) presents a way of categorizing types of theater that moves away from the binary discussed above and helps to explain how Flanagan Davis moves away from this binary as well. He bases his categorization of

theater on the elements of production through which rhetorical identification is meant to occur (Worthen 2). Drawing on Kenneth Burke's concept of rhetorical identification, he argues that different types of theater aim for different types of identifications (or relationships) and outlines three types of theater—*realistic*, *poetic*, and *political*—calling upon Brecht (unsurprisingly) as one of the primary examples of political theater. He defines realistic theater as using the *natural appearance* of the staged scenes as the main point of identification, poetic theater as relying on the *words* of the script as the main point of identification, and political theater as positioning the *audience's experiences* as the main point of identification. Like Brecht, Flanagan Davis was predominantly concerned with political theater, and, in alignment with Worthen's scheme, she was also most concerned with identifying with the audience through the audience's experiences and specifically was concerned with identifying with a broad range of diverse audience experiences—which, as a whole, are unlikely to fit neatly under the category of either subversive or traditional. [25]

The subversive/traditional binary, however, did likely play a role in shaping how some people saw Flanagan Davis and the FTP. She and the FTP both were, for example, unfairly categorized by conservative politicians as entirely subversive, propagandist, and communist, which led to the end of the FTP. However, I believe Flanagan Davis saw theater, like Worthen, as existing outside of the subversive/traditional culture binary that art is often subjected to and rather, as responsible for seeking identification with audiences and as capable of producing and exploring complex "patterns" of culture, rather than making conclusive or one-dimensional arguments about culture.

[25] Worthen also comments in a footnote that he is not the first to use Burke's concept of identification as a means for understanding drama. Identification, apparently a modern bridge-concept between theater and rhetoric, is also a term Flanagan Davis herself used and will be of note in this project.

In sum, Flanagan Davis has several, significant things in common with Brecht, the Harlem Renaissance, and the radical, political theater associated with the 1930s. However, she also had unique access to the lived experience of running a nationwide, government-funded theater project aimed at helping to rehabilitate the nation and made unique, novel arguments about the relationships between theater, audiences, culture, and democracy.

Conclusion

Flanagan Davis theorized that in order for theater to enhance and support democracy, it must fit the following conditions: be of, by and for as broad and varied audiences as possible; be interpenetrated with interdisciplinary research; translate ideas and emotions about change into stories of struggle expressed through human bodies; and inspire a balance between empathy and aesthetic distance in audiences. If theater met these conditions, she believed it could function as a medium for civic education, civic engagement, the protection of democracy, and social change. Like many theater scholars from her time, she saw theater as inherently connected to culture and politics, and responsible for inspiring critical questioning in audiences. The keystone theatrical conditions she outlines, however, also align with many rhetorical concepts, like audience, translation, and presentation, for example. While she has predominantly been considered a theater scholar, producer and playwright, the keystones here illustrate that she was also very concerned with civic and rhetorical concepts and outcomes.

The theatrical conditions and civic trajectories discussed in this chapter create a framework I will use throughout the remaining chapters. In the following two chapters, I explore a specific genre of theater developed and advocated by Flanagan Davis through the FTP (Living Newspapers), as well as her arguments about how the FTP should function as an infrastructure for the production of a vast amount of diverse theatrical expressions. In other words, I first

compare Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices related to these keystones to her arguments and practices at the micro-level (or ground level) and then compare them to her arguments and practices at the macro-level (or 1000 foot up level). In these following two chapters, I use a two-part lens; first I read the results for how they relate to the keystones here, then I read them through a civic-rhetorical framework. Only after looking at these four conditions and four trajectories from both the micro- and macro-level is it possible to fully understand and appreciate the significance of Flanagan Davis's theories and practices for rhetoricians.

Chapter 3: Living Newspaper Micro-Features: The "Education and Growing Up of America"

"It [the Living Newspaper] is the most dramatic spokesman on the Federal Theatre's forum and it is one of the most powerful mediums of expression in the country. . . . It can make tedious information graphic and personal. It can make the history and social facts of the housing problem the most sensational story on the New York stage at the moment." -Brooks Atkinson "Saga of the Slums"

Introduction

This chapter analyzes Hallie Flanagan Davis's arguments about the features and civic-rhetorical implications of Living Newspapers: a genre of performance prominent in the Federal Theater Project and of particular significance to Flanagan Davis. Despite making up less than 10% of the performances done by the FTP ("Summary of Activity"), I believe Living Newspapers provide insight into Flanagan Davis's theories about how theater could improve democracy more than any other genre. In addition to being developed and Americanized largely by Flanagan Davis (as will be explained in this chapter), Living Newspapers have also been said to "best reflect" her "philosophies of theatre" (Mudarri). Flanagan Davis describes the Living Newspaper genre as a combination of different influences, perhaps most notably Blue Blouse Troupes in Russia and the March of Time radio-film series (Letter to Patricia Anne Ronayne) but simultaneously argues that "they did not resemble anything hitherto seen on stage" (*Arena* 70). Living Newspapers were praised for being "a vital part of American adult education" (Pollock)—Eleanor Roosevelt described them as "something which will mean a tremendous amount in the future, socially, and in the education and growing up of America. . . . far more than any amount of speeches which . . . I—or even the President—might make" (qtd. in *Arena* 222).

As explained in the introduction chapter, I am not the first to assert that Living Newspapers functioned politically or rhetorically. Theater and literature scholars have argued, for example, that Living Newspapers educated audiences about citizenship (Casson) and that

they are best understood as a case study for "the viability of democratic space" (Mudarri); they have also used classical rhetorical theories to illustrate the rhetorical nature and potential of the genre (Smiley, Wynstra). I would like to argue that modern rhetorical theories (not just classical ones) are necessary for fully understanding Flanagan Davis's arguments about the value and function of the Living Newspaper. Living Newspapers were a radical, multimodal avenue through which social problems were addressed and the struggles of the working classes put into focus; a genre that rose to prominence in America during the birth of the New Rhetoric and that reflects many trends associated with the New Rhetoric, for example, a focus on the development of "communally constructed truths as the aim of dialogue" (George et al. 8). I believe, therefore, that a modern rhetorical lens (involving such theorists as John Dewey and Kenneth Burke) will work to illuminate the rhetorical nature of the Living Newspapers in a way that has not yet been done, and I apply such a modern rhetorical lens in this chapter. By illuminating the rhetorical nature of Living Newspapers, I am better able to identify how Flanagan Davis saw theater working to improve democracy on the ground level, with audiences in a theater.

My research and analysis process began with using grounded theory methodology to identify what I refer to as micro-features: the features of Living Newspapers most important to Flanagan Davis, or rather, features that help explain how Flanagan Davis saw theater working to improve democracy at the ground level. I then read the resulting five micro-features through a two-part lens. The first part of this lens involves asking how the micro-features speak to the keystone arguments discussed in chapter 2, allowing me to compare and explore the relationships between different elements of the theory ecosystem detailed here. The second part of this lens requires reading those micro-features (and their connections to keystone arguments) through the civic-rhetorical lens outlined in chapter 1: a process I will explain in more detail in the methods

section momentarily. First, however, I give a brief history of the Living Newspaper's development and Flanagan Davis's role in shaping the genre below.

Living Newspapers from Blue Blouses to Federal Theater Workers

Living Newspapers date back to Russia in the early 1900s, beginning as theatrical readings of newspapers. The original purpose of these readings was to spread knowledge of current events and revolutionary propaganda among the working classes and illiterate. A troupe called the *Blue Blouses*—backed by the Soviet Union—was first known for the genre, reading the newspaper through "skits, verse, monologues, [and] avant-garde oratory." The genre then began to spread to other countries, arriving in America in the mid to late 1920s (Casson 3). Flanagan Davis is one of two, maybe three people responsible for bringing the genre to America.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, in 1926 Flanagan Davis became the first woman to win a Guggenheim Theatre scholarship and, as a result, traveled around Europe for fourteen months studying modern theater. During her travels, she encountered Blue Blouse Theater and the Living Newspaper genre in Russia and later published tales of them in her 1928 book about the experience (*Shifting Scenes* 108). Theater historian John Casson notes that American novelist and literary critic Mike Gold, while abroad in Europe in the mid-twenties (barely a year before Flanagan Davis), worked on Living Newspapers with German playwrights Ernst Toller and Bertolt Brecht (Casson 5). Casson also describes Gold's attempt to establish a worker's theater in America in 1927, based on his work on with Toller and Brecht. Gold would also play a pivotal role in *The New Masses* establishing radical theater troupes, undoubtedly also influenced by his time working on Living Newspapers in Europe (Magil). All of this means that Gold's efforts to bring the Living Newspaper to America happened while Flanagan Davis was writing about them and just before she published about them. Casson also lists 1931 as the year Austrian playwright Jacob Levy Moreno began first *producing* Living Newspapers in America:

the same year Flanagan Davis co-produced a Living Newspaper style play called *Can You Hear Their Voices?* at Vassar University with her former student Margaret Ellen Clifford. Flanagan Davis, therefore, may not have been *the* first person to bring the Living Newspaper genre to America, but she is unquestionably among the first two to three people to do so, and her influence shaping the genre for American audiences is undisputed (Casson, Mudarri, Smiley, Wynstra).

Flanagan Davis's study of the "revolutionary wing" of Russian theater influenced her in important ways, both in spawning her interest in the Living Newspaper and in shaping her views about the relationship between theater and politics. She recounts passionate discussions between Russian theater scholars about the place of propaganda in art and expresses admiration for their pursuits: "the task[] of these actors . . . is to build a theatre which shall train a vast audience, unaccustomed to theatre going, in the principles of communism. The struggle that Russia is making for a universal culture is bigger than anything art can say about it. Art must serve this thing bigger than itself" (*Shifting Scenes* 114; emphasis added). While this may sound like Flanagan Davis is giving her seal of approval for theater as a means of persuading audiences into some kind of "universal culture," a closer look into her work makes it clear she was intrigued, not by communist ideals or arguments, but by the idea that theater could be used to cultivate specific approaches to culture in such overt and seemingly self-aware ways. To make the quote above mirror—almost verbatim—what Flanagan Davis later argues about the American FTP, we need only switch the words *communism* and *Russia*, with *democracy* and *America*, and the phrase *for a universal culture* with: *to understand our unique pattern of culture (as it is)*. So Flanagan Davis's argument amounts to this: *the task of these actors is to build a theatre that shall train a vast audience, unaccustomed to theater going, in the principles of democracy. The*

struggle that America is making to understand our unique pattern of culture (as it is) is bigger than anything art can say about it. Art must serve this thing bigger than itself. While I will discuss this argument at length in the following two chapters, I bring it up here to further highlight the importance of Living Newspapers to any understanding of Flanagan Davis's arguments about theater and democracy—the Russian theatrical influences that led Flanagan Davis to write, advocate, and shape Living Newspapers also greatly influenced her overall understanding of the relationship between theater, politics and culture.

While Flanagan Davis acted as the primary author for only two Living Newspaper scripts, she influenced the creation of many more. In addition to *Can You Hear Their Voices?* (1931) discussed above, Flanagan Davis also authored a Living Newspaper titled $E=MC^2$ (1947) just under a decade after the FTP closed. In between writing these two scripts, Flanagan Davis created the FTP's Living Newspaper Division and positioned it as a critical component of any Federal or People's theater. She spent time collaborating with and assisting the Living Newspaper Division—which produced many Living Newspapers to varying degrees of success—but did not author any herself while the FTP was alive. Each Living Newspaper play produced by the FTP has a primary author listed (Arthur Arendt and Arnold Sundergaard are two prominent examples), but the scripts were composed collaboratively by research teams. Flanagan Davis describes the process as "sponsored by the entire guild of New York newspaper men [and] prepared by newspaper men now working on our project" (Letter to Harry Hopkins), as being "set up like a large city daily, with editor-in-chief, managing editor, city editor, reporters and copyreaders" (Intro to FTP Plays). As noted in chapter 1, Christine Mudarri argues that Flanagan Davis likely had more influence over the FTP's Living Newspapers than she took credit for, knowing that taking such credit would reduce her ability to defend the FTP (36). Thus, although

Flanagan Davis wrote only two Living Newspapers directly, she also created a government-sponsored theater division dedicated to the genre and argued for its significance in any government-funded or people's theater—overseeing and influencing the creation of many more than she wrote and potentially writing more than she took credit for.

Flanagan Davis's Living Newspapers differed from those performed in Russia, most obviously because they did not mirror the genre of actual newspapers. That is, they did not feature a wide variety of subjects, headlines, editorials or comics and focused, rather, on one issue in depth (such as power companies or housing conditions), exploring the history of that issue over decades, sometimes centuries, leading up to the present. Casson attributes this feature specifically to Flanagan Davis, arguing, "while newspaper reporters on the project continually lobbied to make living newspapers more like print newspapers, with full coverage of the news, Flanagan refused, [saying] 'we have never felt that we could make anything like a comprehensive dramatization of current events'" (21). Flanagan Davis's preference for Living Newspapers centered on the in-depth, historical exploration of a single issue is further evidenced by her criticisms of the one FTP Living Newspaper focused on more than one issue: *The Events of the 1935* (discussed more below). Flanagan Davis also emphasized extensive research and citation in Living Newspapers scripts, which, importantly, looks much different in a single-issue, historically focused Living Newspaper than it would have in a Living Newspaper mirroring the newspaper format more closely. The latter would only need to research and cite one or two recent newspapers, more or less transferring the information from a predominantly textual source into a multimodal one. The more the genre moves away from the format of a published newspaper and into a historical overview of a topic as advocated by Flanagan Davis, the more

broad and extensive the required research and citation would theoretically be, and thus, the less likely such research would be to perpetuate the bias or agenda of any one particular news source.

In order to understand how Flanagan Davis's conception of the Living Newspaper differed from her contemporaries, looking to the major debates about early Living Newspapers and where Flanagan Davis falls in those debates is also helpful. Advocates, writers, and producers of early Living Newspapers debated the degree to which the news should be simply read on stage or made more "dramatic" through theatrical devices such as stronger plotlines, symbolic movement, props, etc. They also debated how much improvisation should occur on stage (Casson 20). Flanagan Davis includes and supports a substantial amount of dramatization in Living Newspapers, favoring overarching plotlines, a "loudspeaker narrator" and visual metaphors on stage. She does not advocate improvisation in Living Newspapers but does argue that scripts should be adapted so as to better speak to specific events and places. For example, the final scene in *Power*—a Living Newspapers described by Flanagan Davis as among the most successful produced by the FTP—states that its "foregoing finale is subject to change when the TVA issue is finally decided by the United States Supreme Court." I bring this up here only to situate Flanagan Davis's conception of the Living Newspaper amongst those of her contemporaries: she believed they should be both made dramatic and *planned in advance*, presenting a less spontaneous and more crafted version than many of the Living Newspapers predating her. How Flanagan Davis saw this planned dramatization actually playing out in Living Newspapers will be discussed, in more detail, throughout the body of this chapter.

Despite the differences between versions of Living Newspapers—as Casson argues and Flanagan Davis would agree—all Living Newspapers have been "designed to educate audiences about how to behave as citizens, even if their models of citizenship were not the same" (Casson

22). As such, the civic-educational nature of the Living Newspaper genre cannot be wholly attributed to Flanagan Davis. It is more accurate to say she helped to develop and *Americanize* the Living Newspaper genre, altering it so it could accomplish specifically American goals, than it is to say she created it or imbued it with political or social agency. I would argue, however, that in shifting the purpose of the Living Newspaper away from disseminating one unified view of culture or politics and towards exploring a democratized view of culture and politics (as things to be built and decided upon by many), the genre changes entirely. After discussing my research and analysis process in the section below, I will explore the features of Flanagan Davis's Americanized—or perhaps it is more apt to say *democratized*—Living Newspapers and what those features reveal about her civic-rhetorical theories.

Research and Analysis Process

The goal of this chapter is to understand the civic-rhetorical implications of Flanagan Davis's conception of the Living Newspaper—that is, how she understood Living Newspapers as capable of improving democracy. I looked to Flanagan Davis's published and archival materials for clues about her theories on the genre and, in alignment with grounded theory methodology, allowed her arguments to shape my research process. She states, for example, that the plays themselves are "far more suggestive than any words about them," indicates which Living Newspapers she found the most and least successful, and points to specific scenes as examples of qualities she felt necessary for the genre's functioning. I bring the scripts and scenes she identifies as important or telling and her arguments about them to the center of my analysis in this chapter.

The plays I read include *Triple-A Plowed Under*, *Injunction Granted, Power, One-Third of a Nation, Spirochete* (all during the FTP, not solely authored by Flanagan Davis), and $E=MC^2$.

These are not the only Living Newspapers Flanagan Davis or the FTP were involved with, but they are the only ones both noted as important by Flanagan Davis and moderately accessible. However, many more Living Newspaper scripts were written and performed in smaller scale, in association with the FTP and as a result of the FTP. Flanagan Davis discusses two Living Newspapers from the FTP's Midwestern region titled *Timber* and *Flax,* for example, but also the "Little Theatre and University productions who pay Federal Theatre the tribute of [Living Newspaper] imitation" ("Where Federal Theatre Came From"). The plays I read and analyze here are thus a sample of Living Newspapers, not an exhaustive list.

While reading these plays, specifically those Flanagan Davis noted as successful or unsuccessful, I looked for commonalities between them and found the genre of Living Newspaper—as related to Flanagan Davis's arguments—to be quite consistent. She seems to believe that Living Newspapers should each do the following:

1. Focus on problems related to a basic human need (for example access to food, adequate shelter, livable wages, etc.).
2. Use historical research to explore "conditions back of conditions."
3. Visually represent and "explode" dangerous trends in data.
4. Employ parallel structure and juxtaposition to make arguments about relationships (between people, but also between pieces of data).
5. End with a direct call for audience participation.

In the sections below I provide examples of each of these features and discuss Flanagan Davis's arguments about them. I also read each feature in two ways.

First, I read each feature for any insights it may provide into the keystone arguments I outlined in chapter 2. I read Living Newspapers as concrete examples of Flanagan Davis's

theories at the micro-level, that is, at the ground level, with audiences in a theater. In comparing micro-features to the keystones outlined in chapter 2, I therefore compare her overall arguments about how theater could improve democracy with her arguments about how a specific kind of performance could improve democracy. This part of my research and analysis process is largely motivated by grounded theory methodology, which places importance on "analysis mak[ing] use of constant comparison" (Strauss and Corbin 8). In chapter 2, I approach Flanagan Davis's arguments as a whole; in this chapter I approach her arguments from the micro-level; in the next I approach her arguments from the macro-level—and throughout this process I continually engage in a comparison and synthesis of her arguments and practices across contexts. In addition to providing a means of comparing arguments across one person's body of work, this also helps to explore Flanagan Davis's theory ecosystem on its own terms: as interconnected species, rather than distinct categories of arguments.

The second lens I employ in this chapter is the civic-rhetorical lens outlined in the introduction chapter. As previously detailed, this lens involves looking at Flanagan Davis's arguments about Living Newspapers as arguments about the public sphere and critical literacy, reading for example, her arguments about the theater worker/audience relationship as arguments about the rhetor/audience and student/teacher relationship, and reading her arguments about the purpose of Living Newspapers as the purpose of public sphere engagement and critical literacy education. This lens comes with a variety of implied questions, such as: what are the rules of civic engagement? Who do those rules leave out? Is consensus or the coming together of different opinions valued more? Is coming to group-motivated decisions important or is the purpose more about individual expression? How are different and/or marginalized positions treated? How is quality assured? How (if at all) is in-group/out-group rationality discouraged?

How is authority and who has more power to speak managed? How dialogic is the interaction, and do the audience's goals matter?

I apply the first lens (related to chapter 2's keystone arguments) to each of the micro-features as I discuss them in the body sections below, but suspend applying the civic-rhetorical lens, at least in an explicit way, until this chapter's conclusion. Aspects of my civic-rhetorical lens do come up in the body of this chapter because, as previously noted, modern rhetorical theories are incredibly helpful for understanding Flanagan Davis's arguments, specifically for understanding the possible connections between her different arguments. They help explain, for example, how parallel structure and juxtaposition, a micro-feature of Living Newspapers, stand to stimulate the keystone civic trajectory of social change. I do not, however, explicitly read Living Newspapers as a kind of public sphere or critical literacy classroom until the conclusion. I organize my process as such so as to explore Flanagan Davis's theory ecosystem on its own terms (the relationship between Flanagan Davis's different arguments and practices) as best I can in the body of this chapter before I apply the insights of modern civic-rhetorical theories to the ecosystem. I apply these modern rhetorical insights in the conclusion so as to translate the micro-features and their place in this theory ecosystem into more explicitly rhetorical terms and explore their rhetorical implications—to grow rhetorical fruits from the rich soil and existing vines located in the body of the chapter.

Civic-Rhetorical Features of Living Newspapers

Before discussing the features of Living Newspapers, I'd like to discuss just a few more hints Flanagan Davis gives about how to read the genre. In addition to arguing that reading the plays will be "far more suggestive" than her words about them, she also provides a helpful overview of Living Newspapers methodology:

> Here we have the recapitulation of the Living Newspaper method: study by a group, culminating in a dramatization of complicated factual material done in a series of short, cinematic flashes, introduced by words of a commentator, enhanced by dialogue, pantomime, music and dance . . . the graphs, charts and pictorial surprises with which more mature Living Newspapers are replete . . . and the flash of genius in the opening which takes powerful hold on the imagination. ("Living Newspaper Lives" 2)

Here we already see not only a couple elements of the keystones discussed in the previous chapter, such as the value of research and the argument that theater should be a "dramatization" rather than a reproduction of life, but also new techniques: the use of montage or "short, cinematic flashes," a narrator ("commentator"), and interestingly, an argument for something that sounds a lot infographics ("graphs, charts and pictorial surprises"). In alignment with the quote above, I pay special attention to how such features are used and to the openings of Living Newspapers; I further regard Living Newspapers with graphs, charts, and "pictorial surprises"—which I understand as visual, symbolic representations of trends in data—as "more mature." She also refers colleagues to $E=MC^2$ as an ideal example of Living Newspapers and frequently notes her opinion that *Power* and *One-Third of a Nation* were other ideal examples of the genre (Letters to Patricia Anne Ronayne and James B. McGrath Jr.). As such, the features in these plays are taken very seriously in my analysis below. She describes *The Events of 1935* and *Injunction Granted,* however, as relatively unsuccessful Living Newspapers, and thus, I look to these plays (and her arguments about them) to explore what she believed Living Newspapers *shouldn't* do (for example, that they shouldn't focus on many different issues or represent only one perspective) (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 71).

Micro-Feature 1: Focus on Problems Related to Basic Human Needs

Living Newspapers all focus on social problems. As I noted above, perhaps Flanagan Davis's most notable influence on the Living Newspaper genre was in shifting its format from coverage of multiple issues and topics—like that of an actual newspaper—to a focus on exploring one issue in depth. The only Living Newspaper associated with Flanagan Davis or the FTP that focuses on multiple issues is *The Events of 1935,* widely regarded by Flanagan Davis and others as the least successful Living Newspaper (*Arena* 71). All other Living Newspapers focus on one problem, and that problem is always connected to some basic human need and the struggle for people to maintain access to it. *Can You Hear Their Voices?* and *Triple-A Plowed Under,* for example, focus on the need for food; *Power,* the need for electricity; *Spirochete,* the need for medical awareness and treatment; and *One-Third of a Nation,* the need for safe housing.

Flanagan Davis defines "the struggle inherent in all Living Newspapers" as "the struggle of the average citizen to understand the natural, social, and economic forces around him, and to achieve through those forces, a better life for more people." She goes on to describe the Living Newspaper as representing "n new frontier in America, a frontier against disease, dirt, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, despair, and at the same time against selfishness, special privilege, and social apathy. The struggles it dealt with were not in any narrow sense political, but illustrated what William James called a moral equivalent for war" (Flanagan Davis, "Intro to FTP Plays" 1). She defines the Living Newspaper as dealing not only with political struggles, but with "human," or in other words, "natural, social, economic" struggles. The phrase "moral equivalent for war" is a reference to one of William James's last speeches (dated 1910), in which he asserts that, instead of merely arguing against war, we need to establish a moral equivalent to take war's place: something that would allow citizens to work together for something larger than themselves, affirming their togetherness but also their "hardiness" and ability to create change

and stability together. Thus, in the passage above, Flanagan Davis argues that the struggles dealt with in Living Newspapers were equivalent in a way to the struggle of human against nature, but also included the struggle of man against social and economic forces: struggles capable of uniting us, struggles we can work against together for the creation rather than destruction of man. A national project providing citizens with such a "moral equivalent" (engaging not only natural struggles but also social and economic ones) could therefore potentially help reduce the perceived need for war and instead help us channel the energy typically expended on war towards exploring natural, social, and economic problems and their solutions.

Drawing on Kenneth Burke's concept of metabiology and John Dewey's definition of public or "state" matters helps to further explore how this feature—a focus on problems related to basic human (natural, social, economic) needs—might work to accomplish the civic trajectories for improving democracy from chapter 2. In 1935 (the first year of the FTP) Burke published *Permanence and Change,* which analyzes the prevention and facilitation of social change (one of the keystone trajectories). In this work, Burke argues for an ethical system called *metabiology,* which is focused on ensuring the basic needs of the human body (biology) and then some (meta) are met. For Burke, the *and then some* is often understood as the human desire to make and use symbols, but could include any kind of nourishment that exceeds the purely physical realm, such as social or intellectual nourishment. Ann George's archival exploration of Burke's *P&C* book notes points to metabiology as a method of simplification, or rather, of stripping away unnecessary moral and ethical systems that overcomplicate decision-making (*Critical Companion* Ch 3 p 11).

Living Newspapers focus on what could be referred to as metabiological problems and, in general, can be understood as rooted in an ethics of metabiology. That is, Living Newspapers all

focus on problems related to essential human needs—or in Flanagan Davis's words, "natural, social, and economic" needs—and attempt to identify and begin resolving whatever prevents people from having those needs met. George argues "that metabiology was intended as a powerful intervention in cultural politics—one that is 'workable' because it slices across hardened opposing perspectives" (Ch 3 p 2). In "slicing across hardened opposing perspectives" and revealing an ethical base that opposing perspectives may have in common, metabiology stands to facilitate understanding across difference. A focus on metabiological problems in Living Newspapers would thus also stand to create understanding across audiences who were different by posing easily agreed upon ethical arguments, like *everyone should be able to eat*.

