Capital, Contract, and the Conditions of Contention:

an Ethnographic Account of the 2009 Occupation of the Visteon UK Plant in Belfast

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Abstract

This paper anthropologically unpacks the 2009 occupation of the Visteon UK factory in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It asserts the centrality of the contract as an equivalent value-form in the relations of capitalism and asserts that the constructive capacities of capitalist state effects maintain this value-form as part of their primary function: the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist commodity production. The Belfast occupation was made possible by both the relations of production and production's relation to the capitalist state, though the other myriad conditions which allowed this radical undertaking are also accounted for. While class and solidarity are certainly mobilizing concepts for this thesis, my research problematizes the idea of class-consciousness by explaining the utilization of the contract fetish as a catalyst for radical action. This paper is the result of eleven days of fieldwork and interviews with several key figures in the occupation and its community of support.

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This thesis is dedicated to my grandfather, Chris Haidinger.

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Introduction

This paper examines the theoretical underpinnings and the empirically accessible conditions of the occupation by workers of the Visteon UK plant in Belfast during the Spring of 2009. It contributes to the anthropological study of labor under capitalism and hopes to offer a useful account to future labor activists of this rare instant of a basically successful occupation. My central argument is that, in light of the fact that the class of workers in a production scheme are at all times in direct contact with the materials of production over which they expend their labor power, yet, in normal circumstances they do nothing to "revolutionize production" by overthrowing the owners of those materials as predicted by Marx, a condition of uneven relations is largely maintained through the establishment of the 'contract' as an equivalent value-form which permits individual acts between the laboring class and the capitalist class in a given system of production to be legitimized and evaluated relative to the absolute value of the contract. In centralizing the contract as our theoretical linchpin, the importance of the capitalist state comes to the fore and thus this thesis is also a test-case for the anthropological study of the capitalist state and its effects. Finally, I account for the web of conditions in which this occupation took place to both problematize and reinforce my Marxian and post-structuralist framework.

The Belfast occupation is a singular historical event with broad ethnological linkages and implications and for that reason the reader will find this to be a discursive account webbing together many disparate phenomena of social life. Therefore, this paper has been divided into three related chapters: Chapter I establishes the case of the Belfast occupation and its general significance from a historical and journalistic perspective as well as my own methodologies and theoretical motivations for piecing this case together. Chapter II is a

highly theoretical treatise on capitalist labor, the state, and its corollaries through which I establish the significance of my case to the anthropological discourse on social exchange in capitalism. Chapter III is a quasi-narrative account of the social, political, and economic conditions cobbled together primarily from interviews with key informants and textual research.

The potential, or lack thereof, for workers under capitalism to collectivize contention or production has been a leading problem in Marxian literature since its inception. Anthropology has taken this question up as well, though it has commonly focused on subtle forms of resistance to domination (Scott 1985, Ong 1987), synchretic resistance to colonial capitalism (Taussig 1980), the globalization effect of mobile capital (Rothstein 1992), or the hegemonic struggle over political representation (Roseberry 1994). Efforts to produce working-class ethnographic accounts have underlined the need for a holistic view of class and have looked at the production process of capitalism as only one of its many intersecting determinates (cf. Kalb 1997, Kasmir 2005, Munk 1985). While supporting this view, this paper nonetheless puts heavy emphasis on the (post)structural logic of capitalism and the capitalist state and sees in their foundations the potential for the radical re-organization of labor into tactics of contention like the Belfast occupation. I combine the anthropological view of the state as "state-effects" (Trouillot 2001, Ferguson and Gupta 2002, Poulantzas 2000) with the Marxian "strategic-relational approach" (Jessop 2002) to explore the significance of the contract as an equivalent value form which allowed the grievances of the Visteon workers to be mobilized into legitimate actions.

This thesis has two audiences. Firstly, it is written for the academic who is, like me, endeavouring to unearth the fundamental mechanics of capitalism and to understand the conditions of those people and places which collectively assemble its totality. Secondly, this

paper is written for the labor organizer; while the theoretical language in Chapter II will no doubt be difficult to follow for those not immersed in the literature of post-structural sociology, Marxian, or social anthropological literature, Chapter III will be useful to the potential activist as a detailed account of the conditions surrounding the occupation and how each related to the successes and failures therein. I therefore hope to contribute to both the study of labor under capitalism and its struggle.

Chapter I: March 31st, 2009 - Belfast

James, long-time production worker:

> Well it wasn't a total surprise that it was closing, you know? But what was a big surprise was Ford didn't really behave honourably. One of the sort of turning points was when they were told the place was closing, "You've no redundancy, you've no pension, and you've got six minutes to get out." The guys went in and some started getting changed in the locker room. And there was a man there who had been.. he had been there I think about 34 years, 34 years of constant service, and he was coming near to retirement and he looked down and started to- he started to cry. And of the younger people around him turned around and said, "You know what? This is absolutely wrong. He's been a sort of grandad figure to us, and this is completely wrong! This cannot be allowed to happen to this man. 34 years and he is about to be thrown into the scrapheap with absolutely no prospect for a job and he lost his pension and no redundancy." So people turned around and they said, "No, we're standing!" And people who had maybe been not political turned around and went, just from a human decency point of view, "This can't be right. No, we're not taking this."

Gerry Campbell, retired staff shop steward:

> So they boys rang me, one of the lads rang me that morning. I had actually retired on the 31st of January after 30 years but I still kept me contacts. So one of the boys rang me around a quarter to twelve saying, "Gerry, the administrators are in the factory and they are calling around some of the managers and senior trade unionists," and at five-to-twelve he rings back says, "Look, we were told we are in administration and to clear the building," and I said from the phone, "Occupy the building!" "What? What?" "Occupy the building! I'll be up in a few minutes." It was just a knee-jerk reaction. Do not leave the building if you leave the buliding we'll lose everything. So we occupied the buliding.