In addition to being metabiological in the Burkean sense, the problems focused on in Living Newspaper plays are also *public* in the Deweyan sense. In *The Public and its Problems* (1927), Dewey argues that "the extent and scope of the consequences of acts" should determine which issues are "public" enough to warrant government or "state" oversight (15). Similarly, Living Newspapers work to illustrate the extent and scope of the consequences of acts that prevent or complicate access to basic human needs to a significant degree and almost always argue for government regulation of those acts. The first scene of *Power* perhaps best illustrates this feature. The play opens with a handful of small tableaux on stage—a factory with women working, a man listening to his radio, a call being sent out to police officers about a wreck—all illustrating the need for power in varying contexts. The lights then turn off to simulate a blackout. Chaos breaks out on stage while the loudspeaker narrator describes a blackout that occurred in Jersey City when a private power company caught fire, along with all of the damage and disorder that ensued (Arent 14). This scene illuminates the extent and scope of the consequences of failed power and, as such. provides fertile ground for later arguments that the

government should regulate power because of how many people and tasks depend on its consistent functioning to meet their basic human needs. All Living Newspapers include at least one scene that works similarly to illustrate the broad and/or severe nature of the issues they explore. The title of *"One-Third of a Nation"* alone indicates an issue impacting a large portion (1/3) of the country. Living Newspapers could therefore be considered, like Dewey, politically pragmatic: identifying problems based on consequences rather than ideals.

I've already discussed how the metabiological nature of the Living Newspapers may have helped them to inspire understanding or empathy across difference (an element important to many of the Ch. 2 keystones). In addition, I'd like to note that, by revealing the consequences of problems serious enough to warrant government regulation, Living Newspapers also educated audiences about civic or "public" problems and the scope of their consequences (civic education). This micro-feature, in addition, speaks directly to the condition of being *of, by, and for broad audiences* in that the issues discussed are those impacting large numbers of Americans (or small numbers in serious enough ways).

Micro-Feature 2: Use Historical Research to Reveal "Conditions Back of Conditions"

Another commonality between the Living Newspapers Flanagan Davis wrote and influenced is they all involve a meticulously researched *historical* look at the issue in focus.[26] The *Philadelphia Daily News* described *Spirochete* as "400 years [packed] into two hours and 30 minutes" (Klein), and Langdon Post, then Housing and Labor Adviser, referred to *One-Third of a Nation* as *"*the most dramatic and effective history of the slum that has ever been written . . . gain[ing] its effect by skillful presentation and its force by strict adherence to the truth." Flanagan Davis quotes literary and theater critic Brooks Atkinson as remarking, similarly, that the Living Newspaper staff "shook the living daylights out of a thousand books, reports,

[26] The play, *Events of 1935,* was the only exception to this and was criticized by Flanagan Davis as a result.

newspapers, and magazine articles in the attempt to create an authoritative dramatic treatment, at once historic and contemporary of current problems" (qtd. in "Intro to FTP Plays" 1).

As discussed in chapter 2's section on interpenetration, Flanagan Davis believed research and citation were a crucial component to any successful theater, and the historical data used in Living Newspapers was no exception. She believed that if theater were to inject itself into politics and life to any benefit, it must be able to back itself up with research. *Injunction Granted* includes no less than 45 publications in its bibliography, and Flanagan Davis describes the research she did for $E=MC^2$ as "desultory. . . . Beginning in June I gave it my complete time—about ten hours a day—right through the summer and fall. Any such production takes such tremendous research" (Letter to Peter Cox). In a letter to playwright Emmet Lavery, she writes, "any Living Newspaper should be documented, with both bibliography and footnotes. . . . Please impress your playwriting division with the absolute necessity for documentation on all such material." I should emphasize that this wasn't a requirement handed down to her but something she advocated because she believed it helped to ensure that theater was powerful in a positive, rather than negative way, positioning evidence as a kind of safeguard against the production of damaging propaganda: "it is because the possibilities for good or evil are so great that everyone working in this field should be respectful of facts and accurate in gathering evidence" ("The Living Newspaper Lives" 3).

Related to the Living Newspapers' inclusion of historical research is Flanagan Davis's argument that "the Living Newspaper from the first was concerned not with surface news, scandal, human interest stories, but rather with the conditions back of conditions" ("Intro to FTP Plays" 2). This is perhaps the most telling statement with regard to how she saw historical research working in Living Newspapers: to identify and communicate not only the conditions

immediately surrounding and causing the metabiological problem in focus, but also the conditions hiding behind such conditions—the unseen conditions leading up to the seen conditions. Another way to put this is that Living Newspapers were concerned not only with direct but also *indirect causal influences*, or rather, more hidden, insidious influences. Flanagan Davis seemed to believe that these "conditions back of conditions" were best revealed, at least in part, by looking at a problem historically and tracing problematic conditions back to their origin.

She also acknowledges the importance of selecting a kairotic moment in history from which to begin telling a story and, thus, inadvertently acknowledges the rhetorically constructed nature of history. She asserts:

> The moment of choice in a living newspaper is as important as that in any other play. The dramatist having at his disposal a great mass of material, must decide at which point he will start to tell his story. He must choose a moment which holds the past in retrospect, and the future in solution. He must choose a moment which uses the fresh interest of the audience and leads that interest down the right path. He must choose a moment which strikes the keynote for his play. (Flanagan Davis, "Theatre Writing")

Here she identifies the moment at which the Living Newspaper begins as a critical moment of choice, a moment that should both give meaning to the past and provide insight into how the past and present speak to the future. In Living Newspapers, this typically involved starting the play in the present, then moving back to a specific moment in history and playing that history out until it bisects the present. Looking to these beginning moments of choice in some of the Living Newspaper scripts helps to illustrate how she saw this working.

The opening scene in *Spirochete* (1938) shows a young 1938 couple applying for a marriage license, being asked to document proof of testing for "venereal disease" and responding in offense, protesting that they both know their spouse-to-be is "decent" and therefore doesn't need testing. The attendant explains that "decency has nothing to do with it" (Sundgaard 14). The play then shifts back to 1493 and retells what is widely regarded as the initial spreading of syphilis: Christopher Columbus's sailors engaging in sexual activity with different people along their travels, both picking up and spreading the disease. The play continues to follow syphilis's spread across Europe, discussing myths about the disease being a punishment from God and the eventual scientific discoveries that helped to identify and cure the disease, in addition to reducing its spread. By framing this history with the couple applying for a marriage license, *Spirochete* draws attention to how the shame and stigma surrounding syphilis still exists and exposes it as a *condition back of conditions* leading to the spread of syphilis. In other words, while the immediate causes of syphilis' rapid spread may have been the infectious nature of the disease, the historical lack of treatment for it and the sexual contact people had with each other, *the condition back of this condition* would be the shame and silence people are taught to approach STD's with, the myths preventing scientific advancement from alleviating disease by preventing citizens from seeking testing or treatment. The marriage license scene holds the past in retrospect, highlights what hasn't changed, and points us towards what should change.

Similarly, *One-Third of a Nation* (1938) begins with a fire breaking out in the slums in 1938 and shows a man who lost his wife and children in the fire being interviewed. Through his grief he recounts how the building went up in flames at an alarming rate and how the conditions of the building prevented people from getting out. A commissioner questions an inspector about the property, who then questions the landowner, and everyone has one excuse or another as to

why the building's conditions were not their fault. The play then goes back to the 1850s when New York was growing rapidly, and land was just beginning to be bought up all over the city. This, again, allows the play to explore not only the conditions of slum housing that lead to fires (poor infrastructure) but also the conditions allowing those conditions to persist: landlord greed and laziness spiraling out of control and ineffective enforcement of housing regulations. The opening scene with the fire highlights the dangers of such greed, laziness, and unenforced regulations—death—but also highlights that such dangers still exist. Towards the end of *One-Third*, a house that has been in the background—part of the setting—for the entire play begins to talk to the protagonist, drawing attention to how, even after so many years, tragedies and changes in law, he, the house, has remained essentially the same, getting older and a little worse off. In the final scene this house catches on fire, mirroring the first scene. Coupled with this ending, the opening scene works to emphasize the lack of change—the consistent, stagnant threat of the slums—and thus illustrates that changing regulations (conditions) will likely be largely ineffective without a change in the greed and laziness of landlords (conditions back of conditions, or rather, indirect conditions that lead to direct conditions).

These conditions back of conditions, revealed through the presentation of historical research, echo many of the same qualities as the "indirect consequences" Dewey argues must be perceived in order for people to organize and understand themselves as a public or publics (131). If consequences are the result of causes or conditions, then *indirect consequences* would be the result of indirect causes or *conditions back of conditions*. Both indirect consequences and conditions back of conditions imply attention not only to immediate cause-effect relationships but also extended cause-effect relationships, revealing *what causes* the causes of effects, or, on the flipside, what consequences are caused *by consequences*. Dewey argues that "the public

consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for" (69). He asserts that the more people understand how they are impacted by indirect consequences the better able they will be to understand themselves as a public and to work towards changing their lives for the better. Flanagan Davis's argument that Living Newspapers should reveal conditions back of conditions thus implies that Living Newspapers would have been equipped to help audiences understand themselves as publics based not only on how they are affected by certain conditions but also an understanding of what led to those conditions (and their impacts on citizens). So while indirect consequences (the indirect consequences of landlord greed, for example, or of shame and stigma surrounding STDs) are explored through the FTP, Flanagan Davis frames them in such a way as puts focus on the *source of conditions* or the root of the problem: as conditions back of conditions, or consequences born from consequences. I believe this focus would accomplish something similar to Dewey's call for more education about indirect consequences—increased citizen ability to see interconnectivity and thus vote in more thoughtful and informed ways—but also may reveal the sources of metabiological oppression.

This micro-feature therefore reveals how Living Newspapers worked as civic education, but also as a way to protect democracy. The historical component of Living Newspapers worked to educate citizens about the history and causes of social issues and stood to help citizens organize themselves along the lines of indirect consequences. In addition, by revealing the indirect *conditions* of struggles to obtain basic human needs, this feature also stands to reveal forces leading to metabiological struggles, or in other words, oppressive forces. This may help achieve a second civic trajectory (the protection of democracy from threats of oppressive regimes) by helping citizens to identify oppression and its roots. This feature also embodies the

keystone conditions of interpenetration and dramatic translation; it begins with interdisciplinary research but translates that research as a story with dramatic elements, presenting *a way of understanding* the history rooted in evidence, but not aiming to represent said history in any particularly realistic manner. The history of slum housing, for example, is performed similarly to Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Tale*: the protagonist is taken on an educational journey through the past by a godlike narrator.

Micro-Feature 3: Visually Represent and "Explode" Dangerous Trends in Data

Flanagan Davis also argues that Living Newspapers should contain a visual representation of a dangerous trend that works to "explode" an idea central to the play. In a letter to Emmet Lavery, she describes "a dramatic trait particular to the Living Newspaper" as "the explosion of an idea not in talk or characterization, or realistic scene, but in a *theatric device*. For instance, the 'Holding Company' colored box scene in *Power*, the single word 'Dust' scene in *Triple-A"* (emphasis added). She goes on to explain to Lavery that in this theatric device the overall theme or argument of the work should be not only "said, but . . . dramatically visualized" (Flanagan Davis, Letter to Emmet Lavery). It is clear from her correspondence she believes this "theatric device" that dramatically visualizes arguments is a necessary and defining component of Living Newspapers, capable of illuminating problematic trends.

Looking to the scenes she suggests above as examples helps to reveal what she means by such a theatric device.[27] In the "Holding Company" scene from *Power*, a character called "The Man Who Knows" explains to the loudspeaker what a holding company is using a sequence of differently sized and colored boxes. At first there are only two small blue boxes on stage, each explained to be operating companies: companies that generate and distribute power. Then, The

[27] She also lists the "Mad Tea Party" scene in a play titled *Medicine Show* as an example. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any copies of this script. *Medicine Show* was written by Oscar Saul and H.R. Hays in 1940, after the FTP closed, so her suggestion of it here is interesting.

Man Who Knows brings on a single larger, yellow box, which he sets on top of the two smaller operating company boxes, making a pyramid. The yellow box is said to represent a holding company, which is explained as a company that "buys up the common stock of the two" operating companies and "extends to them the finances they need." The loudspeaker is satisfied by the explanation, but The Man Who Knows asks him to hold on, and tells him he hasn't "seen anything yet." The Man then brings on two more small blue boxes and one more yellow box, setting them up the same way as the previous pyramid, and then brings on an even larger orange box to set on top of the two pyramids, making them all into one larger pyramid as seen in figure 2. The Man Who Knows then exclaims, "Oh, that isn't anything. When I get through piling up these boxes, those things (*indicating yellow and orange boxes*) will be just sub-sub-sub-holding companies" (Arent 31). This scene works to illustrate visually not just how holding companies work but also how holding companies work *as a trend.* The "exploding" of the idea seems to happen when The Man Who Knows explains how high up the holding companies will stack, giving the audience a visual representation of an economic trend that, according to *Power,* has become a problem.

Figure 2
Holding Company Visualization

In *Triple-A Plowed Under*, there is no scene titled "Dust," but there is a scene titled "Drought" in which "dust" is the only word spoken by an actor on stage. The scene consists of a tableau of a farmer against a stretch of land. There are two voices that speak from off stage. One calls out dates in a "crisp, sharp" voice, and the other, in a "sinister and foreboding" voice, calls out the words "fairer and warmer." The two voices alternate as the dates move forward in time until the end of the scene when the farmer holds up a pile of dry, powdered dirt, lets it run

through his fingers, and says the word "dust" (Staff of the Living Newspaper 35). The visual illustration of a trend here is less obvious, as the only visuals provided are a farmer, a dry field, and dust. However, as the dates pass and the sinister voice calls out "fairer and warmer," it becomes clear to the audience that the weather is not just "fairer and warmer" and that while becoming "fairer and warmer" once or twice might not be all too alarming, continuing to do so could pose serious problems—such as the dirt on a farm turning to dust. This is similar to the way one level of holding companies, or even two, might not be alarming, but the increasing number of them, the consistent *trend* related to them could pose serious problems.

Other Living Newspapers have scenes like this as well, which I believe Flanagan Davis would refer to as employing similar "theatric devices." Part of *Spirochete* is supposed to be played with a map of Europe in the back of the stage, which features "red tubes" lighting up and illustrating the spread of syphilis across Europe. $E=MC^2$ also features a map, this time of the world, and on this map are little red lights for each major city, meant to light up if and when those cities are hit by atomic bombs; in the final warning scene of the play, the red lights illustrate the slippery slope of *x* city bombing *y* city, which bombs *z* city just to be sure, which bombs someone else believed implicated, and so on and so forth. *One-Third of a Nation* features a scene in which a landowner lays out a piece of green turf on stage—"his land"—and portions it off into smaller and smaller parts for more and more tenants. When the turf is just about full of people, and all actors "living" on the property are bumping into each other, elbow to elbow, the Landowner receives another request, looks down at a couple of blades of grass left uninhabited, and welcomes the new tenant in. The result is the toppling over of all other tenants, now unable to stand because of how tightly they are packed in. All of these scenes are visual ways to represent dangerous trends; they help to reveal what Flanagan Davis means when she calls for

"graphs, charts and pictorial surprises," and claims "in . . . theatre form light talks, sound becomes visible, and not only words but objects are eloquent" ("The Living Newspaper Lives" 4).

How might this feature work to accomplish Flanagan Davis's goals? Perhaps the simplest answer is Flanagan Davis seems to have understood that the presentation of data in different symbolic forms stands to move and educate an audience more so than presenting it all in the same form. She writes that "experimentation with factual material" is "made dramatically effective by light, sound, acrobatics, and cinematics" in the genre of the Living Newspaper ("Birmingham Address"). As discussed in the previous chapter, for Flanagan Davis, being dramatically effective was roughly the same as being rhetorically effective: it is measured by how much the audience is moved. Flanagan Davis thus believed these scenes stood to move audiences, and while the direct educational component of this "theatric device" is fairly clear—it helps audiences to understand trends, like power holding companies, that may be conceptually complex—the more interesting impact on the audience here has to do with the "explosion" of the idea that she describes above. The moments of *explosion*—of implying that holding company boxes will build upon each other until they are so tall they might not fit in the building, of seeing the dust fall through the farmer's hand, of seeing the red lights spread like crazy or the tenants topple over—all ask the audience to understand that something either has gotten out of hand or is at risk of getting out of hand because of the *degree* to which it is done. Thus, this theatric device makes symbolic arguments of degree, not arguments of kind.

Putting this in conversation with Flanagan Davis's earlier references to "gunpowder" and theater as "explosive" helps to further reveal how she saw this feature working. As explained in the chapter prior to this one, she describes theater as having the ability to "shatter accepted

patterns" and correlates explosiveness with the ability to draw attention to and question what is accepted as normal. In the single iteration of the holding company boxes, the activity seems normal, reasonable. It is when holding companies start to pile upon holding companies that the pattern starts to seem alarming. The same goes with the "dust" scene: being fairer and warmer occasionally is normal, but the persistence of the trend and the resulting dust is not. It is normal that syphilis spreads, but not that it spreads so much. Thus, this theatric device Flanagan Davis describes was likely intended to "shatter" the idea that certain trends or patterns are normal and/or acceptable *to the degree to which they currently exist*. This theatric devise was therefore able to protect democracy by identifying dangerous trends (often but not always related to economics and government). I would also like to note here that this theatric device is another example of interpenetration and dramatic translation, taking data about change and presenting it through dramatic devices, such as visual symbols. In addition, this feature is also an example of theater inspiring critical thinking (associated with aesthetic distance), as it asks the audience to think not only about the data being revealed to them, but also what happens if patterns in such data persist, to participate in recognizing patterns and predicting where they may lead.

Micro-Feature 4: Employ Parallel Structure and Juxtaposition to make Relational Arguments

Living Newspapers make consistent use of parallel structure and juxtaposition—often working in tandem—to make arguments about the relationships between different people (and pieces of data) involved a particular social issue. While the theatric device discussed above mostly works to reveal trends in data and people, the use of parallel structure and juxtaposition almost always works to reveal *relationships* between data and people; the difference is slight but important. The "theatric device" points to something happening in large or persistent scale, something happening too much; parallel structure and juxtaposition work more to establish group-identity. Parallel structure is predominantly used as a means of identifying people or

groups with each other, indicating that they are impacted by "conditions back of conditions" in similar ways. Juxtaposition, on the other hand, is used to indicate *divisions* between people or groups, specifically by identifying antagonists: those who profit off of the unnecessary struggles of others to meet their basic bodily needs.[28]

Because parallel structure and juxtaposition deal with relationships and group identity, it is helpful to look at how people and groups were represented in Living Newspapers before discussing parallel structure or juxtaposition more fully. Most Living Newspaper characters were meant to be representative of whole demographic groups. For example, the main protagonist is often listed as only "little man" or "consumer." In *Triple-A,* characters are named things like "farmer," "woman on strike," "country banker," "city banker," and so on. However, not all characters in Living Newspapers were meant to represent groups; some characters represented specific individuals already in the public eye and already functioning as "public" persons to some degree, such as politicians, famous inventors, and major historical figures like Mussolini or Christopher Columbus. Living Newspapers also occasionally represented nonhuman entities as characters. $E=MC^2$ for example, features Atom—an anthropomorphized atom—as a main character, who, like the atom, is unpredictable, unstable, easily excitable, and experiences increasingly popularity and demands on her time. *One-Third of a Nation,* as noted above, similarly features an old tenement building as a talking character. Thus, the characters on stage are all meant to represent some group of persons, a notable individual person, or an important and *real* nonhuman entity. That is, they all represent something from the real world outside the theater, with the majority of characters representing different groups.

[28] Christine Mudarri refers to this kind of juxtaposition as a "theatric device." Because Mudarri and I did our research at different archives, it is very possible Flanagan Davis referred to both the micro-feature discussed in this section (juxtaposition) and the feature discussed in the section above (visual representation of trends) as different "theatric devices" important for the Living Newspaper.

Parallel structure often works with the visual theatric device described in the section above to illustrate trends in data, such as the repeated stacking of holding company boxes or the repeated stating of "fairer and warmer" temperatures. However, in this section I would like to discuss how parallel structure is used, alternatively, to illustrate similarities between different represented demographic groups, as can be seen, for example, in the scene below from *Triple-A Plowed Under*:

> FARMER: Farm prices must stay up.
>
> WOMAN (strike leader): Food prices must go down.
>
> ALL FARMERS (in chorus): UP! UP!
>
> ALL WOMEN: DOWN! DOWN!
>
> FARMER: I can't buy that auto.
>
> DEALER: I can't take that shipment.
>
> MANUFACTURER: I can't use you anymore.
>
> WORKER: I can't eat.
>
> ONE UNEMPLOYED: We need food!
>
> ALL UNEMPLOYED: We need food!
>
> ALL FARMERS: We need food!
>
> ONE WOMAN: We need a decent standard of living.
>
> ALL WOMEN: We need a decent standard of living.
>
> ALL UNEMPLOYED: So do we. We need a decent standard of living.
>
> ALL FARMERS: So do we.
>
> A FARMER: Then all our problems are the same!

ALL UNEMPLOYED: Then all our problems are the same. (Staff of the Living Newspaper 56)

This excerpt highlights the connection between food prices and farmer wages (if one goes down, so does the other) but also explores how food prices and farmer wages impact other demographic groups. Originally the farmers and the women on strike appear to be in opposition because high food prices mean more money for the farmer but less money and less food for the women and workers purchasing the food. However, the scene goes on to reveal that the farmers, women on strike, workers, and unemployed are all really experiencing similar difficulties meeting similar metabiological needs: all need food and don't have enough money for it.

The consequences of dropping farm prices are explored in a way that reveals to the audience that the farmers and the others on stage (manufacturers, women, workers, dealers, unemployed persons) all have interconnected consequences—that their struggles are more similar than they may initially seem. This kind of structure, in the example above, works against quick judgments about "us v. them" based on immediately observable conditions and, instead, asks audiences to look past those conditions to the "conditions back of conditions" that reveal workers and farmers to be impacted rather similarly by the same forces: the aftermath of war and changes in international trade demand. This parallel structure can also be seen in *One-Third of a Nation* when the loudspeaker calls out statistics about disease rates in the slums of Chicago versus other parts of Chicago, then the slums of Boston versus other parts of Boston, then New York, Philadelphia, and so on, revealing disease rates to be consistently higher in the slums (Arent 58). The loudspeaker later repeats this pattern by calling out juvenile delinquency rates (Arent 83). These statistics work to illustrate that people in slum areas across the country were experiencing similar consequences and thus should perhaps see themselves as more connected

than they did before. The parallel structure here also, however, works to illustrate a connection between disease/death and crime/delinquency rates, implying that the slums are the important common factor and likely responsible for both in some way. Through parallel structure, groups are therefore asked to see themselves as connected by consequences they experience.

Juxtaposition also plays a significant role in defining relationships between groups of people. Perhaps the most iconic example of juxtaposition occurs in *Triple-A Plowed Under,* between scenes 15 and 16. In scene 15 a customer cannot afford a bowl of oatmeal because "processing fees" caused the price to rise from two cents to three cents; in scene 16 a wealthy couple enjoys champagne and caviar and talks about how the man is profiting from increased food processing fees. The wealthy man asserts, rather coolly: "it's the consumer who pays" (Staff of the Living Newspaper 33). Here we see not only the conditions of the people in the two scenes juxtaposed, but also, in that juxtaposition, the realization that the wealthy man is amassing wealth from the same forces preventing the consumer from meeting his basic bodily needs (the need to eat). Here the wealthy people are positioned as antagonists, and the difference between their lives of luxury and the consumer's life of desperation works to emphasize this positionality.

Another example of juxtaposition appears in a scene from *Power* in which a consumer goes to purchase potatoes, finds them too expensive, goes to another location, finds them cheaper and then purchases them. The consumer repeats this process while purchasing meat, and then attempts to do the so while purchasing electrical power. However, when the customer tries to find alternative electrical power options, they are told there is no competition, no choice, and they must purchase from the first and only option (*Power,* Arent 22). Here we see the consumer and both food sellers engaging with free-market competition in a parallel structure; this is starkly

contrasted, or juxtaposed, with the electricity monopoly identified as the antagonist of the play. Yet another interesting example of this comes in the story of *Ethiopia,* the FTP's first Living Newspaper, and one that never made it to stage. *Ethiopia* was not allowed to be performed because of the way it depicted foreign leaders (Mussolini, in particular). Flanagan Davis argued against this censorship, asserting that the play merely quoted said leaders verbatim and that the short, cinematic flashes characteristic of Living Newspapers did not provide enough time in the performance to establish judgment or negative characterization of anyone ("Conference Memorandum"; "Statement on Elmer Rice"). Interestingly, this second feature is likely what actually *caused* the script to seem critical of Mussolini, and Flanagan Davis almost certainly knew this. She argues that the primary intent of Ethiopia was "to present the various people in certain artistic juxtapositions" (Letter to Harry Hopkins). It was likely not the quoting of Mussolini, but rather the juxtaposition of his speech against the speeches and experiences of others that positioned him unfavorably in *Ethiopia* and thereby led to the play being censored.

Flanagan Davis also asserts that juxtaposition, like the visual trends in data discussed in the previous section, should be communicated not only linguistically but also visually. In her class plan about surrealism, she notes *One Third of a Nation's* stage design as placing "in strange juxtaposition natural objects in order to shock observers with awareness" ("Expressionism"). The stage design of *One-Third of Nation,* described at the very beginning of this project, consisted of a large rickety fire escape, an overflowing trashcan, and a giant faucet leaking with bright green contagion. These objects, as Flanagan Davis describes them, become not only a part of the scenery but "active elements of the disease, misery, and crime bred in the slums" (*Arena* 212). Thus, juxtaposition, in Flanagan Davis's terms, likely indicates more broadly the act of positioning things in an unfamiliar and jarring way. One way she sets this up is through parallel

structure; if the lines and scenes of a portion of the play follow a predictable, repeated structure, the moment or person who breaks the structure will stand out as jarring. A second way to create juxtaposition would then be through surrealist imagery and symbols that stand out by virtue of working against audience expectations, such as the leaking faucet and other bizarre elements discussed above.

Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theories help to explain how these features (parallel structure and juxtaposition) might work to facilitate social change. In *Permanence and Change* (1935), he describes the concept of pieties: ways of thinking and interpreting the world often held precious and assumed to be "true" and unmediated (75). The word *piety* echoes religious adherence intentionally, as many pieties are linked to religious understanding, but importantly, for Burke, pieties often are secular. For example, a belief in the scientific method is a kind of piety. Burke explains how pieties condition the sensory inputs we receive, influencing us to make certain meaning out of those inputs and thus not only dictating but *limiting* the meaning we can make. This, for Burke, presents a problem for social change, as pieties will limit the solutions and understandings we come upon to those that already work with our current ways of understanding. Pieties may, for example, cause a person to disregard certain data as irrelevant or invalid simply because it does not fit into their normal ways of making sense of the world. Juxtaposing incongruous symbols, Burke theorizes, will help elude the pieties held by a person and jolt the brain, asking it to make meaning that might not fit with held pieties, meaning that may create diversions and intersections amongst and between the well-woven paths of the brain; he refers to these effects as "perspective by incongruity." Achieving perspective by incongruity through juxtaposition, he argues, is a strategy especially adept at changing the ways people perceive and understand reality, and as such, is also adept at facilitating social change.

Living Newspapers employ perspective by incongruity through the use of juxtaposition, and Flanagan Davis's argument that juxtaposition could "shock observers with awareness" indicates that she may have understood juxtaposition in a way strikingly similar to Burke. Juxtaposition asks the audience to make meaning at the intersections of what is normal and what is not expected or "incongruous." Living Newspapers do this rather consistently. To give a final example of this feature, in *Power,* a young child questions her father about how it is that mail is considered important enough for government regulation, but access to electricity is not. The juxtaposition between electricity and mail delivery asks the audience to engage in critical comparison of the two that would not have resulted without the strange pairing: a lot of bad can happen if either doesn't work properly, but an hour's delay in mail delivery doesn't cause nearly as much damage as the loss of an hour of electricity.

Burke also argues that parallel structure, in its predictability, allows the audience to make meaning along *with* the rhetor by making it possible for them to anticipate what will come next. As such, he presents it as an extremely effective strategy for persuasion (Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives* 59). He therefore explains both juxtaposition and parallel structure as particularly powerful forms of rhetoric that ask audiences to participate in the meaning-making process at the intersections of ideas. Parallel structure situates meaning at the intersection of two or more similar things. Juxtaposition situates meaning at the intersection of two or more different things. The meaning made as a result of parallel structure and juxtaposition within Living Newspapers most often has to do with helping audiences to identify similarities and differences between demographic groups based on how indirect conditions impact those groups.

With regard to the keystones from chapter 2, parallel structure and juxtaposition, together, stand to facilitate civic education about the interconnectedness of different

demographic groups, thereby further helping audiences to identify who profits off of whose struggles (and thereby also potentially identifying oppression and protecting democracy from corruption). Parallel structure and juxtaposition often worked to reveal how groups were connected by conditions back of conditions, making Living Newspapers quite compatible with Dewey's description of an improved democracy in which groups better understand how they relate to and impact each other. In addition, both parallel structure and juxtaposition work as examples of dramatic translation (ways to translate data into theater). Together, they also work to inspire empathy and critical inquiry: parallel structure asks groups previously at odds to see how their goals are the same and thus to potentially empathize while juxtaposition asks audiences to question the relationship between two different things.

Micro-Feature 5: End with a Direct Call for Audience Civic Engagement

Engaging the audience in meaning making through parallel structure and juxtaposition isn't the only way Living Newspapers asked the audience to contribute. Most Living Newspaper performances end with a direct, if vague, call for the audience to participate in creating solutions; they put a compelling amount of responsibility on the audience to change things moving forward from the moment of the production. For example, *One Third of a Nation* ends by calling out to the audience, "we must make them [government officials] hear us [those struggling to meet basic needs]." Rather than assigning audiences particular views or tasks, these ending calls simply ask audiences to be engaged and make their opinions known. As a review of *One Third of a Nation* puts it: "it is far more profitable to discuss *One Third of a Nation* as an artistic presentation of a condition rather than as a solution of this condition. . . . It is a spectacle to make us think" ("The Play and the Screen" 414). This aligns with Flanagan Davis's arguments for theater aimed at educating audiences by raising "critical, inquiring" questions in their minds, rather than advocating certain answers.

While this feature is relatively simple and I won't spend much time discussing it, it is relevant because these calls to action are strikingly consistent between scripts, align with Flanagan Davis's arguments about the Living Newspaper genre as a form of protest, and were at times wildly successful at engaging audiences in civic matters. *Spirochete* ends with, "it can be done and will be done if you and you and you wish it so. The time has come to stop whispering about it and begin talking about it . . . and talking out loud!" (114). Likewise, *E=MC2* ends with this call: "whether we can do it and do it in time, rests not alone with the scientists, but with the psychologist—the economist—the philosopher—the artist—with you and with me. For it is still—in this moment of time—December 13, 1947—by some desperate miracle—*our world*" (83). *Triple-A Plowed Under* end simply with "we need *you.*"

Flanagan Davis argues that Living Newspapers audiences were the most likely of FTP audiences to participate in civic action, stating, for example, that "if it were announced today that the Federal Theatre was to go out of existence . . . the only united protest would come from the Living Newspaper audiences" ("Public Works" 9). While she may have said this because the Living Newspaper genre appealed to an already more politically active audience, there is also evidence she believed Living Newspapers were successful at motivating audiences to political action. In an article titled "Theatre and Geography," she recounts a particularly moving set of *One Third of a Nation* performances and their success at motivating civic engagement:

> In the lobby of the Adelphi Theatre in New York, where . . . a hundred and fifty-one thousand people have paid to see the Living Newspaper on housing, there is an exhibit of paintings by children of the slums. . . . American children have made their own record of the squalid rooms and alleyways which to one-third of our nation mean home. The pictures are part of the play, the play a continuation of the

> pictures, and both at once a part of the life of the audiences pouring nightly into the Adelphi and a force galvanizing that audience to some action. People leaving the theatre sign petitions to speed the housing developments; they write to their congressmen, they join renters' leagues. (462)

She describes the genre as one of protest, arguing, "if in addition to giving great plays of the past as greatly as we can give them . . . we can't also protest as President Roosevelt is protesting, against some of the evils of this country of ours, then we do not deserve the chance put into our hands" (Flanagan Davis, "Talk with Summer Session" 3).

Flanagan Davis clearly saw the Living Newspapers as a force for shaping and catalyzing civic engagement, and it is undoubtedly no coincidence they all end on a note directly encouraging such engagement. Facilitating wider civic engagement amongst FTP audiences would theoretically work to both protect democracy and stimulate social change specifically because the audiences of the FTP were often from lower socio-economic brackets and persons who had been slighted by political and economic systems. Therefore, in stimulating civic engagement of the lower classes and the shafted, the FTP stood to amplify the voices of those struggling and facilitate their entry into political conversations. In addition, this feature provides interesting insight into the strategy of interpenetration, not because it brings other fields and research into theater, but because it asks the audiences of the theater to interject themselves into politics.

Conclusion

In the analysis above I explore Living Newspaper micro-features and how those micro-features speak to Flanagan Davis's keystone arguments about the FTP. I discuss the Living Newspaper's focus on educating audiences about public, metabiological problems and the

history of such problems to help reveal their indirect causes; how Living Newspapers used visual representations of worrisome trends as educational/rhetorical devices and employed parallel structure and juxtaposition to make arguments about relationships and inspire critical thinking, ending with a direct call for audiences to engage in political action and communication. While I employ rhetorical theories to help explore some of the features above, I'll now turn to a more explicit application of the civic-rhetorical lens outlined in chapter 1, so as translate some of the connections made above into rhetorical terms and highlight the rhetorical implications such connections have. This lens asks us to read Flanagan Davis's arguments about Living Newspapers *as arguments about the public sphere* and *critical literacy education*. This lens, in addition, involves looking to the many different questions implied in reading anything as a public sphere or critical literacy medium (these questions are explored in depth in chapter 1 and briefly in the methods section of this chapter). Rather than go through and answer these questions systematically, I provide a summary of the results such systematic inquiry yielded, which are as follows:

- Living Newspapers were meant to educate audiences for deliberative and agonistic civic engagement but had flexible rules of engagement common to the medium of theater.
- Living Newspapers taught about oppression in public, metabiological terms to mitigate some of the critiques of oppression as a critical literacy framework.
- Living Newspapers invited audiences to make meaning out of relationships and trends.
- Living Newspapers encouraged public organization along the lines of indirect consequences, with an emphasis on interconnectivity.

Before expanding upon these conclusions, I'd like to briefly discuss a trend that arose throughout my analysis in this chapter: Living Newspapers seem to have worked predominantly as a

medium of civic *education* in Flanagan Davis's eyes. While they were meant to catalyze audience civic engagement—as well as the protection of democracy and social change—the majority of such engagement was seen as happening after rather than *during* a performance. My conclusions below still draw from both public sphere theory and critical literacy, but they indicate that Living Newspapers, at the micro-level, were primarily focused on civic education.

Education for Deliberative, Agonistic Civic Engagement with Flexible, Theatrical Rules

Drawing on Roberts-Miller's axes (elaborated on in chapter 1), I'd like to argue that Living Newspapers were meant to educate audiences for deliberative, agonistic engagement and to encourage audiences to embark on such deliberative, agonistic engagement following the close of the performance. That is, Living Newspapers modeled deliberative rhetoric (rhetoric focused on coming to decisions impacting groups), but also agonistic rhetoric (rhetoric that values disagreement as productive and not to be avoided). Living Newspapers also, however, circumvent many of the criticisms of more traditional deliberative and agonistic spheres by having very flexible rules of rhetorical engagement. This was due, at least partially, to the rhetorical nature of theater. Below I discuss the Living Newspaper as a deliberative, then agonistic public sphere/critical literacy medium, and then explain how theater's flexible rules of engagement influence such a sphere/medium.

Flanagan Davis argues that Living Newspapers should be deliberative quite directly, that they should focus on social and economic problems in hopes of yielding a "better life for more people" (Intro to FTP Plays). In other words, while actual mutually binding policies were not decided upon in Living Newspaper performances, Flanagan Davis believed Living Newspapers should be in service to stimulating change benefiting as many diverse groups of people as possible, often by advocating or opposing legislation. Living Newspapers frequently cite past

and present legislation, clearly attempting to educate and inspire citizens to vote on mutually binding policies after leaving the theater. Actors modeled deliberative rhetoric on stage, but audiences were asked to engage in deliberative rhetoric outside of the theater, after the performance. While the call to "make them hear us" at the end of *One Third of a Nation*, for example, can be understood as in some ways a call for more *expressive* (rather than deliberative) engagement—that is, a call for individuals to express themselves rather than engage in mutually-beneficial decision-making—Living Newspaper performances' focus on educating audiences about the indirect consequences of legislation (along with the indirect consequences of other social and economic forces) indicates that they were intended to equip audiences to vote and engage in social action with an understanding of how their actions may impact others.

Living newspapers also predominantly illustrate agonistic rhetoric. They feature different opinions, discussions and arguments between characters, and generally present those discussions and arguments as leading to greater understanding. The "little man" or "consumer" protagonist character, for example, often learns a lot about the metabiological issue in focus by questioning different characters on stage and hearing their different takes on an issue. Part of the agonistic nature of Living Newspapers, however, may come from the medium of theater itself. In theater, multiple characters are typically represented, and conflict is often revealed and solved, at least in part, through dialogue between characters with differing opinions or motives. Imagine a play whose characters were consistently all in agreement; it would make for rather dull—or perhaps uncomfortably avant-garde—theater. To put it more simply, theater relies on conflict (a sentiment echoed in Flanagan Davis's notes), and conflict often relies on disagreement. As such, varying perspectives are valuable in theater at least insofar as they create conflict or move the plot forward. Living Newspapers, however, often go so far as to present *even the antagonist* as

having worthwhile and understandable, if flawed, opinions. For example, the general who is at fault for all-out atomic war in *E=MC*^{2} does so by mistake because he was concerned for the safety of others and believed himself to be stopping rather than beginning war; similarly, a landlord in *One-Third of a Nation* explains that he bought land to make a profit and is concerned about not being able to do so and potentially losing money on an investment. Indeed, Flanagan Davis's harshest critique of an FTP Living Newspaper (*Injunction Granted*) was centered on the play's presentation of an issue as one-sided and its leaving out of relevant information that would have challenged the play's one-sided argument.

Like most public communication though, Living Newspapers were only agonistic up to a point. That is, they did tend to advocate specific ways of looking at problems and specific kinds of legislation, thus advocating a level of consensus. Living Newspaper audiences, however, weren't necessarily asked to come to the same conclusions. The audience was typically given surveys through which to respond freely to the play and called to further engage in politics as they see fit following the play. As such, the consensus reached in Living Newspaper plays didn't work as a rule for silencing dissent from the audience, nor was it attached to any policy or decision put into effect. I argue, rather, Living Newspaper consensus can be understood as the play itself reaching one opinion after illustrating the educational value of engaging multiple opinions, and then asking the audience to follow a similar path to forming an opinion—a kind of agonistic, deliberative modeling, or what Mudarri called "democratic space."

In modeling (and I would argue, encouraging) both deliberative and agonistic rhetoric, Living Newspapers educated audiences for the kind of public sphere identified by Roberts-Miller as the most apt for democratic decision-making: deliberative democracies. The feature distinguishing Roberts-Miller's deliberative democracies from more traditional and exclusionary

Habermasian/liberal public spheres is that deliberative democracies take a flexible approach to rules about what kinds of participation counts as valuable. For example, while liberal public spheres have been critiqued for placing a premium on "objective" and "rational" engagement of purely "public" issues (Fraser; Hauser; Warner), deliberative democracies welcome emotional, subjective engagement including but not limited to personal narratives and the discussion of seemingly "private" issues (Roberts-Miller). These flexible rules work to make deliberative democracies more accessible, specifically to groups often shut out from traditional civic engagement in liberal spheres. Living Newspapers, like deliberative democracies, also have flexible rules for such engagement and include personal stories, emotional appeals, private concerns, etc., allowing them to count as researched evidence and valid points for consideration (along with other, more quantitative research). However, like the preference for agonism, this inclusion of personal and emotional appeals, narrative evidence, etc. is likely motivated in part by the medium of theater: a multimodal form of artistic communication most often associated with narrative and, as Flanagan Davis described it, "the whole human"—i.e., not only the intellectual, but the *emotional*, *embodied* human.

Teaching about Oppression in Public, Metabiological Terms

Living Newspapers also aimed to improve democracy by teaching audiences about oppression in metabiological terms—that is, in terms dealing with the most basic human needs. Basic human needs are described by Burke as the needs arising from the body *plus* mind and similarly by Flanagan Davis as "natural, social and economic" needs. Like Freire and more traditional critical literacy pedagogues, Flanagan Davis believed teaching audiences about oppression could improve their ability to protect themselves (and democracy) from threats of

oppressive regimes. As discussed in the introduction chapter, the Freirean method of teaching students to identify oppression has been criticized by pedagogues for two main reasons:

1. It presents stable notions of the poor as the oppressed and the rich as the oppressors, which overlooks many complicated facets of oppression (Elias); and
2. It risks becoming the banking method wherein either the professor knows who the oppressed/oppressors are, and the students must find out *or* in which liberal ideas are always right, and the students are asked to conform to the teacher's agenda (Jay and Graff).

While these critiques are valid and worth consideration, I believe the public, metabiological way oppression is defined in Living Newspapers actually presents a solution to one, and possibly both, of said critiques.

Living Newspapers position oppressors as those who intentionally benefit (often meaning profit) off of the unnecessary struggles of others to meet their metabiological needs and who do so to a degree that should be deemed "public" in terms of scope or severity. While this formula will often lead to the rich being seen as oppressive and the poor as oppressed, it doesn't always. Rather, it presents flexible and dynamic categories of oppressed/oppressor. Let's say a rich student is bullied by poorer students for having a lisp or being a redhead; those poorer students who caused the rich student to struggle unnecessarily to maintain basic physiological and emotional wellbeing (presumably profiting socially or with regard to their own self-esteem) would be the oppressors in said scenario—according to a metabiological definition of oppression. Thus, a metabiological definition for oppression avoids reducing oppression to issues of class, but without pretending that class isn't a large part of oppression. In addition, by looking at basic human needs, the metabiological focus of this formula should (like Burke's

metabiological ethic) theoretically "slice across" cultural and political interpretations of oppression, simplifying our understanding of oppression in a way that stands to make sense and unite us across different cultures and perspectives (George). As such, a metabiological view of oppression is not only capable of addressing different kinds of oppression, but is also not theoretically tied to any political (liberal or radical) perspective unless the idea that people should have their most basic human needs met is considered a political stance.

This way of framing oppression does, however, within the context of Living Newspaper performances, present oppressor/oppressed categories as something the theater speakers know and the audiences are to learn, and therefore verges on the banking method of education. Theater speakers, most specifically playwrights and directors, present who they believe is the oppressor and oppressed based on this formula; they do not collaboratively discuss or determine this with the audience, although they do find ways to involve the audience, and, as discussed above, do not require audiences to vote or act any particular way after performances, putting more focus on the audience's need to engage. The audience is, thus, not punished in any way for disagreeing with the performance's take on oppression and is rather encouraged to continue exploring and commenting on such oppression after the performance ends.

Inviting Audiences to Make Meaning out of Relationships and Trends

In the Living Newspaper genre, the relationship between the speaker/teacher and audience/student is predominantly invitational. While theater speakers (playwright, director, actors, etc.) have more authority to speak in the setting of a performance than the audience, like a critical pedagogue or invitational rhetor, the Living Newspaper positions the audience as collaborators, both during and after the performance. As Flanagan Davis states, "The audience shares in creation" ("Difference between Narrative" 3). Asking audiences to engage in civic matters at the ends of plays is the most direct way Living Newspapers invited audiences into the

conversation, but it is not the strategy I would like to discuss here, mostly because such calls invite audiences into problem-solving in rather direct and obvious ways (by saying: now you go make yourself heard). Rather, I'd like to explore here how the visual "theatric device," juxtaposition and parallel structure all work together to invite audiences into the meaning-making process, specifically with regard to making meaning about trends and relationships.

Parallel structure and juxtaposition, as noted before, situate meaning at the intersections of ideas, people, scenes, what is familiar and unknown, etc.; they position meaning not so much *in* the ideas, people, or scenes themselves, but in the relationships *between* ideas, people, scenes etc.—relationships the audience is asked to analyze. *Triple-A Plowed Under* doesn't directly state that the man eating caviar is wrong for profiting wildly off of food processing fees while many starve; it places scenes side by side and asks the audience to make the connection themselves. *One-Third of a Nation* doesn't tell the audience that higher disease *and* juvenile delinquency rates are connected to the leaky faucets and overflowing trashcans of the slums; it places statistics side by side and makes elements of setting work against audience expectations to inspire questioning that will likely lead to such conclusions. The visual theatric device works similarly; it presents a trend and asks the audience to imagine the escalating nature of said trend, along with the problems such escalation could yield. In other words, all three strategies *invite* the audience to make connections and inferences, to actively think through the performance, rather than passively accepting all the performance has to say, to critically inquire.

Parallel structure, juxtaposition and the visual theatric device also all specifically seek to engage audiences in understanding *trends or patterns* (in data, in consequences, in relationships). In a pamphlet titled "Patterns in the Theatre" from her teaching materials, Flanagan Davis asserts that revealing patterns is one of art's greatest tasks:

> The great artist . . . is a pattern maker. The average spectator of life or nature sees no pattern in either. He sees nature as a series of casually related objects, he sees life as a succession of people or a series of incidents all bearing more or less directly on himself. The thing that disturbs the average spectator in a great work of art is that he is brought face to face with a sudden, forcible synthesis which he has not hitherto noticed, which therefore seems to him untrue (2).

Thus, revealing trends and patterns and inviting audiences to see such trends and patterns is something Flanagan Davis saw as integral to the goal and function of theater, and therefore likely also integral to the goal of improved democratic functioning through theater.

Housing and Labor Advisor Langdon Post describes *One Third of a Nation* as a play that succeeded at inviting audiences into civic matters *and* revealing important civic patterns:

> It lifts the veil of indifference which has hidden the shame of New York for a hundred years and it reveals in stark realities the human misery which our society has created by the cruel and stupid exploitation of the land in the richest city in the world, and of the people who live on that land. It explains in simple terms but with compelling force the *vicious circle of circumstance which has resulted in the pyramiding of land values year after year* and, finally, in the misery of almost two million people. It places the responsibility where the responsibility belongs and with skillful *dramatic irony* it explains *the hypocrisies* which have served only too long to conceal the fact and the truths (Post; emphasis added).

The quote above helps to demonstrate the value of revealing patterns: things such as vicious circles of circumstance, pyramiding land values, hypocrisy, etc. may become visible. Part of the Living Newspaper's civic educational potential comes from just this: it stood equipped not only

to identify important trends and patterns in the social, political and economic world, but also to invite audiences into the process of making sense of those trends and patterns.

Encouraging Public Organization around Indirect Consequences and Interconnectivity

In addition to educating audiences for civic engagement in the ways above (modeling flexible agonistic, deliberative communication; teaching about metabiological trends in oppression, and inviting audiences to make meaning out of those trends), Living Newspapers also asked audiences to begin engaging in civic activity within the walls of the theater in predominantly one way: by seeing themselves as publics organized along the lines of indirect consequences/causes. In exploring indirect consequences/causes Living Newspapers brought focus not only to cause/effect relationships but also chains or patterns of cause/effect relationships, or rather, the ways cause/effect relationships interconnect and influence each other. Living Newspapers did not ask audiences to understand themselves as publics that were completely separate or distinct but, rather, as publics deeply intertwined by how they impact and are impacted by each other: less like stable categories and more like patterns of relationships.

In many ways, asking audiences to form such publics aligns Living Newspapers with the news media called for by John Dewey in *The Public and its Problems.* Dewey emphasized that part of the problem with civic engagement in the 1920s had to do with too much information and too many disorganized people unaware of how they related to one another. The same can be argued today, with "fake news" and the ever more complicated and hidden economic chains through which we connect with the world and people around us. Dewey explains how "many consequences are felt rather than perceived; they are suffered but they cannot be said to be known, for they are not, by those who experience them, referred to by their origins" (131). Part of his solution was the presence of news media with a strong focus on direct and indirect consequences and their origins. Dewey believed such information would help citizens to better

decide which actions and policies to support, but also to better understand how they were connected to other people and groups and ultimately to form publics based on something other than political partisanship, racial divides, and other often superficial demographic categories.

Dewey's indirect consequences and Flanagan Davis's indirect conditions are two sides of the same coin. Both theoretically work to reveal roughly the same thing to audiences: how they might align themselves with different groups or "publics" based on indirect consequences and the conditions behind them. Living Newspapers therefore, like Dewey's news media, stood to help citizens organize and understand themselves based on how their perceived and indirect consequences related to one another, and thereby help citizens to see how policies impact not only themselves, but those they are interconnected with. I would also argue that Flanagan Davis's focus on interconnectivity resists "in-group/out-group" rationality by presenting groups as permeable and interdependent, rather than distinct, separate entities.

Patterns of indirect consequences/ causes related to social problems weren't the only patterns Flanagan Davis believed the Federal Theatre Project could help reveal to American citizens, nor the only way she believed the FTP could help American citizens to understand and organize themselves as publics. The next chapter is largely focused on Flanagan Davis's arguments about how the FTP could reveal cultural patterns on a more macro-level, providing citizens with a medium through which to explore, develop, and synthesize culture. In addition, many of the concluding points in this chapter will be further built upon and explained in the conclusion of this project. For now, the above conclusions are intended to illustrate the rhetorical strengths of Living Newspapers as a medium for critical literacy education that stands to help citizens identify oppression and better understand themselves as interconnected publics.

Chapter 4: FTP Infrastructure Macro-Features: The "Rethinking, Rebuilding, and Redreaming of America"

"In a larger sense, the Federal Theatre is a pioneer theatre because it is part of a tremendous rethinking, rebuilding, and redreaming of America. . . . In this larger drama they [FTP workers and audiences] are themselves protagonists and the Federal Theatre, being their theatre, becomes not merely decoration but a vital force in our democracy." -Flanagan Davis, "Democracy and Drama" 824

Introduction

While Living Newspapers were an important part of the FTP, they were just that: a *part* of the FTP and thus provide insight into only part of how Flanagan Davis saw the FTP (and theater in general) working to improve democracy. This chapter expands its focus from Flanagan Davis's arguments about Living Newspapers—one genre of theater—to her arguments about how the infrastructure of the FTP as a whole stood to improve democracy. In this chapter, I explore and analyze Flanagan Davis's arguments for a wide variety of different FTP performances, her arguments for how those performances should be selected and managed, and her arguments for why such selection and management matters, locating infrastructural features, or as I refer to them, macro-features. As such, this chapter asks us to imagine ourselves not as audience members in a Living Newspaper performance, but as rhetoricians analyzing an infrastructure that facilitates numerous types of theatrical expression across the country. To start off with some concrete information about that broad, infrastructural perspective, the map to the left (figure 3) illustrates the locations of different resident theater

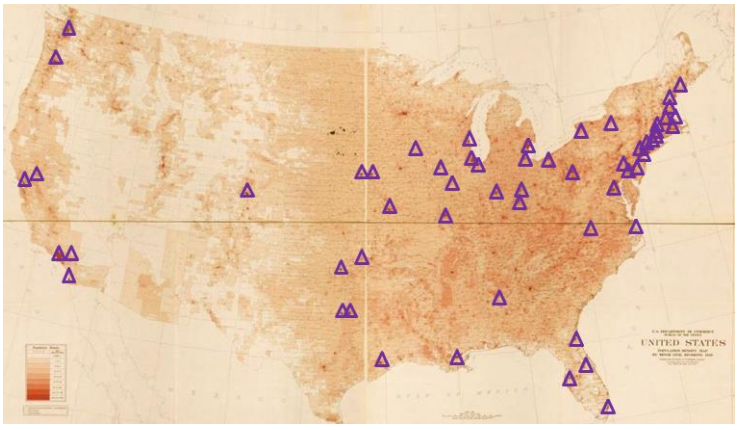

Figure 3
1935 FTP Resident Theaters over 1940 Population Map

troupes set up in the FTP's first year (before major budget cuts), each triangle representing a city with at least one FTP troupe (First Six Months Report).[29]

At the macro-level, Flanagan Davis positioned the FTP as an industry for democratized cultural production, proclaiming, "the citadels of our democracy should develop the arts . . . as activities vital to the growth of a people fit to build—and preserve—their own culture" ("General Meeting Notes" 4). I understand her arguments about the FTP's infrastructure as arguments about how she believed the FTP should facilitate cultural production, reading FTP performances as *cultural expressions*. While the idea that works of art function as cultural expressions is not unique or radical, I argue the way she positioned the FTP as an *infrastructure* for cultural production, meant to yield cultural expressions in a specific, democratized manner, is both unique and radical. I expand upon how I arrived at this understanding below, as it is central to this chapter and necessary for understanding the civic and rhetorical importance of Flanagan Davis's conception of the FTP. The following four macro-features most adequately summarize her arguments about the FTP's infrastructure—or rather, the process by which she believed the FTP could facilitate democratized cultural production:

1. A broad, flexible variety of performances should be supported—modern, historical, classical, marionettes, theater for youth and for Black Americans and other marginalized groups—but all should be made relevant to the present.
2. Regional and local FTP directors should decide performance materials based on the opinions, wants, and needs of their audiences and local communities.
3. Federal and regional FTP administration should both provide services to directors and workers and aggregate and circulate FTP activity through bulletins and radio.