John Maguire, Unite the Union convenor and production worker:

> Obviously I wanted to be speaking to the membership so i said, "Well, let me speak to the membership see whether they're prepared to leave the plant," sort of pretended I was half agreeing with them. He left the canteen and I spoke to the membership, at that point I asked them to occupy the plant but I didn't need to, they were going to do it anyway. So while the administrator was back around in the management office we were out taking the cameras down, chaining the gates. I then was called back round to the office. The

> management were there with the administrator and they said, "Now we're gettin the police about gettin' you's off the plant," they had two armed body guards on the plant at this time as well. So i said to the manager, "Open that window," he looked out and he seen everybody standin' at the gates. At this point there was some other people from other organizations comin' onto the plant. I told the management and the administrator, "The problem won't be gettin us out, the problem will be gettin you out."

1.1 The Special Case of the Belfast Visteon Occupation[1]

On March, 31st 2009, the employees of the Visteon UK car-part manufacturing plant in Belfast are told that their company is bankrupt and they have all become redundant. They are given six minutes to collect their things and evacuate the plant. Since the company was bankrupt, no redundancy pay would be meted-out and their pension contracts would not be honoured. Within minutes the entire plant is occupied by the now-unemployed workers and within the first few hours local community members, political organizations, and media are already starting to line up at the south entrance thus initiating a seven-week-long stand-off between the occupiers, Visteon, and eventually the Ford Motor Company with whom most of the striking workers had signed their contracts. The next morning workers from the two Visteon UK plants in Basildon and Enfield, England follow suit and attempt to occupy their own plants in solidarity with Belfast, though with markedly different results. The Enfield occupation lasts for about a week with comparatively little community support but some measure of ideological support from a variety of leftist groups and news agencies. By contrast, the Basildon event can only be called an 'occupation' for the first hour or so; with zero community support it quickly turns to office vandalism and picketing.

These actions appear to be part of a broader trend in the UK, indeed to some extent the entire world, of factory and workplace occupations as a demonstration of labor grievances. It

1 The events recounted in this section have been pieced together from the interviews of seven key informants; however, I initially became aware of the occupation through reports on *libcom.org,* especially those of Red Marut (2009), Thorne (2009), Woodward (2009), and three articles by Steven (2009). This event was also covered by major news organizations (cf. BBC News 2009).

is a tactic which is openly unlawful and aggressive and, in the UK at least, is discouraged by the official unions to whom these workers belong due to the institutional danger posed by its illegality.

Moreover, there is a clear connection between the Visteon UK events and the occupations that occurred at the Vestas plant on the Isle of Wight, the Lewisham Bridge Primary School and the Thomas Cooke travel agency in London later that month as well as with a similar event that preceded the Belfast occupation at the Waterford Crystal plant in the Republic of Ireland in January of 2009. The standard features of all these events include [1] a closure or threat of closure of the workplace, [2] no *official* union support in the occupations, and, most importantly of all, [3] the initial participants in the occupation itself are actual laborers in the occupied plants or workplaces, that is to say, these are specifically worker actions as opposed to actions of political parties or external interest groups.

As for the Visteon occupiers, the workers were eventually awarded the largest redundancy package in UK labor history with full-time workers receiving two-years full pay and part-timers receiving eighteen months; however, their pensions, though supposedly won, have yet to materialize. Now, a year after the end of the occupation, the means through which these former occupiers will continue to fight for their pensions are largely unknown and the possibility for their full realization can be called into doubt. With Ford/Visteon's production network restored, they may lack the leverage they need to force capital into compliance. "People are fighting them in the court and every time they talk about fighting Visteon the name Ford keeps coming up," says retired staff shop steward for Unite the Union, Gerry Campbell:

> It is a dirty thing that they did and they did not need the dirt. It was one of the best things we ever did. Everybody came out of their feeling morally high that they had done something illegal. People who never broke a law in their lives had done something illegal and felt

good about it. That is a change.

Regardless of what may happen in court, however, the 2009 Belfast Visteon occupation has made history in Northern Ireland, indeed in the worker's movement as a whole, if such a thing can be said to exist. It stands among the very few global examples of a fundamentally successful act of radical labor resistance and is therefore a singular anthropological subject.

1.2 Theoretical Motivations and Methodologies

This thesis seeks to ethnographically unpack the conditions that made this occupation possible and establish the significance of this event to contemporary social theory as well as contribute to the anthropological study of capitalist labor. It is the result of eleven days of fieldwork in Belfast conducted from May 1st through May 11th, 2010 and is primarily based on data produced from seven in-depth interviews with key figures. Because time was short these interviewees are, for better or worse, positioned to represent their particular social category, therefore, although my informants' accounts were complimentary and without significant disjunct, allowances must be made for possible opinions and viewpoints of other members of their social groups who were not interviewed during my fieldwork. Each interview was semi-structured and, being conscious of my own role in the production of data as an interviewer, the informants were encouraged to direct the course of the discussion themselves (cf. Briggs 1986). The interviews include one middle-aged Visteon Belfast production-line worker named James, a retired staff shop steward for Visteon Belfast named Gerry Campbell who was a central figure of the occupation, another central figure named John Maguire who was the Unite the Union convenor for the Belfast plant and production-line worker, two railway drivers who, apart from founding the anarchist proto-union Organise!, are long-time members of the transport division of Unite the Union and can be regarded as experts in Northern Irish trade unionism, and two members of the International Socialists who spent many days in the

occupied plant as delegates from the Socialist labor Party and who organized several events for the workers during and since the occupation[2]. Additional context was acquired by touring the area of the factory, labor-significant sections of Belfast, and reading journalistic accounts on the subject of the Visteon occupation and relevant related issues.

Because this paper is an ethnographic account of a particular instance of a tactic it would be difficult, and I believe unfair, to reduce this event to a single theoretical argument establishing causality. At the same time, its historical character and limited social scope prevents it from taking on the classical form of an ethnographic monograph. My intellectual methodology partially resembles that of "event structure analysis" in its unpacking of a contingent event in a historical narrative (cf. Griffin 1993); however, instead of employing Weberian counterfactuals to determine causes, a particular obsession of UK and US sociology, my interest is in unearthing the fundamental logics and genetic predispositions of the relational fields of capitalism in which this occupation took place. Such as it is, readers will find the positions presented in this paper more in line with the vaguely Marxian theoretical outlook of Bourdieu than with the social movement school of Charles Tilly, Doug McAdams, David Snow and Sidney Tarrow.