[29] Figure 3 indicates cities with major FTP presence mapped over a 1940-1942 population density map (the closest to the years of the FTP I could find through the Library of Congress).

4. Trends in performances should be understood, explored and valued as geographic patterns of culture that rely on both cultural variation and similarity.

Before exploring the four macro-features above in depth, I first explain the data, research and analysis process that led me to them.

Research and Analysis Process

The data gathering and analysis process in this chapter is similar to that in the previous chapter. I analyze Flanagan Davis's arguments—in both her published and archival materials—but this time focus on her arguments about how the FTP should function as an infrastructure: what types of performances she believed should be facilitated and valued, who she believed should choose what scripts were performed (and how), and what she believed the breadth and variety of performances could amount to together. I often find these kinds of arguments in Flanagan Davis's outlines for the organization of the FTP and proposals for future People's Theaters following the FTP's close, but they also appear in speeches she made to FTP employees and occasionally in letters to colleagues. Using grounded theory methods, I organize her arguments about the FTP's infrastructure into the four macro-features of this chapter.

I approach these four macro-features similarly to how I approached the micro-features in the previous chapter: with a two-part lens. First, in the body of this chapter, I describe each macro-feature in depth and explore how each speaks to the keystone arguments from chapter 2. In doing so, I engage in both the process of comparison (comparing her overall arguments about theater and democracy with her arguments about the structure of the FTP) and analysis (exploring how the different theoretical components work, together, as an ecosystem). Then, in the conclusion of this chapter, I explicitly apply a civic-rhetorical lens, which—as described in chapter 1—involves reading macro-features and their connections to keystone arguments as

critical literacy pedagogies and as public sphere theories. This lens raises many questions outlined in chapter 1. The most pertinent to this chapter are as follows: what kinds of civic engagement or communication are sought out either directly or through education? What are the rules of such engagement or education? Who might be excluded by these rules or conversations, and how are differences in power and authority to speak managed? Mirroring the previous chapter, I invoke civic-rhetorical theories in the body of this chapter at times as such theories prove exceptionally useful for explaining the connections between the keystone arguments and macro-features identified in this project, but I hold off on an explicit, in-depth application of this lens until this chapter's conclusion. While rhetorical theories help me explore the connections between keystones and macro-features in the body of this chapter, the direct application of a civic-rhetorical lens in the conclusion works to translate those macro-features into rhetorical terms and explore their implications in terms of rhetorical theory.

Civic-Rhetorical Macro-Features of the FTP

As in the previous chapter (and in accordance with grounded theory methodology), I take Flanagan Davis's own suggestions about how to read the FTP as an infrastructure into account, letting her arguments ground and influence my process. I position one specific argument she makes as an important framing device for understanding the macro-features below: Flanagan Davis believed the FTP should function as a kind of cultural production industry. She argued that American culture in 1935 was "an infant industry," and the FTP should help to develop said industry. As she explains in a letter to a WPA Director, "the Roosevelt Administration is the first adequately to realize that culture in America is still an infant industry, which, through wise and generous Government support, has a possibility of becoming an industry of paramount importance to the people of our nation" (Letter to Ellen S. Woodward). In referring to culture as

an industry, she implies that culture is not organically occurring, but rather is made, developed and worked at—produced in part through efforts like the FTP. I'd like to clarify here that Flanagan Davis did not believe "high-brow" or "sophisticated" culture or theater was lacking. She believed "limousine trade" theater in America had far more than its fair share of focus and perceived a need for theater appealing to the people, the workers, the masses on their own terms. She claims, "Art is of little value in a democracy as long as it remains an esoteric cult, appreciated only by the few. In must increasingly be appreciated by many, and thus eventually become the strong, rhythmic and natural expression of the free life of a free people" ("The Arts and Democracy") and argues that "culture must be decentralized, made available throughout the country" (Flanagan Davis, "Theater in a Changing World").

Thus, as I explore the four macro-features that make up the body of this chapter, I read them as participating in the cultural production industry: in the development of decentralized, democratized culture. I will comment more on the implications of this in the conclusion after exploring what such a democratized cultural production industry would look like according to Flanagan Davis's arguments.

Macro-Feature 1: Broad, Flexible Variety of Contextually Relevant Performances

The first macro-feature addresses the broad, flexible variety of performances Flanagan Davis believed the FTP should facilitate. As noted above, Living Newspapers made up a small portion of the FTP's productions; it was only one of the kinds of theater Flanagan Davis continually listed as important for any federal or people's theater. I've organized the kinds of theater she positions as the most important into six categories:

- Modern plays with an emphasis on Living Newspapers
- Inventive and Modern Approaches to Classical/Historical Plays

- Theatre of Youth
- Theatre of Entertainment (Circus and Vaudeville)
- Marionette Theatre
- "Negro Theatre Units" and Units for Historically Persecuted Groups

I arrive at these six bullet points by analyzing Flanagan Davis's arguments for which types of theater any federal or people's theater should facilitate and by taking into account the types she brings up most often in her published and archival works. Before going into detail about these six types of theater and their relevance, I expand upon my process identifying them.

My list of types of plays isn't actually a direct reflection of any one of Flanagan Davis's lists because I did not find any list, from her, containing all six of the types of theater she identifies as the most important to the FTP. For example, in a 1937 proposal for how the Federal Theater should be structured moving forward, Flanagan Davis proposes each of the regional centers emphasize five kinds of theater:

A. Classical plays. . . . Our experience has proven that although this is an admirable way to use the older actors on our projects, it needs the most inventive, imaginative, and modern approach as to direction and staging.
B. Modern Plays, with a special emphasis on the Living Newspaper. The Living Newspaper has proved to be, in the opinion of critics and box offices alike, the most vital new form in the theatre of our generation. It should continue to be one of the main lines of emphasis.
C. A Theatre of Youth
D. A Theatre of Entertainment, including circus and vaudeville
E. A Marionette Theatre. ("Dec 1937")

In general, these genres are also those Flanagan Davis discusses the most throughout her archival materials, except something very important is missing. There is one type of theater she mentions often and with great emphasis, however, that I include in my list of six, but is not listed in the quote above, perhaps because it is not technically a type of *theater* but rather a type of *theater troupe*: theater produced by "Negro Theater Units." In a 1935 letter to Herbert Kline, Flanagan Davis provides another list of important kinds of theater, this time with theater for Black Americans discussed first:

> *Negro theatres* in Harlem, Saint Louis, Alabama; an Ibsen repertory theatre in Minneapolis; *Marionette* shows dealing with local history; *vaudeville* and specialty acts in connection with some of the great recreation centers where dance orchestras of the unemployed will play for the unemployed youth; a number of theatres of an *experimental* nature, specializing in *new plays* of unknown dramatists, with an emphasis on regional and local material; several theatre *projects of a historic nature*, such as the one in Charleston, South Carolina, where the oldest theatre in the United States is becoming remodeled to house the plays given during the first theatrical season in America. (1)

Although this list roughly mirrors the previous quotation, it occasionally does so in different terms (such as arguing for historical rather than classical plays). *My* bullet point list of six types of theater above, which guides the subsections below, is the synthesis of numerous outlines and lists of important theater types advocated by Flanagan Davis. I do not attempt to mirror Flanagan Davis's sequencing of types of plays as such sequencing is rarely the same between her different documents. Instead, I begin with the category of modern plays and Living Newspapers, so as to start with what is most familiar at this point, but also because Flanagan Davis writes more about

these types than any other. I also save discussion of the "Negro Units" for last, not because I feel they are in any way an afterthought to Flanagan Davis (they are the type she refers to with the third or fourth most emphasis and frequency), but rather because they provide some of the most compelling and unique insights into how Flanagan Davis argued the FTP could help "reflect and enrich" culture, and as such, are a meaningful close to this section.

As I explore the types of plays below, I also read them for any clues they may provide into what aspects of culture Flanagan Davis thought were the most important for a cultural production industry to facilitate. For example, the one consistency I found between her arguments for these six types of theater is the idea that all of them should speak to the present in some way. I read this information as indicative of her belief that a cultural production industry should be, above all else, epideictic: focused on speaking to the present. This aligns with her keystone argument that theater should interpenetrate current events and "the changing world." I ultimately claim here that she positions all human experience and perspective as valuable material for theatrical exploration, capable of reflecting and enriching American culture in the present. However, in her argument for each specific type of theater above, she also stresses the exploration of certain, specific aspects of culture, synthesized below:

- how citizens respond to/ feel about modern social and economic life
- how citizens experience current social, metabiological problems (things going wrong)
- how history and classical stories speak to the present and future
- how youths experience modern social and economic life
- how Black Americans and other historically persecuted groups experience modern social and economic life
- how art and theater can be put to new uses (education and therapy, for example)

While I came to these six aspects of culture by exploring the six types of theater identified above, they do not, line-for-line, match up with those six types of theater (the fact that each list contains six lines is coincidental). The sections below are organized by each of the six types of *theater* Flanagan Davis argued for and address the six elements of culture above as they come up.

Modern Plays with an Emphasis on Living Newspapers

In arguing for new/modern plays and emphasizing Living Newspapers as the standout modern genre, Flanagan Davis implies that the development of culture necessarily involves exploring reactions to modern social and economic life, with special focus on the problems, patterns, and protection of that way of life. I will first discuss Living Newspapers below, again because they are most familiar, then move onto arguments for new and modern plays in general.

Despite making up a relatively small percentage of the plays put on by the FTP, Flanagan Davis believed Living Newspapers were important enough to be continually produced in all regions of the US. This, along with her many other arguments about Living Newspapers found in the previous chapter, suggests that she considered the genre important not only for its potential micro-effects—what it could accomplish within a performance—but also for its potential macro-effects—what it could accomplish as an aggregate of performances. Living Newspapers, as discussed in the last chapter, established the existence and seriousness of social problems plaguing the country and explored how those problems impacted people. When written, altered, and performed across the country so as to be relevant to different audiences, Living Newspapers functioned as a kind of diagnostic system for social problems, revealing which places experienced what social problems and thereby how widespread or consistent problems were across the country. While doing so, they also educated citizens about those problems and inspired citizens to work towards solutions. Because Flanagan Davis argued that the FTP was meant to help develop culture and that the Living Newspaper was an important part of such a

process, I infer that she believed developing American culture specifically required a nationwide exploration and diagnosis of social problems.

Living Newspapers weren't the only modern plays she believed the FTP should facilitate though; she argues the FTP should include other kinds of new, experimental, American theater, concerned with general human responses to events and social, economic or other trends. In a proposal for a permanent FTP, she recommends Living Newspapers but also plays from modern American authors Eugene O'Neill and Sinclair Lewis, along with an "anti-war cycle" ("Discussion on Proposal"). Recommending such plays indicates a belief that developing culture requires looking to the perspectives of modern playwrights, specifically those skilled at recognizing patterns in life (as she claims O'Neill was), but also looking to plays about democracy, the protection of it and common threats to it such as the threat of dictatorship in Sinclair Lewis's play *It Can't Happen Here* or the threats of war addressed in anti-war plays.

In addition, she advocated supporting new American playwrights who study "American life" as their subject, including but not limited to social and economic life. She explains, "there are . . . aspects of American life which do not have to do with social or economic projects, but which are excellent dramatic material. I mean the vivid regional material of this amazing country. . . . We hope our new dramatists will look at plays less and at America more" ("Birmingham Address" 11). In a class lecture, she asserts that theater, even when it tries not to be, is always connected to the "social scene" and culture it was born from—always interpenetrated with the present. She explains that "any artist must be a part of the life around him: even if he tries to escape, or to protest it, those reactions are significant as to the social scene" (Flanagan Davis, "Graduate Seminar"). Thus, she argues that every new play can be read as epideictic: a response to the present.

Inventive and Modern Approaches to Classical/ Historical Plays

This section covers two types of plays—classical and historical—because I understand both as connecting to roughly the same argument made by Flanagan Davis about developing culture. While a play can certainly be both classical and historical at the same (classical plays come from historical contexts), the genres have one primary difference: classical scripts are those written *in* a historical context whereas historical plays are scripts written *about* historical contexts. Both, however, use content from the past, and according to Flanagan Davis, both should draw from the past to speak to the present and/or future. I therefore assert that she believed cultural development required exploration of history and what we can learn from it.

She specifies that classical plays should not be done in classical style but "in ways exciting to a modern audience" (Discussion on Proposal) with an "inventive and modern approach" ("Dec 1937")—that is, an approach requiring theater directors/workers to consider how the script's performance could help audiences better connect with its content rather than aiming to give audiences a realistic representation of how plays were performed in the past (the goal is still translation, not representation). *Voodoo Macbeth* is perhaps the most direct and often discussed FTP example of a modern approach to a classical script. The play is essentially *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's story of political backstabbing in Scotland motivated by the advice of witches, except all the actors are Black, witchcraft becomes voodoo, and early 1600s Scotland becomes early 1800s Haiti (ruled by former-slave, Emperor Henri Christophe). The play was put on by New York City's "Negro Unit" and illustrates the adaptation of a classical script so as to increase its relevance to modern and here, modern Black, audiences. Performances of *Voodoo Macbeth* were both notably successful and controversial.[30]

[30] *Voodoo Macbeth* went from being very controversial (someone came at its director with a razor on opening night), to being wildly successful. Despite having an all-Black cast, it was directed by a white man (Orson Welles), which brings up questions of power. There were FTP actors who actively practiced voodoo (and wrote Flanagan

While classical plays bring scripts or stories from the past into modern performances, historical plays bring histories into modern performances. Flanagan Davis writes that within the FTP "plays were often written out of the very history of the place itself" ("The Arts and Democracy"). This is likely what she had in mind when she referred to historical drama: theater that captures the history of a specific place for the people living there. Her discussion of a play titled *Heritage*, which she developed with and for Smith College students about the history of Smith College, helps to explain the value she saw in historical drama. Flanagan Davis recounts how the play "brought us . . . a deeper understanding not only of our college, but of the power of theatre to enrich life" (qtd. in Dowell 207). Thus, Flanagan Davis argues historical plays, like classical plays, should draw on the past to understand and "enrich life" in the present.

I therefore believe she positioned historical understanding, and specifically the exploration of how history speaks to the present, as crucial to cultural development and important for artists to engage. Flanagan Davis has been noted for her work as a radical theater director and for her work exploring social problems with Living Newspapers, but she has not yet been given full credit for her work to increase public knowledge of history and the ways history can help us to understand the present. I believe her arguments for the inclusion of historical and classical plays further illustrates the interdisciplinary educational potential of the FTP.

Theatre of Youth

The next important category of theater I've identified is related to youth education and expression. I argue that Flanagan Davis saw the opinions, perspectives, education, and entertainment of youth as all integral to cultural development. Throughout her archival and published materials, she emphasizes that "no shows . . . we do are more important than these

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Davis letters about it), and as such, the inclusion of voodoo as a concept in this play—while potentially problematic—*could* have been informed by active practitioners.

shows for youth, not only from the humanitarian point of view, but from the theatre point of view" ("Men at Work" 13). I'll explain "theatre point of view" first; it likely refers to the ability of children's theaters to cultivate theatergoing audiences from a young age, which would benefit the theater industry and, thereby, the cultural industry. Ideally, she argues, exposure to theater would start early and yield a lifelong passion. In other words, the more people who were recruited into theatergoing audiences early on, the more people there would be who continually participate in shaping and exploring cultural expressions through theater. Flanagan Davis mentions the development of such audiences as a notable goal on multiple occasions. However, she also seemed to believe engaging youth in cultural production was valuable in itself, even if it didn't yield lifelong theatergoers. Her third published book, *Dynamo,* is about the powerful potential of youth to shape culture and the importance of providing them with tools for cultural creation. She criticizes America's willingness to give youth guns and send them to war, but not to trust them with access to building and commenting on culture in creative and positive ways (Flanagan Davis, "Energy into Power"). Thus, when Flanagan Davis advocates for the recruitment of youth into theatergoing citizens, she advocates for the inclusion of youth in building culture.

She also believed children's theaters were important "from the humanitarian point of view" because they provided children joy, entertainment, education, and an alternative to more dangerous ways of passing time, which for Flanagan Davis included drinking, drugs, and fundamentalist religion. She describes a story in which "two slum children, little girls twelve and eleven" go to a "Holy Roller meeting" because it is the only free place to go, and the younger, Minnie May, "is frightened by the squirming, sweating bodies of people tossed in an agony of prayer." Flanagan Davis asserts that "one function of the Federal Theatre is to see that in every

city and town in America where Federal funds are being used for theatre development, the Minnie Mays have somewhere to go. . . . provided that once inside our theatres they see something funny, true, beautiful, or exciting" ("Men at Work" 13).The FTP regularly put on free performances in orphanages, children's hospitals, and juvenile detention facilities, providing theater to many children who had never seen a play before. Flanagan Davis's archival files contain numerous letters not only from such children, thanking her for performances and promising to "be good" if the FTP troupes return, but also from principals and teachers attesting to the educational value of the FTP. Flanagan Davis saw great cultural significance in the FTP's educational successes and its ability to provide youth with positive and productive leisure.

Theater of Entertainment (Circus and Vaudeville)

I have also combined Flanagan Davis's arguments for a "theater of circus and vaudeville" with her arguments for a Theater of Entertainment or Variety: theater in which different talents and arts—acrobatics, dance, comedy, singing, burlesque—are featured on stage (plotline optional). Her reasons behind the inclusion of these forms are less clear than her reasons for the inclusion of others. She notes in several places that the "need for laughter" was all too real and familiar during the depression and that FTP workers understood this need (Flanagan Davis, "Federal Theatre Project Jan"). It is likely these more entertainment-driven forms of theater were meant to be just that: entertainment, a break from the realities of the day and a chance to relax. This would imply that Flanagan Davis believed the ways we relax and engage in leisurely activities were either worthwhile with regard to reflecting and enriching culture or perhaps simply just worthwhile.

In a letter to then-husband Philip Davis, however, Flanagan Davis actually reveals her relative dislike of vaudeville and circus, but also her respect for the performers of such theater and their potential:

> Up in Maine our intrepid company is playing their same old vaudeville for at least the 90th time to the inmates of various asylums. (I wonder how we are really affecting people in the asylums—I know if I had to see some of these shows very often I would be in one). . . . I went out all nerved up to close the project, and then what do you think happened? These very same actors, vaudevillians, circus clowns, tab show people, came in and did a play about Flax;[31] they had written it themselves, and . . . although crude it was really something. Then they proceeded to do a part dance-part Living Newspaper called Bonneville Dam, and if anybody thinks I am going to close this project now he is crazy. (November 1937)

It is therefore possible Flanagan Davis valued these genres not for their contributions to cultural expression, but because they could lead to different kinds of performances. Her understanding of the value of vaudeville and circus is potentially similar to how many people today view theater, film, and television: as leisure activities meant to provide an escape from daily life. However, as I mentioned in the previous section, she asserts that even a rejection of or escape from life is a reaction to that life and thus still a response to the "social scene" and relevant to culture.

I conclude that Flanagan Davis supported the inclusion of vaudeville and circus because she both believed the talents and skills from vaudeville and circus might contribute to new experimental types of theater and found leisure and relaxation to be valuable considerations in reflecting and enriching culture (even if only to express a desire to escape from culture). However, while I believe she valued Entertainment Theater as a form of cultural production, I don't believe she valued it as much as the other types explored in this chapter.

Marionette Theatre

[31] Flax is a crop grown for food and textiles (flaxseed, oil, and linen products); the play was written about agricultural and economic trends related to the crop.

Perhaps the most unexpectedly interesting genre of theater advocated by Flanagan Davis is Marionette Theater. Marionette Theater in the FTP covered a broad range of topics and levels of seriousness, from children's shows to political comedies to classical plays. It is perhaps more apt to refer to this as a *medium* of theater rather than a *genre* or type of theater, as Marionette theater is defined by its medium (puppets). Many of the other genres or types of theater discussed in this chapter would be considered appropriate material for FTP Marionettes (there could be a marionette Living Newspaper, historical marionettes, youth marionettes, etc.). It is thus hard to determine what specifically Flanagan Davis believed marionettes could reveal about culture. The one unique quality that makes this type of theater distinct within the FTP was the fact that it used puppets as symbols to explore human emotions and experiences rather than using actual humans. As such, Marionette Theater was relatively easier and cheaper to travel with; it required fewer people, smaller props, and a smaller stage or performance area. While this convenience likely played a part in Flanagan Davis's argument for marionettes, her archival materials indicate that her argument has more to do with the fact that she found marionettes successful at interpenetrating—that is, working with, injecting itself into, and contributing to—other fields.

As I discussed in chapter 2, the FTP had surprising success at helping asylums and hospitals in the realms of diagnosis and therapy. I would now like to add that evidence of such is typically linked to Marionette Theater.[32] Flanagan Davis also reports that "the use of marionettes in teaching English to foreigners and in aiding them to understand the duties of citizenship has gained much recognition among school authorities" ("Educational Aspects Report" 23), and she collected letters from teachers about how FTP marionettes helped educate their students about history. I argue that she saw this type of theater as important because it helped to develop

[32] Modern scholarship on Marionette/Puppet Theater affirms its therapeutic possibilities (Irwin, Irwin and Shapiro).

educational and therapeutic methods and thus illustrated how theater could inject itself into—that is, interpenetrate—fields previously thought quite separate from theater. I could not find any direct statements from her about why she thought the medium of puppets was so skilled at interpenetrating fields. However, my guess is that it had to do with their convenience: puppet performances were easier and cheaper to put on, which means in the context of the FTP, that they were frequently performed for free in venues such as hospitals, schools, and asylums, and thereby frequently performed in interdisciplinary spaces (therapeutic, educational, etc.).

"Negro Theatre Units" and Units for Culturally Marginalized Groups

Flanagan Davis argued that the FTP and all future federal theater plans should contain "Negro Theatre Units"—units meant to employ predominantly Black artists and explore Black culture—but she also argued (though less frequently) for the existence of theater troupes for other cultural minority and/or historically persecuted groups, such as theaters for Jewish persons and theaters producing plays all in Spanish. The inclusion of such units is not an argument for a specific genre of play (like Historical or Living Newspaper plays) or a specific medium of performance (like Marionette Theater) as much as it is an argument for a particular type of theater troupe and audience, and as such is most similar to her argument for youth theater. Of theater for Black Americans she states, "From the first it has been the policy of the Federal Theatre to develop a theatre for and by this gifted race" (Flanagan Davis, "Where Federal Theatre Came From").[33] W. E. B. Du Bois and other influential Black theater workers of the time, such as Du Bois's later wife Shirley Graham, worked closely with Flanagan Davis to establish and develop such troupes. As noted previously, the FTP also featured white and Black actors on stage together and received much criticism for doing so; I understand Flanagan Davis's

[33] In this speech she goes on to say that all races are naturally skilled at theater because its medium is the human.

arguments for "Negro Units" not as arguments for segregation but, rather, for spaces dedicated to the exploration and expression of Black American culture.

She seems to position Black theatrical expressions as important for the cultural development of all Americans, not just for Black Americans. Rena Fraden studied how the FTP's "Negro Units" functioned both within the FTP and in relationship to Black community and activist theaters. Fraden regards Flanagan Davis's rhetoric as one of "inclusion" and often speaks of her influence positively (21). More interestingly, though, she points out a key difference between Flanagan Davis's view of a "Negro Unit" and close colleague, W.E.B. Du Bois's view. Fraden explains that Flanagan Davis never intended for audiences to be segregated while Du Bois did (6). Flanagan Davis seemed to believe not only that marginalized groups exploring their own cultures through their own theaters was a necessary aspect of cultural production, but also that audiences of all kinds should experience and engage with such cultural production.

I do not mean to assert here that the FTP successfully provided a medium through which Black American culture could always express itself freely nor that broad audiences always listened, but rather, that Flanagan Davis believed the existence of such a theater was important. Fraden comments on one significant problem the FTP's "Negro Units" confronted: the goal of presenting and exploring "authentic" Black culture. While a valuable and sometimes successful goal, Fraden explains how the search for "authenticity" was also used, at times, by authorities to reinforce narrow ideas about what counted as "authentically Black."

While Flanagan Davis does not argue that every marginalized group should have a representative theater, there are obvious ways she sought to make the FTP inclusive of non-dominant cultures and groups, and thus positioned non-dominant cultures and groups as important components of American culture—components to be developed and circulated through

theater. She positioned Black American culture as the most pressing and important, and Jewish theater seems to come at a close second. I should note, however, that her written discussions of racial tensions were fairly limited, as were her discussions of religious tensions. While she argues for the presence of theater troupes dedicated to these specific, marginalized groups and to increasing "understanding across difference," I did not find many materials in which she directly engages with the realities of racial or religious oppression in America in the 1930s and 40s.

As I will discuss in much greater detail in the conclusion, her positioning of the FTP as a cultural production industry aligns her arguments very closely with those made by David Sheridan, Jim Rodolfo, and Anthony J. Michel in their 2008 work, *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Rhetoric.* Sheridan et al. argue that one of rhetoric's most important functions is to build and shape culture. The above six kinds of theater help to reveal what Flanagan Davis likely saw as the most important components of culture to explore so as to contribute to its development. Overall, she seems to argue all theater can and should be read as reactions to modern life and culture, as well as that any cultural production industry should focus, specifically, on exploring social problems; how history speaks to the present; how youth and marginalized groups understand modern life and culture; how we engage in leisure; and how art proves useful to fields outside itself (in other words, how art can improve the human experience in tangible and novel ways).