More important than this thesis' (post)structural implications, however, is its usefulness in a field of practice. Therefore, a faithful appraisal of the conditionality of the Visteon occupation, while not claiming to have a causal connection to the tactic's employment, can serve to establish a base-line standard, perhaps a sort of litmus test, in determining the future potential for similar acts of labor contention. While I will offer some general answers to the question, "Why occupation?" based on my informant's responses and my own observations, the more fundamental question is not a "Why?" or a "How?", but rather

2 The fact that all of these informants are male was not a matter of design, merely an unfortunate limitation arising from the brevity of this fieldwork.

a “Should?” Anthropology has much to offer the laborer under capitalism and while the thankfully-outmoded phrase, “Speaking truth to power”, had its decade in the sun, my anthropology must be able to speak in a practicable manner to the 'dis-empowered' and provide, at the very least, some footing for those engaged in a system of relations where the rug is forever being pulled out from underneath them. “What we want is not a theory of domination,” writes John Holloway (2002), “but a theory of the vulnerability of domination” (26).

Chapter II: Anthropology of Capitalism via Labor

As I stated in my introduction, the aim of this paper is two-fold: to establish the relevance of the formal tactic of occupation to the current social anthropological discussions on capitalism and its social realities and to present a holistic account of the Visteon occupation in Belfast from which practicable lessons can be learned and applied to future labor struggles; this latter aim will occupy the third chapter of this thesis while the former will be the subject of this chapter. In light of this division of labor, Chapter II is portioned into several related sections: an anthropological theory of capitalist labor (2.1), the capitalist state and its effects (2.2-2.4), their synthesis in the equivalent value-form of the contract (2.5), fetishism and debt (2.6), and finally how each of these factors are embedded in the tactic of factory occupation (2.7).

2.1 Looking a Capitalist Labor and Class as an Anthropological Object

The occupation, when boiled down to its basest component parts, was essentially the application of labor power to the materials of production in a way precisely antithetical to capitalist production. This inversion reveals just how central the fact of worker alienation from the ownership of the materials of production is to the normal function of capitalist commodity production. Such alienation is established through the normalization of a hierarchized system of classification through which rights and obligations are parcelled unevenly. Our first task, therefore, is to establish the 'worker' classification itself as an object of study.

Class is a way of knowing the social world by giving particular characteristics the special task of connecting via representation a number of individuals who exhibit such characteristics together as a group with particular obligations and expectations (Bourdieu

1984:467). Following the post-structuralist principle of cognitive materialism (Bourdieu 2003:72), this knowledge reproduces itself in material practice as 'the commonplace' and in doing so reproduces the unevenness of a hierarchized social organization by giving it the appearance of normalcy or necessity (Bourdieu 1984:477). When we speak of class in the capitalist production apparatus, we are necessarily speaking of a normalized hierarchy. This is not to say that classification is the cause of hierarchy, but the institutionalized reproduction of the conditions of that classification ensure hierarchy's (re)generation. What are these conditions? The multivariate disconnections between the direct control a worker has over the materials of production through his labor power and his simultaneous lack of control over the fate of those materials, disconnections made possible by the sale of a worker's labor power to an owner of those materials (Marx 1999 [1867]:110).

While efforts have been made in some studies to establish an objective differentiation of 'white-collar' labor as either a “new working class” who supplants and de-claws the the classical industrial laborer (Touraine 1987) or as a sub-group of the bourgeoisie and therefore fundamentally antagonistic to the traditional worker (Miliband 1991:62), others have established a tendency towards solidarity by all those who contribute to the production of capital yet are denied ownership of it be they production-line workers or salaried engineers (Mann 1981:69). As will be made clear in the following chapter, both “hourly” and “staff” workers, otherwise known as production-line labor and design/engineering labor, at Visteon united together against the class of owners; however, one of my informants did suggest that prior to the occupation some tension did exist between the two groups and each had their own union shop steward though they were all members of Unite. An anthropological employment of the class concept must allow for any number of configurations or expressions of class and should therefore avoid mystifying the working class as something primordial or precedent of

constantly renegotiated practices.

While sections 3.3 and 3.5 trace the the growth of solidarity of the Visteon workers and those in Belfast society with whom they found themselves standing, it was not only the occupiers and their supporters who mobilized a capitalist classificatory scheme; the Visteon and Ford administrations employed an instrumental class concept as well, even if it was never reflexively identified on those terms[3]. The very fact that both staff and hourly workers at the Belfast plant were treated equally by the owners of the plant and the management apparatus that mediated relations between them shows that 'class' is *practised,* not only through workers banding together against a common enemy, but by Capital itself through the preservation of one group's pensions and continued operation at the cost of another's[4]. This fact necessitates an extraordinarily broad scope in order to understand just how such an act of classification through practice, either from 'above' or 'below', is possible; one must explore the global mobility of capital, the governmental apparatuses which protect it, the material exigencies of commodity production, and the relationship of that production to its given locality. The latter two tasks are accomplished in Chapter III while the first two will be addressed in the following section.

While the normal harnessing of labor power to the means of commodity production may be the principle materiality of a "working class" and therefore its most defining element, an anthropological account of worker radicalism must account for both the ethnological environment in which any collection of working people must operate and the contingency of the practice of class itself. "*Data* should be turned into *relata*," writes anthropologist Don Kalb (1997),

> class oriented research should seek to establish the particular character of a whole, socially structured, spatially and temporally

3 See section 2.6
4 See section 3.3

> defined totality of capitalist relationships and development, trace its key mechanisms and divisions, and an explore the capacities and incapacities of its constituent classes to shape their destiny, create meaningful relationships, and envision possible worlds. (261-262)

While my research does not address, nor does it suggest the existence of, collective visions of "possible worlds", and is therefore not an account of revolutionary struggle in Michael Mann's formulation (1981:69), it does support the continued usefulness, perhaps even the necessity, of the class concept in the anthropology of capitalism. "labor and the process of production are not separable from, and opposed to, the social relations of capitalism," asserts Moishe Postone, "but constitute their very core" (1999:71).