Flanagan Davis and Sheridan et al. also both comment on the dangers of monopolized control over media production and thus monopolized control over shaping culture. If multimodal expressions work to shape culture, then whoever gets to determine those expressions has control over culture (Sheridan et al). As discussed earlier, Flanagan Davis argued that control over cultural expressions should be decentralized and democratized. It is important, therefore, to look

at how she argued plays and materials for performance should be chosen and who had power over those choices. In other words: *who* got to interpret and express culture through the FTP? Was such control really democratized? The section below explores these questions.

Macro-Feature 2: Regional and Local Levels of Power

Before explaining how performance (cultural) materials were selected, I'd like to give a brief overview of Flanagan Davis's overall vision of the operational or administrative structure of the FTP, as it will prove helpful in discussions related to both this macro-feature and the next. She discusses the FTP as, in ways, resembling the structure of the US government, with three primary levels of power or control. One level was made up of individual, local persons: generally speaking, audiences and FTP workers (not administration or directors, but actors, stage hands, sound techs, etc.). There were also intermediate levels of power: state, regional and project directors; sometimes mid-level administrators fit into this category, but for the most part intermediary powers were people who directed plays and who immediately oversaw the direction of plays (small project managers, for example). Flanagan Davis positioned these local, individual persons and intermediary directors as those who should share most influence over the selection of cultural materials—the way these two levels work together to share such influence is addressed in this macro-feature. The FTP, however, also had a third tier of power: regional and federal administrators who had limited but important influence over the selection of cultural materials. This top level of power is the focus of macro-feature 3, but is important here as it helps to explain the overall process through which Flanagan Davis believed cultural materials should be selected and the relationship between all three levels of power, which can be summarized as such: "there is a need for a [national] plan . . . which states the general lines of artistic policy. . . . The carrying out of this plan, with its regional and local modifications, should be left to regional and local guidance" ("Where Federal Theatre Came From"). Part of her

perspective on this national plan has already been discussed: the six types of theater she believed were important to facilitate across the nation. The regional and local carrying out of these types of theater is taken up in this macro-feature, and other key aspects of the "national plan" are taken up in macro-feature 3.

This macro-feature (macro-feature 2) centers on Flanagan Davis's argument that regional, state and project directors (intermediary levels of power) should study and concern themselves with local audiences and FTP workers (local levels), and represent the needs and desires of such audiences and workers (local levels) through productions they (intermediary levels) ultimately had the power to decide upon. She believed audiences were the determining voice in the *success* of performances, but she also asserts that intermediary directors should have the final say in both the materials and styles of production, and, perhaps more importantly, that those directors should be responsible for listening to audience feedback. From early on in my research, it was clear she envisioned the FTP democratizing culture in a manner more similar to that of a representative democracy than a direct democracy: those with more power of expression were tasked with listening to and representing those with less. This structure presents many of the same weaknesses and potential problems as the United States representative government; the ability of people in positions of power to sincerely and successfully represent their constituents has never proven consistent. While potentially problematic in execution, the significance in sharing of power over the selection of materials as described above is that it illustrates concrete attempts to democratize American culture through a specific cultural material selection process—one in which those with more power of cultural expression are tasked with representing those with less power.

As noted in chapter 1, several theater scholars have analyzed the degree to which the FTP was able to actually facilitate decentralized, multivocal theatrical expressions (Fraden, Osborne, Sweigert-Gallagher), and all agree it was at least partially successful. It is important to note, however, that Flanagan Davis never actually intended for local control to be the only, or even the main, control over artistic choices. She argues for a division of power between federal/regional, state/project, and local/individual control, which implies some restriction to the power of individuals in specific locales to determine their theater. Limitations to local audience control over performances, I assert, were intended to improve the quality of cultural expressions, similarly to how the representative structure of American democracy is meant to improve the quality of policies decided upon: those with more knowledge of and experience with theater (or politics) representing the needs and opinions (not the lives, but the perspectives) of those with less knowledge and experience. The experience and skills she believed theater directors and playwrights should have which would theoretically contribute to their ability to represent culture include, most notably: extensive training in their own subjective lenses (discussed in chapter 2) and an aptitude for recognizing patterns (discussed in chapter 3). This representative approach to cultural democracy is explained more below.

Regional (State's Rights) Focus

Because Flanagan Davis believed in the importance of "decentralizing" theater, she established regional theaters across the country and ultimately gave regional, state, and project directors—decentralized intermediary levels—the most power to determine which plays best fit their region's needs and culture. These intermediary levels can be understood as similar to state governments and her arguments that they should have the most control over performances as similar to arguments for increased stated and decreased federal power. Intermediary directors, as explained above, were expected to study and engage with the life and culture around them,

listening and responding to local people to determine which plays would be produced and aiming to represent the perspectives, struggles and desires of those local people.

Figure 4
Twelve FTP Regions of 1935

The regions of the FTP did not remain consistent over the four years it was alive, and I am convinced would have continued shifting had it lived on, morphing so as to make regional boundaries better reflect trends in culture. The map above (figure 4) depicts the 12 regions identified by Flanagan Davis in a 1935 FTP document ("Instructions"). By December 1937, she writes that only "five cities be maintained as regional centers of the Federal Theatre: New York City, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Atlanta or Charleston" ("Dec 1937"), and in *Arena* she likewise describes the FTP in terms of five major regions. These updated five regions and their centers can be found in the map to the left, with yellow stars indicating regional centers (figure 5). Flanagan Davis argues that "each one of the [regional] centers serve the surrounding region by sending out touring companies with major attractions from each region," and in its regional center, a theater should be built "reflecting the needs, and where possible,

Figure 5
Five FTP Regions of 1937

using the materials of the region" ("Dec 1937"). Thus, while most FTP performances were put on in regional centers (cities), Flanagan Davis believed those centers should allocate resources to bringing theater to more remote parts of regions. Budget cuts necessitated the paring down and combining of regions from 1935 to 1937, but I believe cultural observations over the first two years of the FTP—observations about which states were culturally similar and which cities were cultural hubs—motivated *how* these regions were combined.

Intermediary directors had a representative role, similar to state representatives, congressmen and electors; they were not meant to choose plays (cultural expressions) based on personal preference, but on what represented the perspectives, concerns and desires of their regional communities. In the establishment of the FTP, Flanagan Davis emphasized that there should be "no attempt to force a national plan or a certain type of play or a certain kind of production of any region," asserting, "the directors know their own region, were chosen for that reason, and are developing theatre enterprises in terms of their own communities. Each place dictates its own theatre needs" ("Dec 1935 Report"). She asked FTP workers to ensure "the stressing of local and regional material . . . is borne out by plays in every one of the five regions" (Flanagan Davis, "Where Federal Theatre Came From").

Flanagan Davis believed such regional allocation of power was necessary for developing culture democratically. She describes how, in a totalitarian country,

> there would be no need for . . . representatives of various regions concerned with planning a theatre program at once to reflect and to entertain those regions. It would be necessary only to appoint a minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment, and to give him complete power over everything. A democratic government does

> not operate that way and neither does a democratic institution. (Flanagan Davis, "Where Federal Theatre Came From")

Here she explains her understanding of the importance of regional directors who acted as representatives for their regions: it enabled the FTP to produce democratic cultural expressions, rather than totalitarian or dictatorial expressions. Based on her argument in the quote above, I propose that Flanagan Davis believed that even democratic governments did not always have democratic approaches to culture. She describes Britain at the time, for example, as having a national rather than federal theater: a theater representative of one national culture determined from the top down, rather than a federation of cultures explored democratically on their own terms, in their own spaces.

Dialogue between Intermediary and Local Levels

I'd like to further explore how exactly Flanagan Davis believed intermediary directors should cultivate local voices and perspectives. She argued in 1944 that "art, like politics, starts in the precinct. It starts where you are" ("Theatre and Society"). This sentiment is repeated throughout her archival and published materials: "only a theatre which springs from or penetrates into city, town, village and farm can be called an American theatre" (Flanagan Davis, "Theatre and Geography" 468)—but what did this look like? How did the FTP "penetrate into city, town, village and farm"? The excerpt below (written October 3, 1936) helps to paint a picture:

> The high spot of the day was Herbert Price. . . . Now he is back from his second month in the Black Ankle Belt organizing community theatres: "Their feet are still in the mud, they are still slaves. They live in indescribable want, want of food, want of houses, want of clothes, want of any kind of life." He talked to them about making up plays of their own life. Got an old barber shop turned over to

them and they are all at it. They make their own costumes out of old sugar bags, dyed with the berries of the region. (Flanagan Davis, Letter to Philip H. Davis)

Here she praises the director of southern community theaters for encouraging people to "mak[e] up plays of their own life" and helping them to use actual physical materials from their lives to do so. This represents her ideal vision of a theater that "springs forth" from local people.

As mentioned before, Flanagan Davis advocated listening to and studying, but also surveying audiences. Surveys were a concrete way local persons were able to influence FTP performances. I found compiled results for several of these surveys in her NYPL archives and presume more can be found in other FTP archives. These surveys asked for audience demographic information such as occupation, but also how often audience members attended theater, any reasons for not attending theater more often, what they thought of the play they saw and what they would like the FTP to put on next. At the end of each set of survey results is a conclusions section containing a synthesis and analysis of the survey data. The first paragraph summarizes the demographic information—for example, stating the audience "majority [we]re office workers, professionals, or students" and "22%" were new to the FTP—while the second paragraph summarizes audience opinions on what the FTP should do next—most ask for musicals, some for Shakespeare, and several popular social plays are requested. The final paragraph analyzes and comments on the data. In one example, Flanagan Davis concludes that repeated requests for a handful of recently performed FTP plays are indicative of the FTP gaining popularity ("Audience Survey Data").

Flanagan Davis also argued that local reception and support of FTP troupes should, over time, become what determines whether or not centers receive continued federal backing. In other

words, she thought federal funding should only be given to theaters that proved valuable to their surrounding communities. In1937 plans for continuing of the FTP, she proposes the following:

> III. That small companies, which, after two years of operation appear to have no chance of becoming self-supporting, be closed, the best of personnel transferred . . . to the nearest regional center; the others being absorbed by [other FTP activities]
>
> IV. That such groups as have made a place for themselves . . . be helped with personnel and equipment from the nearest regional center.
>
> V. That whenever such a small theatre has succeeded in making a place for itself in the community to the extent that the community will pay necessary other-than-labor costs, the WPA immediately build a small theatre, preferably along the lines of the arena theatre, to house its activities. (Flanagan Davis, "Dec. 1937")

While determining the success of a troupe based on the economic support it receives from its community is quite problematic (especially given the often destitute areas the FTP attempted to bring theater), Flanagan Davis understood "community support" not only in economic terms. The barbershop theater discussed earlier, for example, would count as a theater that had "succeeded in making a place for itself" because a physical space and community resources (berries of the region, old sugar bags) were put towards performances.

Despite all of these arguments for the influence of local communities and audiences, Flanagan Davis occasionally describes the role of the individual *theater worker* in influencing material selection as relatively limited. At a policy board conference she states:

> Let us be quite clear as to what sort of subjects we need discuss with delegations and what we need not. Any subject pertaining to wages, hours, or working conditions is a proper subject for mutual discussion. On the other hand, you are

> within your rights in refusing to discuss choice of play, method of productions or choice of artistic personnel. These artistic decisions are vested in the heads of projects and groups.

However, she also clarifies that "on certain occasions you may have to make your own interpretation as to what constitutes a proper discussion," and the example she gives of such a discussion, interestingly, seems to argue *for* discussing artistic choices with theater workers. She describes how actors in *Triple-A Plowed Under* "revolted because they did not believe in the Living Newspaper technique and thought they were headed for a flop." Rather than ignore this revolt, she negotiated with the actors: "we had our choice of commanding them to continue or firing them for insubordination; or of talking it over with them. We chose the latter, and I think events justified it" ("Public Works Ancient and Modern" 7). In the introduction of one edition of Federal Theatre Plays, Flanagan Davis writes of this discussion with actors in more detail:

> Actors had things to say and hesitations about performing *Triple-A* because it was so different. . . . They were sure "no New York audience would sit through it." . . . We ended with a mutual agreement: the actors were to give us all they had through the first performance; if the play failed we promised to drop all plans for future Living Newspapers. . . . Rumor ran through the project that the curtain would never be allowed to rise, that the performers would be hauled off the stage and into patrol wagons. Opening night found the actors full of misgivings, the audience full of tension, and the lobby full of police. ("Federal Theatre Plays" 4)

Her choice of this specific moment as an example of positive leadership and discussion with theater workers (local individuals) is very revealing. She suggests listening to their concerns and negotiating with them, asserting that if their concerns prove valid, federal level administration

will yield and cancel all future Living Newspapers: a very high-stakes wager. It is also worth noting here that she directly quotes the concerns brought to her by theater workers and cites specific details they objected to. Thus, while she gives intermediary levels of power the ultimate say in terms of artistic choices, she also argues that intermediary directors and top-level administrators carefully listen to local individuals in the process of selecting and producing plays, and when theater worker and director concerns conflict, the final deciding voice should be the audience. All of this reveals the importance of a dialogic relationship between administrators, directors, theater workers and audience members—a relationship necessary in order to produce plays that prove useful but also stand a chance to "reflect and enrich" regional life. The development of dialogic relationships between different levels of power within the FTP was critical for how Flanagan Davis understood the FTP's ability to facilitate democratic expression and will be discussed in more depth in the conclusion of this chapter. First, however, I would like to discuss the dialogic relationship top-level administration had with both intermediary directors and local audiences (macro-feature 3) and what Flanagan Davis argued administrators should do with the cultural expressions produced through the FTP (macro-feature 4).

Macro-Feature 3: Administration Provides Services and Circulates Macro-Perspectives

As discussed above, Flanagan Davis believed federal and regional FTP administrators should be in charge of creating a national plan to be modified and implemented by intermediary and local/individual levels of control. I will not explain *what* Flanagan Davis believed the FTP's national plan was in this section because that is, in many ways, the focus of this dissertation as a whole: exploring what Flanagan Davis—overall top administrator of the FTP—believed the FTP should be and do. For example, the six types of plays listed in the first macro-feature are all part of what Flanagan Davis believed the national plan should be, but the organization and distribution of power described in this and previous macro-feature are as well. Rather, in this

section I argue for the importance of two specific functions Flanagan Davis believed regional and federal level administrators (those with the most authoritative control over the FTP) should enact: providing play selection and production services (support) for intermediary directors and distributing information about FTP performances to inform local/individual FTP workers and audiences about performances in different regions across the country.

Play Selection and Production Services

Flanagan Davis argued that FTP administrators should provide services to intermediary directors and local FTP workers and audiences—services supporting the selection and production of plays, but also working against internal and external censorship within the FTP and helping maintain the FTP's critical edge. These services ranged from reading and recommending scripts, to handling licenses and venues, to listening to complaints about productions and wages, to negotiating with government officials.

One of the three branches of FTP administration was actually called the Service Branch.[34] It was run out of New York but responsible for communicating with and offering services to FTP units nationwide. Flanagan Davis lists the services it should provide as the following:

1. Play Service, which reads a large number of scripts submitted by agents and authors and sends digests and recommendations
2. Contracts and Royalties
3. Loan Service
4. Editing Service
5. Research Service. ("Jan 1939 Report" 6)

She further explains, "The function of the National Service [Branch is] to explore the dramatic medium itself, to explore the human material available to us and the varied uses to which it can

[34] This naming is likely, but not certainly Flanagan Davis's choice.

be put; to explore our own country, its geography, physical and spiritual, its history and its present problems" (Flanagan Davis, "Jan 1939 Report" 8). The Service Branch had representatives from all of the different regions tasked with reading plays of, by and for their region to ensure each region's needs were heard and met by this federal branch.

In *Arena,* Flanagan Davis describes the office of the Play Bureau (part of the Service Branch) as lively and argumentative, and she sheds light on another function of the Play Bureau: to listen and respond to allegations of discrimination within the project. She writes:

> In this very office playwrights discussed scripts: living newspapers were fought over . . . delegations came to protest discrimination against Negroes, against Jews, against playwrights, against stagehands, against the always embattled dancers. There was a tremendous surge of life and power and a desire to get to work which I have never seen equaled. (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 52)

This indicates that in addition to helping review theatrical materials, the Play Bureau also dealt with the responses and concerns of audiences and theater workers, specifically with regard to play selection. It was not a group of administrators sitting in a room blocked off from the responses their recommendations elicited—in rhetorical terms, not an enclave or conversation open to only "in-group" persons and protected from any "out-group" criticism (Roberts-Miller, *Demagoguery*)—but rather a lively room of discussion with an open door. This further reflects the dialogic nature of the FTP: its cultural materials were born of discussion and debate.

Flanagan Davis also argued for a Supervisor's Council, specifically in charge of protecting the rights of FTP artists and workers: not only responsible for ensuring fair compensation and working conditions, but also, and more important to this project, freedom of expression. She explained that the Supervisor's Council should be made up of different regional

and federal supervisors (administrators) and should work "to preserve artistic integrity, to promote efficiency in operation, to protect the economic welfare of the workers of the Federal Theatre, and to defend freedom of expression in the theatre" ("Articles of Organization" 1). *Arena* mentions the Supervisor's Council in stories about communicating with unions and making decisions about personnel, some of whom came under fire for supporting radical or overtly political performances. Flanagan Davis links federal administration with the prevention of censorship elsewhere as well, explaining how "state [intermediary] administrators tended, for understandable reasons, to want all projects to be inconspicuous and safe. This is one of the strongest reasons why any theatre subsidized by the government must have a director or a central board at once conversant with, but somewhat removed from, operations in the field" ("Does Government Subsidy" 3). Thus, she felt the Supervisors Council, and perhaps federal administration more broadly, should labor against not only external censorship (censorship from other government bodies) but also *internal* censorship (censorship from directors on the project, which could be benign and meant only to avoid controversy).

Establishing Patterns of Communication

Flanagan Davis also believed the FTP could begin to provide a macro-perspective of American culture by circulating information about the activities of each FTP region to theater workers and audiences nationwide. She asks FTP federal and regional administrators to accomplish such through newsletters and radio. At a meeting with regional directors, she explains, "during the first six months it was necessary that each director [here meaning regional administrators] becomes egocentric. From now on egocentricity is the road back into the past. We must see the Federal Theatre, must see how our individual policies and plays fit the policies and plays of the rest of . . . the nationwide theatre" ("Opening Address"). Thus, administrators were over time increasingly expected to explore their own macro-perspective of the FTP.

Flanagan Davis argued that FTP newsletters should be used as a way to circulate information about FTP activities to different FTP regions. FTP newsletters were sent out to all of the FTP units, intended as a way to help connect theaters. In a section titled "Editorial" in the first FTP bulletin, regional administrator Pierre de Rohan writes: "this little bulletin is your hometown newspaper, FTP workers. Its only purpose is to acquaint each of you with what the rest of us are doing, so that all of us may better coordinate our efforts toward a complete realization of the program conceived by Hallie Flanagan, Elmer Rice and their associates." These bulletins typically discuss which plays were being performed in different regions with the greatest successes, as well as overall visions and goals for the FTP and how those goals were playing out in the different regions, thus helping al FTP workers gain a macro-perspective.

Flanagan Davis also emphasized the importance of a permanent radio division within the FTP capable of circulating macro-perspectives of FTP performances to audiences and thereby encouraging audiences to take on such macro-perspectives of the FTP's cultural productions:

> Radio can bring us a realization that we are not individual theatres in scattered states, but that we, together with the twenty million people of our present audience are part of a great Federal Theatre sponsored by a government imaginative enough to realize that unemployed artists are people, that their skills are worthy of conservation, and that in the pattern of a better life for more people, on which many of us are engaged these days, the theatre, as well as science and industry, can play a part. ("Radio Dinner")

The macro-perspectives circulated through bulletins and radio point towards the goal of civic education; in other words, by circulating information about cultural expression across the nation, the FTP helped to educate Americans about American culture in all its breadth and variety. This

macro-feature also speaks to the strategy of being "of, by, and for broad audiences"; all of the cultural expression produced through the FTP was meant to be circulated and shared to broad audiences, not merely throughout one city or region despite the regional and local focus of the FTP. The nature of the macro-perspectives that administrators were asked to circulate and how Flanagan Davis believed those perspectives could contribute to improving democracy is explored in the final macro-feature below.

Macro-Feature 4: Geographic Patterns of Difference and Similarity

To recap the macro-features up to this point: Flanagan Davis thought the FTP should include a flexible variety of performances relevant to today, motivated by local and regional life, determined by directors connected to such local and regional life, and supported and aggregated into macro-perspectives of cultural expression by FTP regional and federal administrators through bulletins and radio. The final macro-feature I discuss explores what this circulated macro-perspective might look like and how it might function in relationship to democracy. Flanagan Davis argues that the FTP's cultural exploration should reveal "geographic patterns" of culture, or in other words, trends in similarities and differences in cultural expression understood in relationship to the geography of America. She asserts, "The plays done and the methods of their doing should bear increasing relationship to the actual variations of geography, physical and spiritual. Only through dramatic development of each state and region in a nation-wide pattern is it possible to develop a theatre reflecting and enriching our country" (Flanagan Davis, "Theatre and Geography" 468); she further defines the FTP's "exploration of the dramatic medium [a]s not only human [i.e., cultural] but geographic" ("Democracy and the Drama").[35]

[35] This, interestingly, positions Flanagan Davis's work as strikingly similar to the field of cultural geography. The field of cultural geography developed in 1920s as a split from more positivistic approaches to geography. Cultural geographic study involves watching and recording activities to explore how culture is connected to geographic

I did not, however, find any arguments from Flanagan Davis about visually mapping out the culture of the FTP. This may be, in part, because of the limited multimodal composing resources available to her. I believe if she had the resources we do today, she would have found a way to create such visual maps—or would have created an FTP office responsible for such. In this section I occasionally compare Flanagan Davis's arguments for revealing geographic patterns of culture to the imagery of demographic maps and want to be forthcoming about my role in influencing data. She did not argue for demographic maps, but it is hard to understand her arguments about exploring geographic patterns without visualizing such demographic maps.

As I've discussed in earlier chapters, Flanagan Davis often uses the word "pattern" to describe the kind of understanding theater should stimulate. Patterns play an equally important role in this chapter. So far I have explored her arguments about how theater is capable of shattering accepted patterns of culture (chapter 2), how great artists are able to see previously unseen patterns, and how Living Newspapers used patterns in language to reveal patterns in data and relationships (chapter 3). In this chapter, the word *pattern* can be defined similarly to how it was in chapter 3: as trends in similarities and differences. However, in this chapter, instead of patterns being situated within a play, they are situated across many plays, or rather, across many instances of cultural expression.

At the macro-level, I argue Flanagan Davis uses the word *pattern* to indicate trends in similarities and differences that emerge as the result of synthesizing many different theatrical (cultural) expressions over time and geographic space. She argues that the FTP "stress not uniformity but rather diversity within a definite national pattern" ("Taken at the Flood 9") but also speaks of the FTP's potential to reveal unifying aspects of US culture: "a theatre, speaking

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space, perhaps using ethnographic research or interviews to deepen understanding, but without predetermined categories or quantifiable data.

for the eastern cosmopolis, for the West, the Midwest, and the South . . . can interpret region to region, emphasize the united aspect of the states and illuminate the United States for the other Americas" (Flanagan Davis, *Arena* 373). This duality is intimately related to what I have come to understand as the ultimate significance of the word *pattern* in relationship to culture: its call to value both similarities and differences, as well as its implication that diversity along with unity works to create something complex and pleasing and greater than diversity or unity alone.

The concept of cultural patterns would therefore ask citizens to see value in cultures different from their own, understanding those cultures as contributing to a richer pattern we all get to claim. In other words, the concept of culture as a pattern stands to develop, if not understanding, then appreciation across difference. In addition to asking audiences to appreciate cultural differences, Flanagan Davis also asked them to compare and contrast differences and sameness in cultural expression in order to see patterns. Difference and sameness are thus positioned as valuable (to be appreciated, empathized with) but also as dynamic, unstable trends to be studied and explored (critically inquired into). Understanding cultural patterns produced through the FTP therefore requires engaging with culture through a balanced lens of both empathy and aesthetic distance, the same relationship Flanagan Davis argues theater workers should cultivate with audiences during performances (as explored in chapter 2). In the subsections below I first briefly discuss how the FTP stood to reveal geographic trends in diversity and then discuss emergent trends in unity in depth.

Emergent Diversity

It is not hard to imagine a broad federation of theaters with many directors and offices all over the country yielding diverse theater expressions and therefore: diverse cultural expressions. Indeed, in arguing the FTP should include a broad variety of types of theater, Flanagan Davis ensured that the FTP would yield diverse kinds of cultural expression. What is most immediately

noticeable about how Flanagan Davis approached the FTP's diversity is her focus on organizing and understanding it along regional lines. She uses regional audience preferences in theater as indicators of culture, for example, describing New York City (its own region) as presenting "the widest range of productions, talents, tastes, attitudes, races, religious and political faiths. It was everything in excess. . . . It reflected its city" (*Arena* 51) and claiming, "if Federal Theatre had ever wanted to produce a cycle of plays epitomizing its own projects, New York would have been staged as a living newspaper, Los Angeles a musical comedy, the South a folk play, and Chicago as a melodrama" (qtd. Osborne 1).

In addition to these descriptions being divided by region, it's important to note that Flanagan Davis explains regional differences in terms of the different theatrical genres or rhetorical qualities certain regions preferred. Living Newspapers (NYC) were oriented towards documentary-style delivery, tones of social justice and resistance; musical comedies (LA) towards humor, rhythm and spectacle; folk plays (the south) towards history and tradition; and melodrama (Chicago) towards sensationalism and emotional intensity. These different forms all involve different emotional tones, different preferences about knowledge presentation (the inclusion of music, the preference for narrative versus montage, etc.), and ultimately different rhetorical approaches. Thus, while diversity may have emerged through the content explored in plays, the diverse rhetorical preferences communicated by audiences in different regions were what Flanagan Davis found most notable.