For the Visteon occupiers, the working class cannot be assessed as the "key" of an internalized "frame" in the Goffmanian sense (Snow 1997:245), nor seen for its revolutionary potential, "class-for-itself", as many Marxist traditions would emphasize; however a system of classification assembled from the basic process of commodity capitalism was a prerequisite for the radical activation of the Visteon workers in an expression of solidarity against the owners of production. This occupation was therefore not an instance of spontaneous generation of revolt against capitalism, but was in fact stitched together by the very threads of capitalism's fraying fabric.

Finally, it must be made clear that is this not a paper about resistance like much anthropological literature on capitalism has been; canonical studies like Aihwa Ong's (1987) account of spirit possession in Malaysian factories, James Scott's (1985) writings on co-opting the language of the exploiter by the exploited Indonesian capitalist farmers, or Jean Comaroff's (1985) analysis of the African Independent Church movement as a form of critical synchretism in rebellion against neo-colonial forces may stir a sense of anthropological romance at sharing a secret joke with the oppressed against a witless oppressor, but in the end they are all about enduring the condition of oppression, not struggle.

While an ethnography of normal commodity production might have included analyses in such a vein, making the forceful occupation of the Belfast Visteon plant my analytical linchpin renders questions of hidden resistance quite moot. I do not believe that my subjects are 'weak' and therefore do not give them the task of resisting those with *more* power; the Belfast occupation begs an entirely contrary argument, that labor power is exactly that, a form of power amongst others, and its application to the materials of production in a collective fashion to press a collective interest was not resisting domination, but rather exerting it. If we take the taxonomy of power of Eric Wolf (1990) to heart, the Visteon case is just as much an exertion of structural, tactical, interpersonal and personal power on the part of the radicalized laborers as it is against or in-spite of these forms as they are exerted by the opposing other, as will become clear in Chapter III. Similar research has been done on American strikes in the 20th century (cf. Fantasia 1988, Kasmir 2005), though it generally has focused on the capacity of trade unionism to act as a jumping-off point for labor contention whereas my research regards trade unionism as only one of many conditions of the successful inversion of normal labor in the case of the Belfast occupation; in fact it is largely *in-spite of* the existing mechanics of UK trade unionism that this action occurred at all.

Having covered the significance of capitalist labor and the classification schemes therein to the 2009 occupation, it is now prudent to analyse the socio-political Petri dish in which this social physiology is cultivated: the Capitalist State.

2.2 A Brief Introduction to the Capitalist State

Though it is of utmost importance to establish the functional relationship the State-form has to the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist commodity production in full in order to grasp the significance of the Belfast occupation, this study is primarily concerned with only one of these conditions: the contract. Therefore, although a brief synopsis of the

principle mechanics of the capitalist state is necessary, the bulk of this section will be devoted to unearthing the structural logic of the equivalent value-form of the contract in the mechanics of the State and the state-effects which perpetuate its existence.

For our case, the Capitalist State, or even the state of capitalism, is best understood as the institution through which the conditions for capitalist production are reproduced (Althussar 1971), through which the self-destructive tendencies of capitalism and its markets are meliorated (Jessop 2002), and through which the properties, rights, and obligations which collectively form the functional logic of commodity production via alienated labor-power can be guaranteed (Harvey 2001:273). While the classical Marxist image of the state as the mediator between the needs of a community and the infinite aspirations of selfish individuals or between dominant and subordinate classes (Lenin 1999 [1918]), has yet to fully outlive its usefulness in certain situations, a holistic approach to the capitalist state cannot be content with a mere balancing equation, precisely the heart and attraction of the state-as-mediator perspective. Nor can we rest on the assumption that the State in capitalism is the simply the middle-management of the 'ruling classes' (Miliband 1991:15); as Bob Jessop (1977) points out, the State regularly acts against the interests of individual capitalists in the process of reproducing the conditions of capitalist production (366).

Before coming to the question of the internal physiology of the capitalist state as a series of effects which guarantee the reproduction of capitalism and its operative logic, some attention must be paid to the externality of the territorial state as part and parcel of global capitalism since this was the pathway by which the Visteon company was able to slough off its pension obligations in Belfast by transferring production to South Africa[5]. Building on the Wallersteinian *long durée* view of global capitalism as a relationship between hierarchized geographical classes assembled from Westphalian states (Wallerstein 1991) and in

5 See the sections on the declining factory and on commodity capitalism in Chapter III

contradistinction to the information-age capitalism as a "space of flows" above increasingly outmoded territorial systems (Castells 2000:696), Neil Brenner (1999) has established the centrality of territorial*ization* to global capitalism as a dialectical process of de-territorialization and re-territorialization:

> As capital strives to "jump scale," it is forced simultaneously, on other geographical scales, to reconstitute or create anew viable territorial infrastructures for its circulation process – whether through the reindustrialization and reterritorialization of existent scales or through the construction of qualitatively new scales. (64)

This view will not be problematized here and should be seen as a product of the state effects to which we now turn.

2.3 Capitalist State Effects: Isolation and Spatialization as Relative Emplacement

Regarding the internality of the capitalist state, this paper adopts an anthropological view of the state as "state effects" (cf. Trouillot 2001, Poulantzas 2000, Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Far from being a given concretion, the state is the result of several forms of regularized practice which lend a predictive normalcy and reification to the bureaucracies which enact them while appearing to descend form above; the state is hence an amalgamated category of such effects which has the character of a unified power (Mitchell 1991:93). This approach allows us to avoid over-simplifying the state as a hierarchically bounded territory, conflating the state with government, or being seduced by simple teleological causalities relating to trade and warfare. That said, I find the state-effects approach to be quite compatible with the functionalist conception of the capitalist state outlined above and I will argue in support of the Marxian tradition which claims that the ultimate aim and source of reproduction of these state effects is the maintenance of the capitalist mode of production; this position does not necessitate accepting the capitalist state as an inevitability, but rather claims that such a function is contingent on the regular practice and re-creation of the "state-effects",

the reproduction of which is never assured.

Following anthropologist Marcel-Rolph Trouillot (2001), we will begin with four principal state effects and then, parting with his formulation, I will add another level of abstraction and collapse these four forms into two broader categories of effects: *isolation* and *spatialization* will be recognized as joint acts of relative emplacement and their counterparts, *identification* and *legibility*, as equivalent exchange. Performing this reduction will limit our discussion to a more strictly post-structuralist vocabulary and help to, in the words of Poulantzas (1969), "displacing the epistemological terrain" (69) of critical spatial studies and the instrumental formalism of some Marxian theorists of the State[6].

The *isolation effect* refers to the project of atomization and individualization of subjects, hence their conversion into objects of governance. This is akin to what Henri Lefevbre (2002) calls "catastrophe" in his analysis of capitalist space, the "pulverization" of things and places into newer, smaller, and connectable things and places (89). This includes the objectification of the human individual as a statistical subject, moveable, interchangeable, and fit for governmentality (Foucault 1991). While Anthony Giddens (1990) sees this isolation effect as a defining character of what he calls "modernity", this paper takes a more functionalist or constructivist approach and sees it as a building block of the capitalist State.

The *spatialization effect* Trouillot identifies as the "production of boundaries and jurisdictions" (126) but what we can further complicate with the idea of space-making either through regular 'verticalizing' and 'encompassing' acts of bureaus and their component actors (Ferguson and Gupta 2002) or through the inducement of flows through massive spatial emplacements (Lefevbre 2002). Key theorists who have contributed to spatial theorizing of the State have focused on territorialization (Brenner 1999), seen the state as a spatially contiguous vocabulary of material signifiers which reproduce a state effect (Poulantzas 2000),

6 See the Miliband-Poulantzas debate (Miliband 1973, 1983) (Poulantzas 1969, 1976)

or have concerned themselves with the social space between a government and its citizenry (Castells 2005:11), but it is Lefevbre (2002) who has given space the peculiar honour of being simultaneously the mother and the child of the capitalist State; along with being tasked with producing spaces, the State is claimed to be "born in and with space" (84). This paper departs significantly from the Lefevbrian cosmology. While he attempts to de-fetishize space in the capitalist state by calling into view the instrumentality of space in the reproduction of capitalism, he unfortunately clings to a contract-based statist mysticism; instead of showing that what appears to be neutral space is in fact a mis-recognition of contingent emplacements, he re-fetishizes space by situating it as the stake of class-struggle and confuses the producers of these spaces for their administrators and their consumers. The alienation inherent in the actual material production of these spaces, which are built and maintained by purchased labor power and not *l'hommes d'état* or users, is utterly absent in Lefevbre's formulation (cf. 91) and thus he is obliged to accept the language of 'rights' which Marx (1999 [1867]) long ago identified with bourgeois ideology and the reproduction of capitalist production (106). This paper will avoid mystifying space and state in this manner and instead, following anthropologists James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002), focuses on the contingency of emplacements which precipitate the acts of encompassment, the establishment of a naturalized territory, and verticalization, the institutionalization of hierarchy within these apparent territories.

The sociological outcome of the relative emplacement effects of the state is the contouring of a field of power. Bourdieu defines this phenomenon as "the space of play within which the holders of capital...struggle in particular for power over the state" (1994:5). A field, once established, allows for the transmission of meaning, but for us to conceive of state power and capitalism we must be less concerned with meaning and more concerned with

value, or, as I will argue below, less about identification and legibility and more about about exchange and equivalence.

2.4 Capitalist State Effects: Identification and Legibility as Equivalent Exchange

Trouillot's final two state-effects are so closely linked it is doubtful that one could be conceived of without the other. Firstly, Trouillot traces a path well-worn by Bourdieu (1994) and Michel Foucault (1991) on the *legibility effect* of statecraft which he defines as "the production of both a language and a knowledge for governance and of theoretical and empirical tools that classify and regulate collectivities" (Trouillot 2001:126). The legibility effect of the State is more than simply a system of standardization and sociological rubrics, though such things are necessary for the integration of a large bureaucracy into a productive system of relations; it is the creation of a lexicon which allows meaning, or more accurately, it is the creation of the effect of authorship (authority) of an apparent lexicon. It is also tightly bound to Trouillot's *identification effect* to be addressed next; legibility permits identification and the act of identification reproduces legibility. This promise of permission and (re)production brings us to the question of power in legibility; in keeping with the dialectical mood of Marxian analysis, this paper identifies power as simultaneously power-to and power-over (Holloway 2002:23), or personal and inter-personal power in Eric Wolf's aforementioned taxonomy (1990:586). Legibility permits or enables meaningful relations; in a field of uneven power relations it is not enough that meaning be transmitted, it must be transmitted unevenly for ability and its distribution to be concentrated in the form of an authority such as state representatives: police, judges, offices, and politicians. This concentration is more than simply a fluency in a cultural grammar, it is an accumulation of social profit, getting what you want from who you want; hence the legibility effect which enables actions to be converted into profit must be understood by its capacity to value "social goods" on an equivalent scale

and the resultant profit will be reinvested in this equivalent form which can therefore be seen as hegemonic[7]. This act of profit-making and reinvestment in the production of social goods explains Bourdieu's usage of the word 'capital' to refer to strategically employed and valued social productions (1991:106).