Emergent Unity

As mentioned above, Flanagan Davis also saw the FTP working to reveal aspects of American culture that united the country. The plays listed by Flanagan Davis as unifying follow fairly predictable lines: they engage with the concept or history of American democracy or deal with something impacting a large number of American citizens. There are three chapters in

Arena labeled "States United," which discuss FTP trends impacting the country at large and plays representing unison rather than difference. Two of these chapters are respectively subtitled *It Can't Happen Here* and *One-Third of a Nation. It Can't Happen Here* was discussed in chapter 2 as a play epitomizing Flanagan Davis's arguments that the FTP should do what it can to protect democracy from fascism. It comes up again here because it qualifies as something Flanagan Davis and other FTP directors believed was relevant to and/or representative of the whole country. *One-Third of a Nation* (the Living Newspaper) has also already been discussed, and its inclusion here as a "States United" aspect is not surprising; its title implies the broad-reaching nature of its content. Flanagan Davis lists *Prologue to Glory*—the story of young Abe Lincoln—as another unifying play "because it is a play about America, and all of us today, if we can read history as it is happening, are thinking about our country, its problems, its dangers, its present and its future." She also notes its widespread popularity with audiences as an indicator of its unifying nature (Flanagan Davis, "To Our Audience" 3).[36] Thus, the knowledge of how to recognize dictatorship in its early stages, the problems of inadequate housing, and American historical subjects were considered, by the Flanagan Davis, to be national concerns or unifying aspects of our culture. It is noteworthy, however, that the unifying trend of inadequate housing is something revealed by the FTP *through research*. As such, the FTP stood to highlight unifying trends, based on not only the opinions of directors, but also research into regional life.

I believe diversity and unity are not just both valued, but actually *collapsed* in the concept of pattern. In other words, through the concept of cultural patterns, diversity and unity become difficult to break apart; our diversity becomes part of our unifying pattern. This collapsing of diversity and unity points to an understanding of America as polycultural rather than

[36] Interestingly, this play also argues that most of Abraham Lincoln's inspiration and motivation for entering into politics was a woman he loved, who died early in his career.

multicultural and ultimately works against "in-group/out-group" mentality—one of the most notorious and dangerous roadblocks to democracy and cultural progress.

The difference between a multicultural and polycultural perspective is intimately connected to Flanagan Davis's concept of cultural patterns. Multicultural perspectives are defined by a belief in the existence of many separate, distinct cultures; polycultural perspectives are defined by a belief that cultures are not only varied and different in many ways, but also connected and similar in some ways as well (Kelley, Prashad). By arguing no two cultures are entirely different in every way, polycultural perspectives resist strong "in-group/out-group" rationality. In other words, polycultural perspectives push back against the idea that groups are ever entirely separate and opposed and, thus, against an orientation to decision-making based on the separation and opposition of groups. A polycultural perspective thus facilitates empathy and understanding across difference more so than a multicultural perspective, as it denies the perception of full separation from any group or culture in a way that multiculturalism does not. Flanagan Davis never uses the word polycultural, but her understanding of American cultural patterns clearly aligns with such a view of culture, prioritizing both difference and sameness.

The patterns revealed by the cultural exploration Flanagan Davis advocated, if mapped, would not likely be neat or symmetrical, as culture is not likely to follow rules of symmetry or consistency. Rather, they would probably yield splotchy, uneven, overlapping patterns that might reveal more apt ways of breaking the country into regions, and theoretically, previously unknown trends unifying America. Flanagan Davis doesn't argue that it is possible to fully reveal "American culture." Instead, she argues that as an ongoing infrastructure, the FTP could continually explore and help us better understand the complex, dynamic patterns of our nation.

Conclusion

I will now read the above macro-features through the civic-rhetorical lens outlined in chapter 1, and in doing so, make arguments about how these macro-features speak to critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories. While Living Newspapers predominantly facilitated civic *education*, the FTP as an infrastructure predominantly facilitated civic engagement and more specifically civic *expression* of culture. Flanagan Davis asserts that the performances (or civic expressions) produced through the FTP should be varied; relevant to modern contexts; decided upon by intermediary directors; influenced by regional and local individuals; and supported, aggregated, and circulated by higher-level administration. The FTP's performances were meant to, over time, reveal patterns of culture that place value on both emergent diversity and unity. After looking at the above macro-features through a civic-rhetorical lens, I conclude that the FTP, as an infrastructure, was meant to:

- Engage citizens in democratized cultural production rhetoric, an expressive and ultimately revolutionary political and social act that stands to alter consciousness.
- Mitigate differences in power to produce culture by assigning liberal, representative rules to those with more power, expressive rules to those with less, and encouraging dialogue between levels of power.
- Collapse the diversity/unity binary, thereby asking citizens to understand America as polycultural rather than multicultural and facilitating greater understanding of the American culture that is.

Democratized Cultural Production Rhetoric and Altered Consciousness

On the macro-level the FTP was an ultimately expressive endeavor, which, in Roberts-Miller's terms, does not necessarily indicate any lack of argumentation or engagement with difference; it simply means the goal of communication is not mutually binding policy. Flanagan

Davis positioned the FTP as an infrastructure immediately concerned not with creating policies, but with expressing culture. The FTP was meant to accomplish what some rhetoricians have referred to as "cultural production rhetoric" (Sheridan et al. 146) and others as "poetic world-making" (Warner 114). Such rhetoric is defined as "post-Habermasian" in the sense that it does not position critical-rational, linguistic argumentation about public policy as rhetoric's primary purview; instead, it argues for the importance of exploring how multimodal rhetoric shapes consciousness and identity and, thereby, what we refer to as culture. As David Sheridan et al. state, "The product of the public sphere is not *just* public opinion, but a fundamental transformation of the metaphors, ideographs, narratives, and god-terms that govern consciousness and identity. Rhetors become producers of culture itself" (146).

Sheridan et al. go on to argue that "those who control cultural forms control consciousness itself" (154) and describe cultural production rhetoric's multimodal nature as intimately connected to its ability to impact consciousness. They draw on Detroit as an example: a city often depicted as empty, deteriorating, squalid, and void of fresh food by mainstream multimodal media. They explain how these depictions work on an almost subconscious level to shape how viewers understand Detroit. More importantly, however, they explore how some Detroit residents have tried to fight against such depictions using their own multimodal strategies, such as images of google map searches for grocery stores in Detroit or videos depicting Detroit full of happy people in colorful parts of the city with little sign of depression or decay. Sheridan et al. explain how these media representations shape our perspectives of places and people more effectively than rational, linguistic argument not only because people tend to believe what they see, but also because they tend to be less guarded when they feel they are observing rather than being convinced of something. They note that because cultural production

rhetoric is especially adept at shaping the way people view groups of people and spaces, it is also specifically suited for constructing concepts like race, gender, sexuality, etc. (Sheridan et al. 147). As such, the FTP was likely also suited for constructing—or challenging and shattering constructions of—such concepts.

As cultural production rhetoric, the FTP's expressions therefore stood to not only build culture but also to shape consciousness, impacting what audiences understood or knew, but also *how* they understood or knew. Multimodal cultural rhetoric influences "not just issues of common concern, but the 'background culture' that determines how we frame, perceive, and feel about those issues to begin with" (Sheridan et al. 148). Kenneth Burke refers to the most important and stubborn ways we frame, perceive and feel about the world as *pieties,* asserting that in order to create any lasting or substantive social change, changes in pieties must occur (*Permanence and Change*). As multimodal, *world-making* rhetoric, the FTP's expressions were therefore specially equipped to stimulate changes in *how* we think—changes that stand to impact pieties—and therefore specially equipped to produce powerful and significant social change.

Part of the relevance of the FTP as a cultural production infrastructure is that it aimed to decentralize and democratize power over cultural production and, thus, over the shaping of consciousness. Sheridan et al. claim, "When we ask who owns multimodal rhetoric, we are really asking: Who owns culture? Who owns consciousness?" (155). They argue that today, mass media has too much control over cultural production and consciousness-shaping, and it is imperative for citizens to engage in cultural production rhetoric so as to challenge and overcome any monopoly over consciousness; the citizens of Detroit taking back some control over depictions of their city is an example of such. One way of equipping citizens to engage in cultural production, Sheridan et al. assert, is to teach multimodal composition as a kind of critical

literacy. They claim any pedagogy that does not engage students in multimodal, cultural production rhetoric "equips citizens to participate in only a small fraction of the rhetorical practices that matter" and "cedes culture itself to mainstream commercial media" (Sheridan et al. 155). Teaching multimodal cultural production, thus, for Sheridan et al., is nothing short of working to ensure students are able to shape their own culture and consciousness rather than being complicit in students' passive acceptance of culture and consciousness as dictated to them.

Both as a theater teacher and as the top administrator of the FTP, Flanagan Davis sought to decentralize power over cultural production. As a teacher, her pedagogy aligned in many ways with the pedagogy further by Sheridan, Rodolfo, and Michel. She spent most of her adult life—both before and after the FTP—teaching students to engage in cultural production through theater, often referring to students as "instinctive pioneers" who "want to play a part in rethinking, redreaming, and rebuilding their school, their community, or their country" (Flanagan Davis, "Living Newspaper Lives"). To go back to one of her arguments discussed earlier in this chapter: she believed that the voices of youth were important for shaping culture and that theater was one avenue through which youth voices could be engaged. Interestingly, although Sheridan et al. don't directly discuss Flanagan Davis, they do briefly discuss having composition students compose Living Newspapers as a way to engage them in cultural production, further supporting the idea that Flanagan Davis (who had students write Living Newspapers) was herself a cultural production critical literacy pedagogue. However, her most unique efforts to decentralize control over culture and consciousness come from her time directing the FTP, during which she sought to engage citizens of all kinds—not just theater students—in developing American culture.

Turning power of cultural production over to broad numbers of citizens and specifically to many who fall into the working classes, I would argue, and Flanagan Davis and Sheridan et al.

would agree, is an ultimately radical, political act. By shaping consciousness, specifically how we understand groups and places, cultural production rhetoric not only impacts how we process information but also constructs and realigns identities and publics. By understanding the FTP as an infrastructure that should ensure citizens other than those affiliated with mainstream media had access to shaping cultural production, Flanagan Davis made great strides in guaranteeing that there was not only one voice speaking to identity, culture, and consciousness, and thereby worked against a common threat to democracy: controlled cultural/consciousness production.

However, not every citizen was allowed equal access to the production and analysis of culture and consciousness through the FTP. In other words, as I discussed in Macro-Feature 2, the FTP was not structured like a direct democracy, but like a representative democracy. The section below explores the implications of how the FTP distributed power over cultural production through representation, or in other words, how the FTP assured "that culture, as represented by the arts (including the theatre), is . . . decentralized" (Flanagan Davis, "Theatre as Communication").

Mitigating Power Differences with Different Rules and Dialogue

Two of the macro-features above address how different levels of power within the FTP (local persons, intermediary directors, and top administrators) influenced the selection of performances, and ultimately, the geographic cultural patterns produced by the FTP. Here, I would like to read that sharing of power specifically as it relates to public sphere communication and critical literacy pedagogy. Regional and federal FTP directors and administrators had the greatest direct power over cultural production; that is, they had more power over determining theatrical pieces, as well as more power to make macro-arguments about patterns in cultural expression. This inequality in power to produce or analyze FTP cultural expressions was mediated and redistributed in primarily two ways. First, directors and administrators with more

power were assigned stricter rules, like those associated with liberal public spheres (as discussed in the introduction chapter, liberal spheres ask participants to bracket self-interest, listen to and represent others, only engage in critical, rational communication, etc.); FTP workers and audiences with less power were assigned fewer rules, more similar to an expressive public sphere (See table 1). Flanagan Davis also sought to mitigate power through a strategy common to critical literacy pedagogues and feminist rhetoricians: by creating a dialogic or invitational relationship between those who had more power to express and those who had less. These two ways of mitigating power are also both theoretically seen in American representative democracy. However, here they serve expressive, cultural goals, rather than deliberative, policy goals.

← **Stricter, more liberal model**			**More flexible, expressive model** →
	← Dialogue →		
Federal Admin	**Intermediary Admin/ Directors**	**Local Theater Workers**	**Audience Members**
Responsible for serving/ listening to/representing others	Responsible for serving/ listening to/representing others	Responsible for serving/ listening to/representing others onstage *and* expressing themselves offstage	Responsible for expressing themselves
Deliberation, research and training expected	Deliberation, research and training expected	Deliberation and research not expected, training is expected	Deliberation, research and training not expected
Private interests bracketed	Private interests somewhat bracketed	Private interests bracketed onstage but not offstage	Private interests not bracketed
Power to speak to patterns and resolve conflicts between groups	Power to express culture and speak to patterns	Power to influence those expressing culture	Power to influence those expressing culture

Table 2
Rhetorical Power/Rules Continuum

As can be seen in table 1, the FTP was not divided into neat categories of liberal and expressive publics, but rather was structured along a continuum, with those holding more power of expression and cultural analysis held to stricter rules of participation, tasked with representing

the expressions of those with less power, and motivated by dialogue with them (through interactions with FTP workers and audiences, audience surveys, studying audiences, etc.). Those with more power were required to rely on evidence and answer allegations of misrepresentation while those with less power were not. Those with more power were asked to bracket their own interests and focus on the interests and needs of others while those with less power were not. In other words, those with more power to express culture were bound by their representative function, and those with less power were not bound by much of anything. I argue that both ends of this continuum must play their part in order for Flanagan Davis's cultural production to be successful. If theater workers and audiences don't express themselves honestly without bracketing or censoring themselves, then administrators and directors don't have honest expressions upon which to build cultural representation. If administrators and directors don't represent and aggregate expressions of culture, then there would either be limited expressions (only their own) or a vast amount of cultural expression but no way to organize or make sense out of it.

This brings me to another point: Flanagan Davis defined great "theatre people" based, in part, on their ability to identify patterns and their experience questioning their own subjective lenses. Ideally, FTP administrators and directors would be such great theater people, equipped with such skills. Those with more power of cultural production were therefore potentially assigned not just liberal public rules but also ideally Flanagan Davis's *theatrical* rules. Being well versed in identifying patterns would presumably make a person better at just that: identifying patterns in culture. Being well versed in the presence and influences of one's own subjective lenses would presumably make a person better at representing others, able to question how their own perspective might skew how they see others. Thus, there is an element of

representative technocracy at work here; Flanagan Davis presents skilled theater directors as those best able to see patterns and question subjective experience and, thus, as those who should have the most power in representing and analyzing culture. This technocratic approach would, *theoretically*, enable a representative cultural democracy to work more effectively than a direct cultural democracy, but this approach would also rely on those with representative power adhering to the continuum of rules laid out above.

As seen in the above continuum, those with more power to engage in cultural production were responsible for maintaining a dialogic and invitational relationship with those who had less power—a strategy commonly associated with feminist public spheres and critical literacy pedagogies. The responsibility to stimulate dialogue and listen to others differs from group to group much along the same lines as the liberal/expressive continuum of power discussed above: those with more power in the FTP are required to listen seriously to others far more than those with less power. Flanagan Davis's handling of theater worker concerns over *Triple-A Plowed Under,* for example, illustrates that she felt responsible for listening to and deliberating with theater workers so as to come to a compromise. FTP workers and audiences were not responsible for engaging with and listening to others to the same degree administrators and directors were.

While communication between FTP administration, directors, workers, and audiences was one way a dialogic/invitational relationship was constructed, I believe the rhetorical qualities of FTP performances, specifically with regard to patterns, invited audiences into the cultural production conversation in a less obvious but more compelling way. Flanagan Davis characterized a great theater person as one who not only is able to identify previously unseen patterns, but also one who can help audiences see such patterns. As can be seen in the previous chapter, Living Newspapers used parallel structure, juxtaposition, and visual representations of

trends to help engage audiences in seeing and interpreting patterns rather than explicitly telling audiences about such patterns. The FTP would therefore, theoretically, over time increase the general ability of audiences to identify patterns and, thus, potentially increase the number of people able to participate in analyzing cultural patterns based on the materials produced and circulated by the FTP. Thus, in addition to inviting audiences and theater workers to shape cultural expressions by responding to performances on the micro-level, Flanagan Davis meant for the FTP to increasingly involve audiences in identifying and analyzing cultural patterns on the macro-level (discussed at more length in the following chapter).

Collapsing the Diversity/Unity Binary to Support Polyculturalism

Earlier, I discussed how Flanagan Davis's use of the word *pattern* implies the necessity for—and the valuing of—both diversity and unity. I also discussed how *pattern* implies that the coming together of diversity and unity will yield something more complex and richer than diversity or unity could alone and how the concept of patterns works to collapse the diversity/unity binary. Here I'd like to talk about the rhetorical potential of such a collapse.

Flanagan Davis's concept of cultural patterns aligns in several important ways with Gregory Clark's concept of civic jazz and a comparison of the two proves quite useful. Both Flanagan Davis and Clark argue for a collapsing of the sameness/difference binary, and assert that this collapsing is necessary for improving United States civic engagement. While similar, Flanagan Davis's and Clark's arguments differ in two important ways. The first is that, while Flanagan Davis's concept of patterns collapses the diversity/unity binary, Clark's concept of civic jazz collapses the individual/collective binary. The two binaries are related but slightly different. Flanagan Davis's collapse embraces not only the presence of multiple cultures and the cultural freedom so crucial to America's understanding of itself (cultural diversity) but also our need to understand ourselves as a unified country in some way (cultural unity). Clark's collapse

embraces American individualism and our need to be unique, but also our need to think about the good of the community sometimes. Clark explains that

> at its best, this [jazz] music resolves conflicts between individual and collective, resistance and cooperation, and division and communion by placing each opposition in the service of a common project. So it asserts individuality in community rather than against it, privileging diversity in order to advance unity, and realizing *e pluribus unum* in the process—at least for the time it takes to play the tune. To participate in that process onstage, or at the one remove that is a seat in the audience, is to encounter the American identity that "ought" to be. (Clark 9)

Clark's and Flanagan Davis's terms are intimately connected: cultural *diversity* allows for *individualism* while cultural *unification* facilitates *collective* understanding, and vice versa (individualism allows for diversity, collective understanding for unification); both deal with our need for the freedom to be different and our need to work together. Both take the perspective that we all must be and are simultaneously both different and the same.

The difference between Clark's collapsing of individuality/collectivity and Flanagan Davis's collapsing of diversity/unity is that Clark's is a temporary experience, and Flanagan Davis's theoretically would not be. Flanagan Davis refers to a way of understanding culture and identity that collapses the difference/sameness binary while Clark refers to *experiences of* culture and identity that collapse the difference/sameness binary. While experiences of identity are perhaps fleeting, perspectives on culture are typically more sustained. Clark describes how jazz, while it is happening, reflects the "American identity that 'ought' to be" while Flanagan Davis describes cultural patterns—and an orientation to culture as a pattern—as being cultivated over time and with work: a slow process that likely couldn't come to much fruition during the FTP's

short years. However, if the FTP had been alive long enough to successfully orient citizens towards an understanding of culture as a pattern, rich and complex, the FTP might have encouraged citizens to take on a long-standing perspective of culture compatible with the American identity that "ought to be."

Clark also draws on Kenneth Burke's concept of *consubstantiality* to explain the importance of civic jazz, defining consubstantiality as the state of being "both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another" (Clark 33). According to Burke, such consubstantiality is necessary for any successful rhetorical exchange; if we are entirely the same there is no need for rhetorical exchange, but if we are entirely different we likely will not listen to one another or find use in each other's words. Thus, in order to embrace rhetoric's potential, we must understand ourselves as both the same and different; jazz, according to Clark, provides us a model of the state of being both same and different, the sublime art of such a state. Flanagan Davis did not argue that the FTP, like jazz, allowed for an immediate experience and model of consubstantiality, but rather that it would, over time, help to create an emergent understanding of America as geographic patterns of consubstantial cultures and thus potentially increase the ability of people to understand themselves in a way that facilitates productive civic rhetorical exchange across difference (the implications of which are explored more directly in the conclusion).

While Flanagan Davis approached cultural development with both a polycultural perspective and a perspective that collapses the difference/sameness or diversity/unity divide, I should note that the concept of polyculture can, but doesn't necessarily, imply a collapsing of the same binaries. Polyculture simply implies that cultures are the same in some ways and different in others. Flanagan Davis's concept of cultural patterns collapses the diversity/unity binary

because it asserts that unity arises through exploration, understanding and appreciation of difference; asserts that patterns of differences can unify us, that difference and unity do not exist separately but rather interdependently. Polycultural perspectives *could* say something like this: we are culturally different in all things except our basic biological systems, which unify us—this leaves the ideas of diversity and unity intact and in opposition. Flanagan Davis's cultural pattern perspective, however, would say something more along the lines of this: our cultural differences, along with those things that unite us, combine to create a pattern of culture ultimately belonging to all of us. In other words, Flanagan Davis's cultural patterns not only imply the presence of both diversity and unity; they position diversity *as a kind of unity*. This further makes it difficult to orient to culture as "in-groups" and "out-groups," because difference or diversity (what would normally mark an out-group) is positioned as part of what creates the complex fabric of a flexible, diverse in-group. If the FTP worked to circulate the idea that America could be explored and understood as a polycultural pattern, it could have encouraged a view of culture not only more likely to yield appreciation of difference and productive rhetorical exchanges, but also a view of culture more *accurate* and reflective of the American identity that is.

According to Flanagan Davis, the FTP did not live long enough to influence culture or understanding in the ways she believed it could; she referred to the project as a "blueprint the future of arts" ("Theatre as Communication" 5). It is therefore hard to say whether or not the cultural patterns revealed by the FTP would ever actually succeed at democratizing culture or collapsing the diversity/individuality binary and cultivating a polycultural orientation towards America, or even what that would look like. Would the FTP reveal previously unknown unifying trends in American culture? Would it be possible to communicate emergent cultural patterns—to visualize them? Would people listen to those patterns? Would those patterns actually impact

consciousness and the way we approach culture? According to Flanagan Davis, the answer is yes: the FTP had begun to work, *which is why it was shut down*—and she wasn't the only person who believed this. A document, most likely written by FTP administrators Sam Handelsman and Bernard Simon, claims the FTP was shut down because it was "a focus, a sounding-board, and a rallying point for liberal ideas, and it really reached the people. . . . Because it was the outstanding progressive force of the WPA. Because it was an active force for democracy. Because it was alive and talked" ("Untitled"). As another, unnamed critic put it: "if it had been an insignificant, innocuous and banal movement it probably would have continued unnoticed indefinitely" (qtd. in Letter to Windsor French). But the FTP wasn't insignificant, innocuous, or banal, and it did not continue indefinitely. Taking Flanagan Davis's arguments seriously means accepting that the FTP was potentially on the brink of causing a radical shift in consciousness and the way culture was produced and understood in America, so much so that conservative voices in power had it shut down. In the following chapter I explore how we might implement her theories to facilitate such radical shifts in culture and consciousness today.

Chapter 5: Democratic Cultural Rhetorical Infrastructure (DCRI) Theory

"What the government's experiment in music, painting and the theatre actually did, even in their first year, was to work a sort of Cultural Revolution in America."
-"Unemployed Arts," leading article in *Fortune* magazine, May 1937

"You are legislating against one of the most important things that ever happened in a democratic government." -Orson Welles, 1939 radio campaign against the closing of the Federal Theater Project

Introduction

I began this dissertation with two goals: to recover Hallie Flanagan Davis for the field of rhetoric and to cultivate a rhetorical theory based on her arguments and practices. I argue that this theory should be understood not as a set of distinct, hierarchical components, but as a messy ecosystem full of intertwining and interconnected concepts. Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices are the keystone species, roots, and soil of this theory ecosystem—the most important, critical, and grounding components. I have applied a civic-rhetorical lens to these grounding components not to alter their composition, but to support and enhance them and help them grow fruit. It is my hope that the civic-rhetorical lens I employ helps to grow Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices into a theory ecosystem whose fruits are too bright and noticeable—too rhetorically compelling—to ignore. In this chapter, I first synthesize my analysis of the keystones, features, and insights from previous chapters into a portable, rhetorical theory. I then explore how rhetoricians today might implement this theory as a lens for analyzing social media in our research and teaching, but also as a lens for analyzing our own classroom practices.

However, since my first goal was to recover Flanagan Davis for the field of rhetoric, I would like to begin this chapter by clarifying how I believe she should be thought of in relationship to our field. I argue that she be thought of as a *civic-rhetorician*; that is, a rhetorical scholar whose arguments address civic education (critical literacy) and civic engagement (public sphere theory) in such interconnected ways as to make it impossible to pull those theories apart.

She positioned the FTP as a medium for engaging great numbers of citizens in the process of creating and shaping flexible, cultural expressions, and she seemed to understand the greatest value of those cultural expressions as their ability to educate audiences—providing them materials through which to learn about American culture in all its patterned, polycultural complexity; this increased understanding of culture would then theoretically lead to improved civic engagement outside the FTP. In other words, her rhetorical arguments position democratized expressive civic-engagement as a national prerequisite for (and intimately connected to) both civic education and democratized, deliberative, civic engagement.

I therefore propose Flanagan Davis be regarded—much like her contemporaries John Dewey and Kenneth Burke—as a rhetorician who engaged with critical literacy pedagogies and public sphere theories decades before the formal beginning of either area of inquiry. While there are many rhetoricians whose recent works encompass both critical literacy and public sphere debates in interconnected ways (and who would thus fall under my definition of "civic-rhetorician")—such as David Sheridan, Jim Ridolfo and Anthony J. Michael—it is important to acknowledge that, like Dewey and Burke, Flanagan Davis was active in the 1930s at the beginning of what is considered the "New Rhetoric." She was, therefore, like Dewey and Burke, ahead of her time in terms of her theories about what kinds of communication are needed for democracy to function and in her attention to the civic and cultural power of multimodal address. Like Dewey and Burke, she was a precursor necessary for the development of more modern, multimodal civic-rhetorical theories. It is my hope that Flanagan Davis comes to be seen as one of the big rhetorical players of the New Rhetoric in the 1930s, as her arguments and practices indicate she deserves to be. She was an innovative rhetor and civil servant dedicated to providing Americans "a medium for free expression such as no other form of government can assure," a

medium which would allow citizens "access to the arts and tools of a civilization which they themselves are helping to make"—a medium for democratizing culture.