Before continuing on this path, a brief explanation of what I mean by "equivalent value form" seems to be in order as it will occupy the remainder of this chapter in our forthcoming analysis of the contract in the relations of production. The problem of 'value' has recently resurfaced in anthropological literature and David Graeber's (2007) synthesis of this growing cannon should suffice as an overview of its core tenants. 'Value' is the means through which social actors relate themselves to their sociocultural totality, sometimes by means of an equivalent form as in the Visteon case, but more often by "systems of ranking or measurement" and usually through some material "token" acting as a sign of "prestige" (98). While I accept these principles as axiomatic, commodity capitalism and the production thereof requires us to pay special attention to those values which act as equivalent absolutes for uneven exchange. For Marx, the money commodity was unique from all other commodities in that its primary function was to provide an equivalent form of measuring the relative value of all other commodities (1999 [1867]:199). For any uneven exchange to be possible an equivalent absolute value-form must be established against which products, material or social, can be valued and their profitability can be identified. As one can imagine, control over this equivalent value form amounts to control over the logic of valuation itself as well as the flows of social and material capital; legibility enables such flows in the fields of power of the capitalist state. It is specifically that "language" and "knowledge" against which products are valued as official (of the bureau) while making the force of the bureau legible

7 Hegemony seen here as "a common discursive framework...implicitly recognizing a legitimate use of power" through the normalization of "prescribed forms for expressing both acceptance and discontent" (Roseberry 1994:364)

and, once read, acceptable; the bureaucracy is made legible (legitimated) through the identification of these products. Clearly this creates a social market of uneven exchange, affording less profit to those outside of the bureau and its favour than those in it[8].

Having established that the legibility effect of the state is the ability of author(itie)s to maintain an amenable equivalent value form over which social products can be valued, traded and profited from, we must now talk about what those products and profits are, we must analyse the exchange itself; this is the act of identification. Trouillot's (2001) *identification effect* is the process by which individuals associate with others into groups and recognize themselves, and are recognized, to return to Bourdieu's (2008) epistemology, as politically dispossessed metonyms of these collective identities (206).

Identification, like capital, is both the start and end of the exchange process. Trouillot confines the application of this effect to the self-identification of other people as members of groups, but this is not its only consequence. All social products, be they the metonymic representations of individuals, or material goods, or words, etc. must be moved over an equivalent value form if they are to be made significant in a field of power. A central equivalent value that informs and identifies most, if not all, of the actions which compose the capitalist mode of production is that of 'property'. A tellingly opaque word etymologically speaking, property is nonetheless recognized as an objective characteristic of a thing, place, or action and as such can be employed to value things, places, actions, and even people as objects. As a phenomenon is identified as or by property, it freezes that thing as a representative of a classification and therefore is saddled with the obligations, restrictions and expectations so associated Much like the contract form discussed below, property is also a fetish, an concept to be elucidated in section 2.6.

8 While Capital is usually the favoured participant, as Marxian studies of the State usually claim, my study shows that, in support of Jessop's model, this is not always the case.

While in appearance property is permission for free usage by the owner, it is simultaneously and often invisibly a threat of force against those who do not own it. The exchange of phenomenon over the equivalent value form of property is protected by administrative violence, or the threat thereof as seen in the accounts in sections 1.1 and 3.6, because property is what makes such phenomena legible. The state-effect here is basically Weberian; the monopoly on legitimate violence is the maintenance of a equivalence which makes that violence exchangeable/legitimate, yet valued unevenly in relation to other possible sources depending on the actor's relation to that equivalent value form. This condition of inequity via equivalence defended by specialized force is obfuscated by the appearance of equity offered by the contract.

2.5 A Short Summary of the Logic of Contract

The contract is not a popular subject in contemporary anthropology; however, what little work has been done on the subject provides enough of an infrastructure to engage with the phenomenon . The symbolic school employed it as a sign of equality between actors; their primarily semiotic discussion suggests that its ties to ideas of equality are very ancient indeed (Foster 1961, Bourguinon 1962). Current research on the subject shows that, while egalitarian in appearance, the contract merely ritually reproduces its own material centrality in the reproduction of legal systems or criteria of trust and obligation (Alexander 2001). This paper takes this argument even further and states that the contract, in the distinctly Bourdieuian[9] role assigned to it by Catherine Alexander's research, permits the naturalization of hierarchical state-effects by presenting them as a sign of some basic social evenness. Moreover, as a material mediator which misrepresents hierarchical relations as egalitarian, it speaks directly to concepts of mis-recognition and the fetish.

9 I refer here to Bourdieu's work on 'rites of institution'. By engaging in a rite of passage, one in fact reinforces the institutionalization of the rite itself and its social conditions (2008:117).

True to its etymology, the contract brings subjects together. Though the contract is most important as an equivalent value form itself over which actions are legitimated, the contract binds people to people or things over other value-forms as well; people may be bound to the instruments of production as relatively emplaced actants over a contractually maintained property form of value against which both their identity and that of the machinery is established. Once established and valued, action can be exchanged between the worker and his administrators and the owners of his labor power by the workers relationship to the materials of production, though, in keeping with Bruno Latour's (1996) understanding of the non-human actant, the materials of production only mediate that exchange. This fact means that such materials, having been evaluated by a logic of contractually defined property, themselves are recognized as property and they reproduce the legitimizing logic of the relations of production; but how does this recognition of the contractual arise? Through the mis-recognition of the relations of production and the fetishization of property, contract, and debt.

2.6 Mis-recognition, the Fetish and Debt: an Implication of Cognitive Materialism

Cognitive materialism refers to the positive feedback relationship between subjective cognitions and objectifiable reality and its material consequence (Bourdieu 2008:106). This process is objectified in Bourdieu's epistemology by the habitus, the durable and transposable set of dispositions which generate strategic and symbolic practices in a given field which is hence reformed by the material reactions such practices tease out of the social reality (Bourdieu 2003:72). If we accept the ontological implications of cognitive materialism, the role of mis-recognition or fetishism in a given social field becomes paramount.

As a sort of sociological advocate for 'social' force of things, it is interesting to hear Bruno Latour's take on the fetish. Classical sociology, says Latour (2000), examined religious

symbols as mere stand-ins for hidden social functions; in fact, this condition amounts to what he identifies as the very definition of the fetish in sociology (109). Sociologist John Holloway (2002) sees fetishization as a form of identification wherein subjects are mis-recognized as objects and vice versa; the presence of this in social relations is a sign of the total domination of daily life by the logic of capitalism (33). This contention is rooted in the theory of the commodity fetish as popularized by Marx in Capital,

> A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor; because the relation to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor. (72)

This is not to say that objects cannot mediate subjectivities, in fact this appears to be the very point of the money commodity, an actant quite central to the Marxian formulation. What the fetish concept accomplishes in social analysis is to lend materiality to the phenomenon of mis-recognition in the "dominant discourse" of a given hierarchical social field[10]:

> This discourse is a structured and structuring medium tending to impose an apprehension of the established order as natural (orthodoxy) through the disguised (and thus mis-recognized) imposition of systems of classification and of mental structures that are objectively adjusted to social structures (Bourdieu 2008:169).

The fetish, as a vehicle of mis-recognition, is most easily grasped as a material object: a signed paper contract, a commodity, a dollar; however, man's capacity to commodify the immaterial can not be underestimated. British anthropologist William Pietz's (1985) research into the ethnological history of the fetish establishes that "desires and beliefs and narrative structures establishing a practice are also fixed by the fetish, whose power is precisely the power to repeat its originating act of forging an identity of articulated relations between

10 The field is a central concept for Bourdieu's epistemology; it is the sum of relations between actors made meaningful by a particular value logic presumably shared by all involved. Fields are simultaneously markets for symbolic production whose values are exchanged for varying degrees of social profit which we may identify as the production of social or cultural capital (Bourdieu 2008:71).

certain otherwise heterogenous things" (7). Thus the fetish, as a form of mis-recognition, is reproduced through its materialization which further structures the cognitive *habitus* of a social participant.

There are a number of serious shortcomings to the employment of the fetishism and mis-recognition heuristic though two of these arguments stand out more than others. Firstly, it seems to assume the presence of a rational actor who finds himself unwittingly reproducing a distinctly irrational situation; "if only he knew better," it goes "he'd do it differently". Along with this assumption comes the implication of a privileged observer in the form of the social analyst; this analyst may be a member of a free-floating class of intellectuals (Horkheimer 1937) or a political vanguard (cf. Lukacs in Holloway 2002:50). Against this, Slavoj Zizek (1994) writes "we know what we do, yet we do it anyway", a phrase which does not so much refute the use of mis-recognition in social analysis as define its limits and contours. It is not only the specialist classes of objectifiers who are privy to the marionettes' strings, but also the marionettes themselves; as John Holloway notes, de-fetishization is no guarantor of liberation (2002:51).

Secondly, classical fetishism in the Marxian vernacular as "a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things," (Marx 1965:164) appears, *prima facie*, to be in direct conflict with the utilization of non-human actants in a field of social relations. But as Bruno Latour (2000) observes, though he is himself quite suspicious of the employment of fetishism as a way of artificially hierarchizing an ontologically 'flat' cluster of relations (109), we may employ actants without forgetting that they are mediators of human relationships, not subjectivities in and of themselves (Latour 1996:240). I ask that this be kept in mind when I mention the social role of the materials of the production process as fetishized metonymic representations of the

owners of those materials.

Lastly, a third complication arises in our employment of the fetish concept to account for the centrality of the contract in capitalist relations. Pietz (1995) has also established a linkage to the fetish in its classical form and the idea of debt. While the contract at least presents the appearance of equality, the fetish overtly establishes a hierarchy by metonymically representing the broader power relations behind any human interaction over social distance. To solve this paradox, we must understand that the implied equality of a contract is simultaneously its sole source of legitimacy and those who monopolize the power to consecrate this contract, read: for the state to fetishize it, are themselves legitmated by it, or better said, valued over it. The fetish is a cultural commodity in the Bourdiueian epistemology, but the contract is what allows it to be exchanged for social profit. Contract fetishism is the equality in uneven relations, the (re)generative motor of the capitalist state and the production process.

2.7 The Occupation: a Concise theoretical synthesis

The occupiers, who had worked for the plant when it still read "Ford" on the gates, entered their employment contracts under the shadow of an entrenched capitalist state, one of the oldest in human history. This state reproduces itself via two broad effects: the relative emplacement of places, things and people which establish the terrain of any field of productive relations, and the establishment of an equivalent value form, namely the contract, over which actions between actors and actants in those fields can be valued. Power is simultaneously the fuel and the product of such social machination and the abilities it grants to some actors it simultaneously, perhaps dialectically, dispossesses from others on an uneven field marked by hierarchized classificatory schemes. Ford/Visteon, through the contract of freedom in labor, purchased the labor power of their employees on the condition that the

products of their labor would not be owned by their producers, but by the owners of the materials of production. When this contract faltered in the plant's last day as Visteon UK in Belfast, this labor power was used to take-hold of the materials of production and use them as leverage to demand the honouring of their contract. The liberal capitalist state, whose principle task and source of legitimacy is the maintenance of equivalence and whose primary tool for this task is the contract, was put in an uncomfortable position and tarried long enough for the occupiers to damage the ability for the Visteon production line to maximize the value of their commodities by increasing the socially necessary labor time needed to turn them out. The employment of the contract as leverage by the workers relied on the instrumental mis-recognition of the contract fetish as promoting egalitarianism while hiding social unevenness; the state's unwillingness to publicly undermine the contract fetish by siding with Capital was paradoxically the best way to continue the primary function of the state: the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist production and the tactical mediations of its self-destructive tendencies. The workers were able to mobilize as a collective class due, in part, to the inherent interpersonal connectivity of the production process as a field of relations and to a feeling of collective betrayal. However, as I will show in the following chapter, this connectivity and collective sense of betrayal were only two of the many conditions that accounted for the Belfast occupation's success.

Chapter III: Conditions of the Belfast Occupation

As one of the very few instances in labor history of an occupation which actually ended in some semblance of victory on the side of the workers, an account of the conditions which made this occupation possible and successful is vital to the still-developing anthropology of radical labor. In contrast to the massive but tragic 2009 Ssongyang motor company occupation in South Korea which was happening around the same time[11], the Belfast occupation enjoyed an exceptionally supportive socio-cultural, material, socio-geographical and political environment which goes a long way to explain its unusually positive outcome, if not entirely its tactical contingency.