Democratic Cultural-Rhetorical Infrastructure Theory: Fruits Cultivated

This dissertation makes an important contribution to the field of rhetoric not only by bringing Hallie Flanagan Davis to our attention, but also by synthesizing her arguments into a rhetorical theory that is increasingly applicable in modern contexts. Before articulating the synthesized theory, I would like to give an overview of the complex theory ecosystem developed throughout this project thus far, which consists of:

- eight keystone arguments from chapter 2, including four theatrical conditions which must be met (theater must: *1. be of, by, and for broad, varied audiences, 2. interpenetrate life and interdisciplinary research, 3. translate of life through bodies,* and *4. balance empathy and aesthetic distance*) and four civic trajectories made possible by those conditions (*1. civic education, 2. civic engagement, 3. protecting democracy,* and *4. social change*)
- five micro-features from chapter 3 (some theater should *1. focus on social problems, 2. present historical research of problems, 3. present trends through visual symbols, 4. present relationships through parallel structure and juxtaposition,* and *5. end with a direct call for audience participation*), and
- four macro-features from chapter 4 (artistic infrastructures should *1. facilitate a flexible variety of epideictic expressions and make space for youth and marginalized voices, 2. task regional, intermediary powers with choosing performances based on local culture and audiences input, 3. task federal administrators with providing services, and*

synthesizing /circulating a macro perspective of performances, and *4. present a macro-view of expressions as a nationwide pattern of culture*)

I came to three major theoretical points by analyzing the theory ecosystem above, specifically by using a civic-rhetorical lens to explore the connections between keystone arguments, micro-features, and macro-features—to explore the ways Flanagan Davis's practices and arguments speak to one another across contexts and from different angles. I refer to this rhetorical theory I have cultivated with Flanagan Davis as *Democratic Cultural-Rhetorical Infrastructure theory* or *DCRI theory*. The three main components of DCRI theory are:

1. **Artistic/cultural infrastructure**: In order for democracy to function—for citizens to participate in meaningful ways that take into account both their own needs and the needs of others—there must be one or more artistic, rhetorical infrastructures specifically dedicated to facilitating the democratization of culture (similarly to how voting and lobbying are specifically dedicated to facilitating the democratization of politics). This democratization of culture through artistic, multimodal rhetorical infrastructures will enable citizens to better understand their country as a complex, polycultural pattern, and with this understanding, they will be better able to contribute in meaningful ways to legislation and political decision-making.
2. **Processes of decentralizing, organizing, circulating, and framing**: Any infrastructure that aims to facilitate the democratization of culture must balance strategies for decentralizing cultural expression (such as studying and communicating with audiences in many different locations and invoking interdisciplinary knowledge) with strategies for synthesizing, organizing, and circulating large amounts of expression then created (such as translating research into narratives and symbols, and identifying geographic patterns of

culture). These circulations should be framed as (presented and analyzed for) how they speak to culture, encouraging citizens to see them as such.

3. **Rhetorical view of theatrical expression**: Theatrical modes of expression (film, television, and especially live-theater) are exceptionally capable of facilitating this kind of cultural democratization. Theatrical expression is understood here as rhetoric that uses the embodied human as its medium, draws on a broad "vocabulary of symbols" to compress experience into easily shared performances, and is best created by those who have an aptitude for seeing patterns in life. Such theatrical expression is particularly well suited for a) inviting marginalized voices to participate in cultural production, b) engaging audiences in genuine empathetic experiences, c) increasing audience awareness of the embodied consequences of social, economic, and political forces, and d) identifying patterns in culture.

Taken together, these three components create a theory which suggests that, in order to increase the number of citizens who participate meaningfully in government and politics, we must first increase the number of citizens who participate meaningfully in shaping theatrical expressions as well as the number of citizens who understand theatrical expressions as cultural artifacts to be studied, responded to, and reshaped. In other words: we must first be able to explore the polycultural patterns that make up America through artistic expression.

Artistic/Cultural Infrastructure

Flanagan Davis's arguments—and thus the theory I build from her arguments—align far more with modern, cultural production public sphere theories than traditional, liberal or bourgeois public sphere theories. Traditional public sphere theories (like Habermas's) tend to assume that political decisions are predominantly made through direct, overt political communication and types of expression traditionally regarded as "masculine." More modern and

multimodal approaches to public sphere theory, however, often emphasize how politics and society are influenced by more subtle, cultural arguments embedded in multimodal and artistic media like movies and television—or theater—and the embodied ways we exist in the world (Long, Sheridan et al., Warner). The theory contributed by this project mostly fits in with this latter approach; it is what Sheridan et al. would refer to as "post-Habermasian." DCRI theory is thus a "post-Habermasian" theory based on arguments made publicly by a woman while Habermas was still a child.

DCRI theory finds its closest counterpart in David Sheridan, Jim Ridolfo, and Anthony J. Michael's work, *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric* (2008), written more than 65 years after Flanagan Davis wrote *Arena.* While Sheridan et al. discuss Living Newspapers, they do not discuss Flanagan Davis, although their arguments about Living Newspapers indicate that she undoubtedly influenced their work. Sheridan et al. align themselves with rhetoricians such as Michael Warner and Scott Welsh in proposing that "the product of the public sphere is not just public opinion, but a fundamental transformation of the metaphors, ideographs, narratives and god-terms that govern consciousness and identity" and in arguing that multimodal forms of communication are the most effective at transforming those metaphors, ideographs, etc. (147). Sheridan et al. address how dangerous a monopoly over such multimodal forms of communication would be (equivalent to a monopoly over culture and consciousness), and relatedly, argue that cultural production rhetoric must be decentralized. They assert the importance of rhetoric and composition scholars engaging both students and themselves in multimodal, "poetic world-building" rhetoric so as actively shape "who owns culture" (xvi) and prevent media and advertising companies from accumulating a dangerous majority of the power. The phrase "poetic-world building," coined in

Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics* (2005), refers to the use of rhetoric not just to formulate opinions, come to decisions or make sense of the world, but also to actively build and shape the world, to construct group identity and culture much like an artist would construct a work of art. Rhetoric becomes, thus, not only a tool for persuasion but one of "the arts and tools" which can be used to build culture.

While DCRI theory overlaps with the arguments proposed by Sheridan et al.—both share the goal of decentralizing and democratizing multimodal cultural production—DCRI theory differs in three distinct and important ways (each aligning with one of its components). The first is that DCRI theory points us to the importance of a specific kind of infrastructure dedicated to democratizing cultural production and provides us with a model for distributing rhetorical rules and power throughout such an infrastructure (discussed in this section). The second component of DCRI theory draws our attention to the need to not only decentralize, but also synthesize, organize, and circulate trends in cultural production for the purpose of better revealing and understanding the polycultural patterns of some group (discussed in the next section). The third component of DCRI theory points us to a specific rhetorical understanding of theatrical communication and explains why such an understanding is important for the democratization of culture (discussed in the final theoretical section).

I argue that, according to DCRI theory, democracies need an infrastructure specifically dedicated to democratically creating and building culture much like they need an infrastructure dedicated to democratically creating government. While Sheridan et al. propose a way to use the educational infrastructure already in place to stimulate decentralized cultural production (an admittedly more manageable suggestion), my work with Flanagan Davis illustrates the need for infrastructures entirely dedicated to the purpose of cultural democratization. As such, DCRI

theory positions the democratic exploration and development of culture as *ideally* worthy of much more nationwide infrastructure than it currently has. While this may seem like an expensive and improbable idea, if the FTP is any indicator, such a cultural production industry may in fact be—over time—self-sustaining. In its first three years, government reports indicate that 65% of FTP performances were "given free for underprivileged groups," but even so, in those three year,s the FTP "brought in an excess of $2,000,000 at the box office" (Jan 1939 Report), which would equal roughly $33.5 million today; in fact, Flanagan Davis believed that before the FTP was shut down, it was well on its way to becoming self-sustaining. Theatrical expressions of cultural experience do seem likely, after all, to be more enjoyable to engage with than dry rhetoric about legislation or political views. Despite all this, the possibility of recreating an infrastructure similar to the FTP in scale and function today seems largely unlikely.

Still, the lessons we can learn from the infrastructural features of the FTP make up some of the most potent contributions of this project. As noted in the introduction chapter, one of the catch-22's of public sphere theory is that the more rules there are to ensure quality outcomes, the more likely the public sphere is to exclude marginalized and/or minority voices; the fewer rules and more inclusive the sphere, the less it is possible to ensure any level of quality engagement in terms of listening, evidence, levels of manipulation, etc. and thus ironically, the harder it is to regulate whether or not the sphere is actually inclusive—to ensure marginalized voices are not just expressed but *heard*. The theory I construct here points to an infrastructure that is predominantly expressive, flexible and inviting of marginalized groups, but it also works to ensure listening and quality, providing an innovative way to work around to the catch-22 described above, achieved through specific infrastructural qualities.

The primary way the FTP managed this was through the levels of its infrastructure—applying different rules to people with different levels of expressive power. Having more expressive power in the FTP meant a requirement to listen more, to study more, to represent more and concern oneself with quality; less expressive power meant relatively few if any rules of engagement (see table 1 below, originally in Ch. 4). This way, only those assured to have expressive power (power gained from the infrastructure) faced limitations to their expression; voices without infrastructural rhetorical power were given more complete freedom of expression. In snappier, more clichéd terms: *with rhetorical power comes rhetorical responsibility*. I believe this model of rhetorical power/rules is ideal, not just within a cultural production infrastructure, but in all representative, democratic rhetorical contexts. I believe it could be used by rhetoricians as an ideal against which to measure organizational and group communication practices and as a lens through which students could explore their own rhetorical positionality.

← Stricter, more liberal model			More flexible, expressive model →
	← Dialogue →		
Federal Admin	**Intermediary Admin/ Directors**	**Local Theater Workers**	**Audience Members**
Responsible for serving/ listening to/representing others	Responsible for serving/ listening to/representing others	Responsible for serving/ listening to/representing others onstage *and* expressing themselves offstage	Responsible for expressing themselves
Deliberation, research and training expected	Deliberation, research and training expected	Deliberation and research not expected, training is expected	Deliberation, research and training not expected
Private interests bracketed	Private interests somewhat bracketed	Private interests bracketed onstage but not offstage	Private interests not bracketed
Power to speak to patterns and resolve conflicts between groups	Power to express culture and speak to patterns	Power to influence those expressing culture	Power to influence those expressing culture

Table 3
Rhetorical Power/Rules Continuum

The degree to which an institution adhered to this model or not would, according to DCRI theory, indicate the degree to which it was *capable* of facilitating democratized cultural expressions—capable of welcoming and representing diverse voices, capable of ensuring those voices are actually heard, capable of illuminating patterns of polyculture rather than falsely presenting any institution as culturally homogenous (or perhaps worse, as *completely* different from one region to the next). Another way to put it: such a model ensures that those who don't usually have the power to speak have as few restrictions as possible on what and how they can express, and those who have immense power to speak are required to listen and represent those without power, working to ensure that the powerless are continually heard, studied, attended to and that voices with power don't have a monopoly over culture, even if they have more official power than others over cultural-rhetorical production. (Application of DCRI's rhetorical power/rules continuum to the classroom is discussed further later this chapter.)

I'd like to argue that this rhetorical power/rules continuum positions DCRI theory as, conceptually, somewhere in between the theories of Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal. In other words, that DCRI theory falls somewhere in between what Boal refers to as "political theatre" (characterized by Brecht's Epic Theatre and theater in the 1920s and 30s), and what Boal refers to as his own "Theatre of the Oppressed" (associated with the 1960s and 70s). Brecht believed theatre should engage audiences critically, and allow audiences to actively embark on their own meaning-making processes throughout the play; Boal goes a step further to argue that audiences should be invited to cross the boundaries between actor and audience and physically play a role in shaping the performance as it happens, thereby involving the audience in not only an intellectual, but also an embodied way. DCRI theory argues that audiences should be engaged in critically making meaning throughout the play (like Brecht), but should also be asked to shape

the future of the play and upcoming plays by responding to surveys and interviews: not quite the level of audience control over materials that Boal argues for, but getting closer. In fact, I believe we could think of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed as arguing for a kind of direct cultural democracy, wherein the audience directly shapes their representation and is encouraged take back some of their rhetorical power in a physical, symbolic way through the theater. DCRI theory, on the other hand, explores a more representative cultural democracy, one in which the audience is represented by directors, playwrights, and administrators. The rhetorical rules/distribution above is necessary to ensure that such a representative cultural democracy actually allows the voices of diverse citizens to come forward (this concept is discussed more throughout this chapter).

Another important infrastructural feature of DCRI theory that works to promote listening and understanding across difference is its requirement that deliberative, agonistic rhetorical modeling be infused into the infrastructure at the ground level, at least in some ways. While DCRI theory calls for a primarily expressive infrastructure with few rules, meant for cultivating perspectives and building culture rather than engaging politics or trying to come to difficult decisions, it also requires some cultural expressions that work to subtly educate and encourage audiences to engage in more agonistic, deliberative rhetoric and to apply such rhetoric to their political engagement. DCRI theory argues that cultural production infrastructures should not be entirely separate from policy deliberation, and rather should, in some ways, act as educational spaces for encouraging agonistic policy deliberation. For Flanagan Davis, Living Newspapers accomplished this function; I argue that this is why she found them so crucial to the FTP's success. DCRI theory thus indicates that cultural production infrastructures cannot improve democracy to the fullest extent unless they engage with politics to some degree and find ways to

educate audiences for agonistic, deliberative rhetorical engagement—to encourage audiences to see value in engaging with different opinions as part of their decision-making process.

Flanagan Davis believed that 1930s Americans didn't really know what American culture was or how they fit into it and were likely unsure where to look to find answers. I argue that, while today we have access to more sources, we are still just as lost in terms of understanding ourselves as a culture or achieving understanding across difference—perhaps even more so. While we can research numerous things about culture through the internet, we can also filter our experiences of culture more now than ever before, not only through our own subjective lenses but through literal internet filtering systems (many of which we don't control), and this may have something to do with the anxious, tense quality of our nation's dialogue today. An October 2017 Pew Center Study indicates that Americans are as politically and culturally divided as ever, and the increasing divide can be felt in the resurgence of Nazi symbolism and persistence of words like "libtard" and "snowflake"—indicating a radical lack in understanding across different cultures within the country, and, at the root of that, a lack of agonistic approaches to deliberation: approaches to decision-making that value engaging different opinions. The creation of a rhetorical infrastructure specifically for cultural exploration provides citizens a place to look, a place to engage, a place to find a continually updated supply of cultural materials to study, a place to see the concerns and ideas and hopes and histories of different people across the nation expressed, but also a place to see agonistic, deliberative rhetoric modeled onstage—an infrastructure that could, for example, encourage audiences to think about the one-third of a nation living in poverty before they make decisions about how to vote.

Decentralize, Organize, Circulate, and Frame

The second component of DCRI theory states that, in order to democratize culture, a cultural production infrastructure must focus on balancing strategies that decentralize cultural

expression with strategies that synthesize, organize and make sense out of the vast resulting amount of cultural expression. In rhetorical terms, DCRI theory argues that building culture requires not only engaging and including many different perspectives on culture but also finding ways to synthesize and communicate those perspectives—to search for patterns within them so as to make the large amount of expressions palatable, understandable for audiences. The strategies and practices Flanagan Davis outlines (including the theatrical conditions explored as keystones in chapter 2, as well as many of the micro and macro-features discussed) tend to yield either decentralization or organization/circulation, but it is this latter set of strategies that I believe is most compelling, as it is less often addressed in today's context. This is another way DCRI differs from Sheridan et al.'s arguments: DCRI positions decentralizing cultural production as only a first step. The next step is finding trends within the resulting decentralized cultural expressions and circulating those trends to begin revealing polycultural patterns.

Strategies for decentralization are needed to ensure that many voices are involved in shaping cultural expressions and, thus, that the cultural production infrastructure in question works to facilitate the exploration of culture in a broad sense, rather than any one particular facet of culture. The previous chapters provide many examples of strategies for decentralization. For example, all of the practices Flanagan Davis supported that involve engaging audiences effectively decentralize cultural production by inviting audiences to contribute their perspectives and, thereby, contribute to cultural production. In a different way, interpenetrating current events and other fields further opened the FTP to different perspectives; the cultural expressions produced weren't just motivated by the ideas and perspectives of artists and audiences, but also by research into and communication with scientists, historians, psychologists, etc. Decentralization across space, audiences, and fields is important to DCRI theory because such

decentralization stands to protect democracy by ensuring that a monopoly over cultural production—and thus consciousness—cannot arise (as has been discussed by Sheridan et al.).

On the other hand, strategies for *synthesizing and organizing* cultural expressions are important to DCRI theory because they ensure that the cultural production industry in question is able to identify and communicate trends and patterns in culture, transforming cultural expressions into cultural education materials. As early as the 1920s, John Dewey argued that civic participation was strained and lacking quality due to *an overload* rather than a lack of available information and perspectives—a description that only seems to grow in relevance as we progress forward in the digital age, and social media feeds and search engine results grow in front of us at seemingly infinite rates. Dewey explains the public as "inchoate," as too numerous in perspectives and too disorganized to make any sense out of, and the theory I contribute in this project gets its strength, in part, because of how it proposes we organize and understand this vast amount of perspectives and ideas.

Strategies for synthesis and organization are found throughout the keystones and features discussed in chapters 2 through 4, specifically related to theatrical translation and the concept of patterns. The importance Flanagan Davis places on theater's engagement with patterns cannot be overstated and indicates that, like Dewey, she was aware of the overload of accessible information and how relatively useless that overload is without a way to synthesize and understand it, even if that overload is inclusive of *everyone*. Flanagan Davis argues that having special insight into patterns is part of what defines a successful theater person, thus positioning theater as a medium through which to remedy—that is, organize—the overload of cultural expression available.

The organizational strategies presented by DCRI theory are capable not only of revealing cultural patterns to audiences, but also of helping audiences learn how to locate and analyze patterns themselves. I would argue, for example, that seeking out a balance between empathy and aesthetic distance counts as an organization strategy, as it leads the audience to both identify with the performance and question it, asks the audience to begin organizing the information presented; to connect with some parts of the performance; to approach others more critically; to question the relationships between scenes, characters, or pieces of evidence. This balancing of empathy and aesthetic distance—especially when paired with rhetorical strategies such as parallel structure and juxtaposition—invites the audience into the process of organizing and analyzing information. It asks audiences not to passively accept all of the information presented to them, to see how some might overlap and contradict in unexpected ways—to engage in the processes of synthesis and pattern-recognition.[37] Such performances would therefore give citizens a space to practice such analytical skills—skills necessary for identifying and understanding patterns in culture. I argue that these skills only grow in importance today with the ever-increasing amount of news (and fake-news) available with just a few keystrokes. Perhaps the arguments from different news sources, patterned and juxtaposed through theatrical performances, would give audiences practice questioning and exploring the contradictions between those sources.

The way balancing empathy and aesthetic distance works within DCRI theory is relevant, not only because of the practice it gives audiences at synthesizing information and analyzing patterns, but also because it stands to shock audiences into an awareness of patterns they may have previously been unaware of and even resistant to. Empathy is connected to a central trend

[37] It is a fairly common strategy in theater to reveal character by showing the contradictions between what characters say and what they do.

in modern rhetoric: Burke's concept of identification, which indicates that a rhetor may persuade an audience "only insofar as" the rhetor identifies herself with the audience, or, only as much as the audience perceives the rhetor to be similar to the audience (*Rhetoric of Motives* 55). One important takeaway of my rhetorical reading of Flanagan Davis is that, although identifying with an audience can be a very powerful persuasive tool and can help create understanding across difference, sometimes the *opposite of identification* (aesthetic distance) may also be effective not just for asking audiences to position themselves against someone or something, but for asking audiences to process information critically, to question the relationships between different people and pieces of evidence, to understand a performance as a moment for intellectual and emotional questioning and engagement, not as a moment for passive voyeurism or belief. I believe this is actually similar to another one of Burke's concepts: perspective by incongruity. Burke argues that startling someone by putting unexpected or incongruous things side by side is our best chance at surprising and jolting their interpretive frameworks, our best chance at getting that person to accept knowledge which doesn't fit into their existing frameworks. He thus posits that such incongruous juxtapositions are well equipped to stimulate change in the minds of audiences and thus, to stimulate social change. He refers to the results of such efforts as "perspective by incongruity." So, too, Flanagan Davis achieves aesthetic distance by putting unrealistic, unexpected, or starkly juxtaposed elements into plays to jolt audiences into awareness that something (about patterns) is being said between the lines. Thus, she in essence defines rhetorically effective theater as that which achieves a balance between identification and perspective by incongruity: we identify and empathize with the sick child, but we feel taken aback by the giant faucet leaking strange, bright green contagion down on the child's head; this

state of being taken aback stands to overcome interpretive frameworks and pieties that read poverty as the fault of an individual's laziness.

This is important because it indicates that balancing empathy with aesthetic distance, along with the use of patterned verbal and visual communication, stands to shock audiences into an awareness of *patterns* they had not seen before—patterns their pieties may have previously rendered shadowy or invisible, patterns such as the damaging effects of growing up in poverty, rendered shadowy, perhaps, by pious belief in the American dream and the possibility of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps. Other social patterns that appear to be invisible to some but obvious to others—which stand to be illuminated through a combination of empathy, aesthetic distance, and patterned symbolic communication—include sexism, racism, homophobia, religious intolerance, ableism, and many others. As rhetors we, too, can use this formula (patterned symbolic communication + identification + perspective by incongruity) in our attempts to illuminate patterns to audiences.

Rhetorical View of Theatrical Expression

The third component of DCRI theory requires any democratic cultural-rhetorical infrastructure to be approached and understood using the specific rhetorical view of theater. That is, both DCRI theory and the FTP are only possible if we understand theater not just *as rhetorical*, but as a certain, distinct kind of rhetorical address: one involving a flexible symbol system, the "whole" human as a medium, the goal of compressing and sharing experience, and requiring an aptitude for identifying and exposing patterns. While aspects of Flanagan Davis's rhetorical view of theater are discussed throughout this project, here I synthesize her rhetorical view of theater and explain why this view is necessary for DCRI theory.

Flanagan Davis argues that all people want to experience more life than can fit into one lifetime and that theater allows people to do such. Suzanne Langer, Flanagan Davis's

contemporary and noted rhetorician, asserts that human instinct includes the desire to create and use symbols—that we engage with symbols not only because they allow us to fulfill other human needs but also because engaging with symbols is in itself a human need (1941).[38] I believe Flanagan Davis would argue that human instinct includes the desire to engage in experiences beyond the self—that we engage with symbols because they allow a "terrific compression" of experience and therefore make it possible to engage in experiences that would not all normally fit into one lifetime. Flanagan Davis argues that theater is especially equipped for such symbolic, experiential sharing because it invites a very broad and inclusive "vocabulary of symbols." Unlike literature, poetry, paintings, or music, theater's symbol use is not restricted to visual, audio, or linguistic elements, but rather invokes all of them and often simultaneously. Having such broad symbolic reach creates a richer, more flexible system of symbols to draw from, as well as a potentially more effective and immersive sharing of experience or, as some modern rhetoricians have argued, such "multimodality 'provides the means to describe a practice or representation in all its semiotic complexity and richness'" (Blakesley qtd. in Sheridan et al. xiv). Theatrical expression's flexible, broad, multimodal set of symbols and ability to describe experience in its all its complexity is, according to DCRI theory, an important part of what makes it valuable to democratic cultural production.

Amidst this rich symbol system Flanagan Davis positions the whole human as live theater's primary and most powerful medium of communication; the whole human as a medium of communication is likewise important to DCRI theory. The medium of whole humans, according to Flanagan Davis, facilitates empathy in a way other mediums cannot. Audiences are not asked to experience feelings of pain through words about pain, through an image about pain, through sounds about it, through a moving picture about it, but rather by seeing some (or all) of

[38] Flanagan Davis was familiar with Langer's work.

those things accompanied by a live body in the room acting out the experience of pain in a public setting. The embodied nature of theatrical expression and its requirement for the audience's bodily presence often brings experiences associated with private settings—emotional breakdowns, revelations, the insides of the slums—into a "public" setting: an arena filled with people. Reading about someone's pain through a page or witnessing it through a screen, alone in private space, is admittedly different than witnessing someone's pain exposed in a room physically populated with viewers. In addition, because Flanagan Davis views all theater as involving symbols, staged bodies in pain are not just bodies in pain, but bodies symbolizing groups of people, groups of private experiences thrust forward into a public spotlight. This helps to reveal why theater stands to engage empathy and understanding across experience more so than other art forms: there is no illusion of distance. Bodily pain is represented through physical bodies not distanced or dissected from them. This also, however, reveals why live theater may be better suited to express the experiences of marginalized groups than other forms of address: the struggles of marginalized groups have a history of being considered "private" (household economics and slavery were "private"; domestic abuse was "private"). The medium of theater is known and expected to bring private, bodily experiences into a public setting.

It is also important to DCRI theory that the medium of theater is known for its use of narrative, performative, and embodied rhetoric—modes shown time and again to have special importance for groups historically excluded by traditional, liberal public sphere models. Modern cultural production rhetoricians Michael Warner and Eleanor Long both explore how narrative, performative, and embodied ways of communicating are used by marginalized groups to build and maintain cultural attitudes, preferences, ideologies, and ultimately publics, especially in the face of mainstream institutions that police or ignore countercultural identities. Warner engages

with the embodied and performative "poetic world-making" strategies queer men and drag performers have used to develop and circulate their own counterpublics (114). Long, similarly, explores how groups who fall "in the shadow" of mainstream economic and political institutions use embodied and performative communication to develop cultural resistance and prevent being blacked out, so to speak, by mainstream shadows, focusing more on class and race than sexuality (140). She also explores narrative's special effectiveness in helping audiences to empathize with the experiences of such marginalized people (83). Thus, in addition to being well equipped to inspire empathy through a broad vocabulary of symbols and the use of the human body as a medium, theater is also theoretically more inviting to culturally marginalized groups simply because embodied, performative rhetorical engagement is likely to be familiar and important to those groups, a kind of rhetoric that they engage with often as a means of cultural survival. Thus, in order for a democratic rhetorical-cultural infrastructure to effectively welcome marginalized groups to the table, we must recognize that theater's narrative, embodied, and performative rhetorical qualities are part of its strength.

Implementing DCRI Theory Today

I now turn to arguments about how rhetoricians can implement DCRI theory today. Because one of Flanagan Davis's main contributions is her argument for an *infrastructure*, understanding how and where aspects of this infrastructure could exist today is critical for seeing the current value of her arguments. While the re-creation of an infrastructure similar to the FTP would be the most ideal outcome of this project, specific plans for such a re-creation are beyond the scope of this project and thus are not given much time here. I do, however, recommend keeping the possibility of such an ideal re-creation in mind as a far-off goal while reading through my recommendations for more manageable ways to apply DCRI theory. The possibility

of such an ideal helps to illustrate the radical potential of DCRI theory and what it stands to yield if supported by government officials or (perhaps even better) by major media production and distribution companies. For the remainder of this chapter I focus on how rhetoric and composition scholars and educators can implement DCRI theory as a lens for approaching, analyzing, and contributing to multimodal cultural production rhetoric through two existing infrastructures: internet media-sharing platforms, and rhetoric and composition classrooms.

Applying DCRI Theory to Internet Media-Sharing

To explain how DCRI theory can be applied to today's internet media-sharing platforms, it is necessary to first address why I believe such media-sharing platforms are equipped to carry out work similar to the FTP. When the FTP was alive, talking films ("talkies") had become newly popular, the telephone was just becoming a standard household item, and news was predominantly spread via radio and newspaper. Nevertheless, Flanagan Davis somehow envisioned a rhetorical infrastructure that facilitated a nationwide network of multimodal cultural expression, as well as aggregated, synthesized, and circulated information about those expressions throughout the country. In other words, for the lack of communication media available to her, she envisioned something remarkably similar to the internet's media-sharing platforms. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that a rhetorical theory built from her arguments provides special insight into how we can engage internet-based media-sharing platforms as rhetorical infrastructures for democratic cultural production.

Many internet media-sharing platforms already do some of the same work Flanagan Davis believed the FTP could do, giving citizens both the ability to contribute cultural expressions online and a chance to respond to the cultural expressions of others through commenting and other dialogic ways of expressing opinions, such as the "thumbs up/down," "liking," or rating features seen on many media-sharing sites. When music-sharing platforms

were first created, for example, many of my musician friends proclaimed that the internet would usher in a new age of music—one in which musicians and audiences would no longer have to rely on record labels as intermediary interfaces, and what was popular would be determined by direct interactions between musicians and audiences instead of CEOs in an office. What they were talking about was the democratization of music as a cultural industry, the dispersing of power to select what music would be associated with different times, places, and groups of people. Like the FTP, the internet's many media-sharing platforms have, I would argue, to a rather remarkable degree, brought "the American audience and the American artists face to face" ("Unemployed Arts" 2). Justin Bieber, for example, arguably one of the biggest pop icons of 2010s, is known for getting his start, in large part, due to YouTube videos of him singing, that is: the number of direct audience responses to his personally released material on an internet media-sharing platform is partly what led him to be recognized and signed to a label; he was, however, still signed to a label (Adib).

However, as noted in the third component of DCRI theory, theater's use of the whole human body in live space is partly responsible for its success as a medium for democratized cultural exploration (in that it facilitates greater empathy with audiences and places a private, embodied experience in the public eye). Recorded theater (like that circulated through internet media-sharing sites) doesn't thrust a body into a public space in exactly the same way as live theater, and thus, according to DCRI theory, would have less of a potential impact on empathy and understanding across difference than live theater. However, recorded theatrical expressions contain many of the other important rhetorical qualities of live theatrical expressions (flexible set of symbols, *recorded* human bodies as a medium, narrative structure, performativity, etc.) and thus are equipped to support democratic cultural building in many of the same ways.

In fact, the argument that social media is doing the work of democratizing cultural production isn't new to rhetoric. Many scholars have begun exploring the internet and social media sites as democratic spaces, spaces for activism, for asserting culture, and for cultivating social movements. A special issue of the *Journal of Communication* from April 2012, for example, focuses entirely on how social media engages with political change. The introduction to this issue states, "although social media are generally thought to be democratizing and good for democratic institutions, several of our contributors paint a more complicated picture" (Howard and Parks 360). As this collection brings into focus, the internet's platforms are only as democratic as they are structured, designed, and regulated to be. Social access in itself does not make a media-sharing platform democratic or democratizing. That is, as the above special issue reveals, we cannot take for granted that social media are inherently or naturally democratic, despite their incredible democratizing potential.

I propose that DCRI theory works as a lens through which to read media-sharing platforms, a lens that may help us discern how potentially democratic or not those platforms are. I do not mean to argue that the FTP is the ideal democratic cultural media-sharing infrastructure, but rather that the theory I've built from Flanagan Davis's arguments points us towards such an ideal. We can measure media-sharing platforms against this ideal as a way to explore their democratizing potential, but also to identify ways to increase that potential. I therefore believe the most intuitive application of DCRI theory is in rhetoric and composition research, where it can be used as a lens to explore the democratizing potential of online media-sharing platforms as cultural production infrastructures and make recommendations for improvement.

Rhetoricians have already been doing analytical work very similar to what I propose here. A current trend in rhetoric seems to be analyzing how people use social media, in particular, to

shape culture and democracy, as Catherine Prendergast does in her analysis of Twitter as "an effective platform for public protest" for Black Americans (90) or Frances Shaw in her analysis of Instagram's "Bye Felipe Campaign" and its ability to expose a culture of "harassment and sexual entitlement" from men on dating sites and apps. In addition, many new media scholars have called for greater analytical attention to the concept of multimodal infrastructures. For example, in their article "Infrastructure and Composing: the When of New Media," Danielle Nicole Devoss, Ellen Cushman, and Jeffrey T. Grabill argue that "the processes of new media are very much mediated by the dynamics of infrastructures" and propose that both teachers and students pay greater attention to the infrastructures supporting composition classrooms. Other rhetoricians, like Dawn Shepard, have analyzed how specific dating sites influence and construct user ideas about love through procedural rhetoric and infrastructural qualities (2016). Rhetoricians have thus begun analyzing media-sharing platforms for their democratizing impacts on culture, the cultural trends they reveal, *and* for their infrastructural qualities and impacts. I propose that DCRI theory gives us a heuristic through which to analyze media-sharing infrastructures, specifically for their ability to contribute to the democratization of culture.

Applied as such, DCRI theory asks us to consider the following: Does the infrastructure aim to facilitate cultural expressions? Does it assign stricter, more liberal public sphere rules of representation to those with more rhetorical power within the infrastructure and fewer, more expressive rules to those with less? Does it encourage dialogue between people with different levels of rhetorical power? Does the infrastructure work to decentralize the expressions it facilitates, and if so, how? Does it work to synthesize and organize the expressions it facilitates so as to reveal trends and patterns? Does it circulate those trends and patterns? Does the infrastructure frame itself as *cultural* (that is, does it ask users and audiences to understand the

expressions it facilitates as reflecting upon and shaping culture)? Does the infrastructure allow for flexible, performative, embodied expression and make use of patterned symbolic communication, along with identification and perspective by incongruity?

For example, we might look at Netflix through the lens of DCRI Theory. The GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) organization releases an annual media representation report; the 2017 report reveals that, in 2017, Netflix had more diverse character representation in the areas of gender, race, and sexuality than any other major streaming service, broadcast network or production company. Netflix, has, for example, recruited shows such as *Dear White People*, a television series based on an independent film by the same title. *Dear White People* is centered (rather explicitly) on helping viewers, and specifically white viewers, understand black experiences. How did Netflix discover and decide to put resources towards such a project? What is it about Neflix's infrastructure that allows it to yield more decentralized, diverse character representation than Hulu, Amazon, FX, HBO or Showtime?

The first component of DCRI theory asks us to look further into the infrastructural features of Netflix to find answers. Does Netflix encourage its workers to study audiences? Are directors asked to represent perspectives on changing life? How many voices go into determining what projects are funded by Netflix? As it turns out, Netflix is known for studying its audiences in depth, using analytics and the advantages of internet data compiling to explore, not only what kinds of users watch what shows and movies, but how long certain types of users are prone to watching different things, how often they watch, and when they watch. From 2006-2009 Netflix offered something they called "The Netflix Prize" to anyone with an algorithm that would "substantially improve the accuracy of predictions about how much someone is going to enjoy a

movie based on their movie preferences" (Bulygo).[39] In his article about Netflix's use of analytics, Zach Bulygo explains how traditional television ratings are more like approximations, and green lighting for pilots on traditional television more about "tradition and intuition." Netflix's broad user reach and access to user viewing information allows it to decide its content based on what users are shown to want to see as opposed to "tradition and intuition." While sites like Hulu and Amazon have access to user information like Netflix, the scope of these sites and history of their engagement with video sharing pales in comparison to Netflix's 117.58 million worldwide streaming customers. Thus, we could, with the DCRI theory, conclude that Netflix has a greater diversity of character representation because that is what its users want and respond well to, and because Netflix is better able to (and puts a great amount of resources towards) studying their audiences and giving them what they want—better able to represent the needs and perspectives of their users. We could thus conclude that in listening to and studying audiences, Netflix is able to provide a more accurate representation of what audiences want—the fact that Netflix has a greater diversity of characters than other production companies thus indicates that users likely *want* more diversity in their media.

However, the second component of DCRI theory would also indicate that Netflix has missed an opportunity to use their knowledge of user preferences as an avenue for shaping and reflecting upon culture. The second component states that it is not only important to include many voices in determining which cultural expressions are produced and circulated, but also to organize those results into trends that can be circulated, framing those results as related to and reflective of culture. In other words, by not aggregating and circulating trends in viewership into

[39] Netflix received complaints about the legality of such a study, citing privacy violations. These complaints were settled out of court and the Netflix prize came to an end.

some kind of annual report that encourages readers to view the results as reflections on culture, Netflix reduces its potential to democratize culture.

Let's look at examples of some of the social media sites that *do* work to organize and circulate user trends in a way that asks audiences to see the information as reflective of culture. Interestingly, some of the most detailed annual reports of media sharing framed as cultural analyses come from the dating site OkCupid.com and the pornographic media-sharing site Pornhub.com. OkCupid's yearly report covers things like which genders and races respond the most to which other genders and races as well as common terms listed on dating profiles. Their most famous report used data about message-response rates for different racial groups, cross-referenced with data about how different racial groups answered two questions (is interracial marriage a bad idea? Would you prefer to date someone the same race as you?) to make a compelling argument that white men and women are more racist in their dating preferences than other groups. In 2017, OkCupid noted an increase in the use of the word "woke" along with an increase in political, activist, and feminist terms on profiles, dubbing 2017 the year dating "got woke." By identifying cultural patterns in user trends (racism in dating choices; increasing focus on politics and feminism), OkCupid asks users to see their dating practices as part of bigger cultural patterns. Could awareness of such trends lead users to question their racial dating preferences? Could it embolden them to speak their political opinions in their dating lives?

Similarly, Pornhub's yearly reports provide insights into culture and stand to stimulate changes in how people interact with media-sharing platforms and the socio-political world more broadly. Their report contains a breakdown of preferred pornographic materials for different demographic groups, as well as a breakdown of which groups consume the most pornography, when they consume it, the average length of time someone stays on a page, etc., providing an

interesting look into modern, digital sexuality. The 2017 report reveals that in the past year, users were "more interested than ever before in 'Porn for Women,' . . . the top trending search throughout the year, increasing by over 1400%"; a sex therapist is brought in to comment on the trend: "2017 seems to have been the year where women have come forward to express their desires more openly" (Dr. Laurie Betito). This trend, revealed because Pornhub synthesized and organized information about its media-sharing, not only indicates that women are gaining ownership of their sexuality, but also that regular pornography may not appeal to many women (thus the search for pornographic materials specifically *for women*). More importantly, perhaps, this trend works to shatter many myths about gender, sexuality, porn, and masturbation (namely that such sexual media/activities are just for men/boys). While the OkCupid and Pornhub annual reports could admittedly be more widely circulated, I would argue that they reveal very compelling cultural patterns by allowing the media activity of their users to actively build and shape cultural materials and contribute to cultural understanding. By circulating their reports, OkCupid and Pornhub also ask their users to begin seeing their personal engagement with the sites as connected to cultural patterns; they thus promote a greater awareness of the link between media activity and culture.

One of the strengths of DCRI theory is that it highlights the need for more of these media engagement synthesis reports, but also more rhetorical analysis into what these reports (and any lack thereof) might indicate about culture and how well media-sharing platforms are accomplishing the goal of democratizing cultural production. According to the second component of DCRI theory, OkCupid and Pornhub would be considered more functional democratic cultural production infrastructures than Netflix, as they do more not only to synthesize and organize the expressions they facilitate but also to encourage users to see their

activities as cultural. OkCupid and Pornhub present the cultural perspectives they engage as worthy of study, the trends they reveal worthy as of exploration; DCRI theory asks us to imagine what might happen if Netflix (or Youtube or Facebook) did the same. I believe the potentials would be radical, as these sites engage a very large portion of the population and thus, likely have enough information to reveal a great wealth of trends and reach a lot of people.

Now to turn a more critical lens on these ideas: Sheridan et al. argue that big, commercial media production companies have too much control over culture. We've been talking about some pretty big, commercial media companies here. If Netflix studies audiences to give them what they want solely because they want to increase their number of paying members and profits, and as a result Netflix gains even more than their current share of power over cultural production media, can we really say that this is potentially democratizing? If Pornhub circulates its reports, similarly, in hopes of increasing viewers and profits and in turn acquires a greater monopoly over the porn industry, is that democratizing? I think the answer is a tentative and qualified maybe—the impacts these companies have could be democratizing *if* all tenants of DCRI theory were also met. Users would have to be aware that their information was being studied for trends and included in the circulation of those trends—they'd have to be in on the process. Representative, liberal sphere rhetorical rules would also need to be enforced on those with more power in the company, and audiences encouraged to value differences of opinion through much of the media produced.

I think this is one of the most compelling aspects of DCRI theory: it actually aligns, in some ways, with the goals of commercial media companies. Decentralization through the studying of audiences/customers seems to yield financial success with audiences/customers (at least in the world of media production). Democratizing culture through media could thus, in part,

be compatible with capitalism. This is where breaking things down into intentions and effects is helpful: even if Netflix isn't intending to democratize culture, by studying and appealing to a broad audience base, they somehow have produced more shows (*Dear White People*, *Atypical*, *Orange is the New Black*, etc.*)* that represent marginalized experiences in nuanced ways than any other production company, *and it's profiting them*. Being a giant, profit-driven corporation certainly makes the potential for corruption and censorship high (when money talks, many voices stand to be left out), which is why the rhetorical rules/expression continuum is necessary for this theory to hold together. While not every component of DCRI theory may be very appealing to all companies or capitalistic goals, I think DCRI theory brings up an interesting relationship between democratizing culture and increasing media company profits that is worth exploring more in future research. Why do OkCupid and Pornhub circulate their user trends? Does it benefit them? Wouldn't that allow other companies to use their research? Could an argument be made that more intentional engagement in democratizing culture stands to increase media company profits and make them more competitive? Does a democratizing cultural production infrastructure necessarily have to be run by a public or non-profit institution? That is, is it possible for corporate, commercial media to play a bigger role in democratizing culture, or does their corporate, commercial nature negate this potential?

As can be seen, DCRI theory gives us an idealized vision of a democratic cultural production infrastructure against which to measure existing internet media-sharing platforms for their democratic potential, and brings up a lot of questions in the process. I call for rhetoricians to do more of this research into media sharing platforms as cultural-rhetorical infrastructures, using DCRI theory to analyze how such platforms decentralize culture, but also how they organize and circulate expression and how they encourage users to see expressions as cultural

materials (or not). By engaging in and publishing such research—even if we can't convince commercial media to more intentionally engage in cultural democratization—we can help to encourage a culture which reads online media-sharing critically and increasingly looks to online media-sharing as a place for exploring and working out culture in democratic terms.

We can also work towards these goals by asking students to approach media-sharing platforms as potentially democratic cultural production infrastructures and engaging them in an exploration of the questions stimulated by DCRI theory. For example, students could be asked to generate research into online media-sharing trends, to find ways to represent these trends, and to analyze how accurately they feel the trends represent culture. Students could be asked to explore what they think "culture" itself is, where it is that they think we build culture, where it is we look for and learn culture? We can work to make the internet's radical possibilities—democratized control over information and cultural production—known to them and ask them to interrogate how well current media-sharing platforms work to accomplish this goal. In taking this approach to teaching, we not only give students access to engaging in cultural production as Sheridan et al. recommend; we also give them the tools to begin synthesizing and understanding culture as a complex, evolving pattern worth our time and attention and possible to study.

But, as noted, online media platforms don't involve any in-person, embodied communication, and as such, are lacking a bit in terms of DCRI's third tenant. Classrooms, however, are a different story. I believe, in alignment with Sheridan et al., that we should see our classrooms, not only for spaces to talking about the democratization of culture, but also as spaces *for* the democratization of culture. In the sections below I explain how we can use DCRI theory to read and structure our own classrooms and our approach to higher education more broadly

(rather than, as I describe here, how we can use DCRI theory as a lens we assign in our classrooms).

Applying DCRI Theory in Classrooms

Rhetoric and composition classrooms make up the other currently existing infrastructure through which I believe we can enact DCRI theory. Rhetors have, for a while now, understood the classroom as a space for engaging students in creating and shaping public, cultural materials. Sheridan et al., for example, argue that we should engage students in multimodal cultural production rhetoric as a means of participating directly in the democratization of cultural production. They even recommend having students compose Living Newspapers, identifying the genre as one promising type of cultural production rhetoric. They position the classroom not only as a space for studying and engaging with cultural production infrastructures but also *as a cultural production infrastructure itself*. I propose that DCRI theory be used as a lens to analyze how equipped our classrooms are to democratize cultural production, as well as a guideline for structuring our classes to better achieve such cultural democratization.

One way to do this is by asking students to compose cultural materials. I took Sheridan's advice (and Flanagan Davis's lead) and asked students in three of my composition classes to research, compose, and do rough walk-through performances of Living Newspapers, positioning our class as a theatrical cultural production infrastructure. I allowed students to pick the social issues they researched and explored through their scripts, and, to be true to the montage-format of the genre, had each student in each group write their own scene, and then combine their scenes with others in their group (all dealing with the same social issue) to create 5-6 scene play. I conducted classroom research on the whole process, and while I do not go into depth about the research process or results here (simply because it is beyond the scope of this project), I do want to discuss an interesting thing that happened: students specifically commented that the project

caused them to feel more involved in social issues outside the class, to feel as though the "social" in social issues was something that they were a part of, something that in a way belonged to them. Several students reported such feelings unprompted, in notes to me at the end of their final papers and reflections, writing things such as "I don't usually say things like this but. . . . after your class I feel as another person, a person that is more interested in what is happening around me. Before the class I rarely read the news now I do it daily." While not every student reported such profound changes, I believe this illustrates the democratizing potential of positioning the classroom as a theatrical democratic cultural-rhetorical infrastructure—it has the ability to help students feel as though cultural and social issues belong to them, as though they are both a part of culture and responsible for shaping it. I would thus like to validate Sheridan et al.'s recommendation: Living Newspapers, as a composition activity, do seem to help students see themselves as actively shaping and engaging with social and cultural trends through composition. The genre provides a way to engage students in cultural production and frames the classroom as a space for engaging with culture (something I will explore further in future research).

Unlike analyzing internet media-sharing, asking students to compose Living Newspapers means invoking the live, whole human as a medium. Students consistently remarked at how much they enjoyed composing "blocking": the parts of the script that describe setting, the movement of actors, the faces and emotions that go along with certain lines—all of the script's clues that aren't dialogue. This indicates that there is something enjoyable about writing the whole human body, something students found compelling and somehow "both natural and foreign." I propose that scriptwriting's use of the whole human as its medium, discussed in component three of DCRI theory, stands to improve the ability of a classroom to function as a

democratic cultural infrastructure because composing through the whole human brings issues of representation and fairness to the forefront—there is a kind of uncomfortable intimacy that comes with writing someone else's body movements, an intimacy that asks students to think about the embodied realities of the people they represent in their writing. While there is certainly the potential for unfair representation, mockery, the expression of undemocratic opinions through student compositions, I found that students were actually far more careful and less defensive in their representation of stakeholders *in the scripts they wrote*, than they were in the research papers they wrote. I think this connection, between composing words versus composing bodies and the level of care and defensiveness found in representation, is worth exploring more in future composition research. Thus, I would like to argue that while DCRI theory can be applied to *recorded* theatrical expressions to analyze cultural production, it is important that we also find ways to facilitate the creation of live, embodied theatrical expressions as part of cultural production, as such creations require an embodied awareness of representation—something I believe is necessary for democracy's functioning.

Related to representation, DCRI theory, applied to our classrooms, also provides insight into the relationship between the teacher and student and how to construct that relationship in such a way as to optimize the classroom's democratizing impact. Critical literacy scholars, such as Ira Shor and Peter Elbow, have long debated strategies for mitigating any negative influence the instructor's authoritative position has over students' ability to engage with democratic concepts and practices. The liberal to expressive continuum of rhetorical power/rules contributed by DCRI theory (Table 1 above) aligns with several strategies already used by critical literacy pedagogues to mitigate the instructor's authoritative position: encouraging dialogue between

teachers (those with more power) and students (those with less), and requiring teachers to abide by stricter rhetorical rules than students because of their power (Mike Rose; Stephen Parks).

This continuum, however, also presents a new strategy for mitigating power differences to create a classroom capable of democratic cultural production: have the teacher function as a facilitator of student cultural/civic expression and deliberation and as a *representative* of such expression and deliberation—responsible for synthesizing and circulating student engagement in one way or another (for example, by discussing thematic trends in student writing or by having students anonymously rate their experiences with peer review and posting the ratings on the board). Teachers could explain the continuum above to students and ask them to consider where they might be on this continuum at different points throughout the class, throughout their lives; where the teacher might be; where the people they research might be, emphasizing the need to shift the degree of self-expression and other-representation based on power status. Representing others involves listening and bracketing self-interest at least to a degree. Often we ask students to represent the opinions and perspectives of others through research, which puts them in a position of representational power. However, we rarely ask them to experience or reflect on what it is *to be represented* or to be in a position of less representational power. Perhaps this is because we assume they experience that enough in the outside world, but in the outside world, they may not reflect on such a position, may not consciously engage with such, may not be aware that their experiences of being falsely represented are common, may not have any practice of speaking back to such representations. If we, as teachers, begin to find ways to represent student perspectives in class (aggregating opinions into charts, for example), we can give students the chance to explore the experience of being both the representor and the represented, and therefore give them practice with how political, rhetorical power is actually supposed to be distributed in

representative democracies: through the representation of those with less power by those with more. In other words, DCRI theory not only advocates giving students reflective experiences in multiple places on the continuum to educate them for engagement but also asks teachers to honestly address the power difference between students and teachers and to mitigate that experience by actively working to represent student opinions.

This way of mitigating power actually positions the process of conducting classroom research on students as desirable, having a potentially democratizing influence. Classroom research requires the teacher to represent students to some degree, and ethical classroom research requires students be made aware of and consent to their being represented. I argue that the more a class engages in dialogue over such representation, the more theoretically democratic the resulting representations would be. (I might add that this would hold true for all human-subject research, not only that within a classroom.) A teacher might ask students how they want their work represented; who they want representations to reach; what concerns they have about being represented. Such discussions would undoubtedly impact the way students not only understand themselves as represented but also how they embark on the task of representing others.

Conclusion

In sum, we can implement DCRI theory as a lens in our own research and the research we ask students to do, but we can also use DCRI theory as a lens through which to question and increase the ability of our classrooms to participate in democratizing culture. While Flanagan Davis resisted explaining what the FTP would look like in an ideal, utopian sense, the theory presented by this project helps to articulate what such an ideal would be, motivated by Flanagan Davis's arguments and refined through modern rhetorical scholarship. This ideal gives us a kind

of vision against which to compare and contrast different media-sharing infrastructures today, online and in the classroom.

What is at stake here, as Sheridan et al. have articulated, is "nothing less than who owns culture" and therefore, nothing less than who gets to shape human consciousness and the way we think about different people and groups. I would add to Sheridan et al.'s assertion that the ability of citizens to effectively engage in political decision-making is also at stake. Democratic cultural-rhetorical infrastructures stand to allow countries to finally understand themselves as *polycultural*—that is, as countries full of people who are culturally similar in some ways and different in other ways, as countries whose similarities and differences can be understood and appreciated as a creating complex and beautiful patterns of culture. From this understanding, I believe we can better arrive at policies that will help as many as possible lead the best lives as possible within the cultural fabric of any given country.

The prime contribution of this work—in addition to bringing Hallie Flanagan Davis into the rhetorical parlor—is that it provides a heuristic or lens through which to analyze existing media-sharing platforms and structures—a lens through which to explore how well they not only decentralize, but also synthesize, organize, and circulate trends about culture; how well they invite citizens into shaping cultural materials and into analyzing and making sense of those materials as cultural artifacts. DCRI theory not only gives us an ideal vision of a democratic cultural-rhetorical production infrastructure; as a lens, it also helps us work towards shaping the media-sharing avenues available to us so that they are better able to explore and reveal polycultural patterns and, thereby, ultimately better able to help citizens understand culture in a way that can improve both the quantity and quality of democratic engagement.

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ABSTRACT

DEMOCRATIZING CULTURAL PRODUCTION: A THEORY CULTIVATED WITH HALLIE FLANAGAN DAVIS

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The gaps this dissertation fills are two-fold. First, I recover an important but overlooked female rhetorician from the interwar period, Hallie Flanagan Davis. Flanagan Davis was the national director of the American Federal Theatre Project (1935-1939), a project referred to as "one of the most important things that ever happened in a democratic government" (Orson Welles), but I would add that she was also an insightful cultural critic and rhetorical activist. She wrote several books and many articles and speeches, but declined to ever write down her ideal visions or theories about how theater could improve democracy, explaining the urge as "tempting" but that her focus was, instead, on capturing the stories of her work and the lessons gleaned from those stories (Letter to Malcolm Cowley). Through extensive archival research, grounded theory methodology, and the help of a modern rhetorical lens, I analyze Flanagan Davis's arguments and practices, and work to cultivate them into rhetorical theory that can be applied today. This cultivated rhetorical theory—which I refer to as Democratic Cultural-Rhetorical Infrastructure (DCRI) theory—fills a second gap by providing insight into how to democratize the production and analysis of culture, and encourage dialogue and appreciation across groups who understand themselves to be different: prominent concerns for public sphere rhetoricians and critical literacy pedagogues (Long, Parks, Sheridan, Warner). I argue that DCRI

theory is increasingly relevant and applicable today, as theatrical expressions are easier to circulate than ever before (through our many media-sharing platforms), and cultural divisiveness, at least in America in the year 2018, seems to be higher than ever.