3.1 The Factory

Let us begin with the factory itself. The three principle buildings, which held over 600 workers when control was passed from Ford to Visteon, employed 210 staff and "hourly" laborers by the time of the occupation, many of whom had made this plant their second-home even decades before the sign on factory was changed to Visteon UK. Encircling the property is a 3 meter tall fence with barbed wire tracked along the rim of it giving the impression of a prison camp. This enclosure is broken by two electronic gates at the primary southern entrance and the secondary northern one; during the occupation, a small contingent of strikers was all that was needed to secure the north entrance while the south was the focal point of most of the occupiers' efforts and attention along with the parking lot just past the southern entrance and the canteen inside the factory. The building was fully equipped with internet-connected computers, working telephones and an electrical and water supply that was

11 1,000 production workers occupied the Ssongyang factory for six months in 2009 when they were forcibly removed from the roof by an army of riot police wielding powerful water jets and offensive use of their shields. No concessions were achieved on the side of labor and the country remains largely ignorant of the entire event.

reportedly tied to the community grid and could not be turned off from outside.

As part of a long-term plan to shut-down the Visteon UK plants and move production to areas with a less-entrenched organized labor power, one of the Belfast plant's final tasks was to produce and test a vital component of an engine for a new line of cars called a fuel rail. The plant contained the only machine in the world capable of producing this specific part in a plastic medium for a specific series of vehicles that had passed two rigorous safety tests; it was supposed to be the future life-blood of the Belfast factory, though in fact it was fated to be relocated to South Africa. On top of this, they had the actual test results and certifications themselves in the plant's offices and without these, supposedly, Ford/Visteon could not restart production[12]. Neither of the other two Visteon UK plants had equipment this valuable to the production process.

Moreover, the production workers of the Belfast factory were unusually flexible in their expertise and mastery of the production apparatus. One of my production-line informants emphasized the fact that the ever-shrinking workforce combined with constant redirection of the Belfast plant's production made every worker an expert on every machine and though no one is totally certain of this, it was likely a Belfast worker who suggested to the Visteon UK administration that the production machinery could be modified to produce affordable trash-bins for the United Kingdom instead of car-parts thereby avoiding redundancy, a proposition never taken seriously by the corporation; other suggestions were made as well, such as producing smaller parts that could be shipped cheaper back to Ford in England, though these were dismissed just as glibly. This flexible labor power was drastically redirected during the occupation; for example, the maintenance staff disconnected

Figure 1: Medal printed from re-configured machine in the factory.

12 See section 3.7

the CCTV surveillance system, unhinged lockable doors to prevent the company from effecting a lockout, and wired the north gate shut. One of my informants discussed the ways in which even highly skilled engineers would take-up extremely menial tasks in support of the occupation: in one case a highly paid and highly trained staff engineer devoted his time to cleaning the toilets. On the lighter side, at the conclusion of the occupation, one machine was reconfigured to print medals for the supporters of the occupation (figure 1). Unfastened from the exigencies of normal capitalist production, labor power in the Belfast plant appeared inverted as its own mirror-image; it became a self-directed, self-motivated, egalitarian relationship though, due to the plant being only one link in a vast chain of production dependant on specifically Ford's decision to purchase from them, they did not, and probably could not, resume production.

3.2 Manufacturing and Trade Unionism in Northern Ireland

Though much literature on capitalism and the working class has focused on the de-industrialization of the capitalist mode of production and the financialist revolution, the fact remains that one-third of the global labor force is currently harnessed by 'traditional' manufacturing regimes (World Bank 2009). In Northern Ireland, 10% of the region's 74k-strong active labor pool was engaged in manufacturing activities as of 2009[13]. Northern Ireland's manufacturing sector has suffered a 28% decline in total employment since 1999 while the United Kingdom as a whole averaged a 36% drop[14]. In the United Kingdom as a whole, 21% of all manufacturing workers were trade union members in 2009 and this percentage increased to 30.7% when one focuses on just the plant and machine workers (Achur 2009).

Over the last ten years, trade union membership in the UK declined by 7%[15] though in

13 Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment. Monthly Labour Market Report. Rep. May 2010.
14 Ibid.
15 Labour Force Survey. Rep. Department of Trade and Industry, 19 Apr. 2007

Northern Ireland it actually rose by 4.2%, about 23 thousand workers total (Achur 2009); a fact which seems to problematize the argument, voiced most prominently by Touraine and Laclau, that industrial decline decreases trade union membership (Gledhill 2000:190). This confirms the suspicions of some of my informants that Belfast "bucks the trend" for labor organization; indeed, Northern Ireland seems to be a global aberration with union membership rates experiencing an uninterrupted worldwide decrease since 1985 (Visser 2003:405). Even Wales and Scotland, traditionally sites of high union membership, saw a drop in union association by 1.9% and 1% respectively over the last decade (Achur 2009). While 100% of the Belfast Visteon plant was unionized, a fact explained in the next section, in general, 40% of the working population of Northern Ireland is unionized and 85% of that total is a member of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) which currently boasts 215,478 members in the region (Achur 2009, NIC 2010). Unite the Union, the organization to which the Visteon UK workers belonged, is one of the 64 unions from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland that collectively composes the ICTU.

The city of Belfast is littered with the landmarks of a long history of labor struggles. Statues of James Connolly and Jim Larkin, Irish socialist labor organizers of mythic reputation, suddenly appear in alleyways and street corners. The John Hewitt pub, where I conducted several of my interviews, is named for a leftist poet who founded an unemployment center on Writer's Square to which much of the bar's profits are donated. Murals in the Falls Road area commemorate the Belfast 1907 Docker's Strike and the 1919 General Strike; the giant Harlan and Wolfe shipbuilding cranes, Samson and Goliath, can be seen from almost anywhere in the city, a testament to the power the formerly Protestant Belfast trade-unions had over Westminster (Murchú 2005). Even the Troubles, the decades-long nationalist conflict which has dominated the history, and now much of the tourism, of

Northern Ireland has roots in the development of trade unions in Belfast (Connolly 1983, Cradden 1993, Munck 1985, Murchú 2005).

Clearly there is a strong trend, both in the history of Belfast and its current socio-economic condition, towards labor organizing and activism despite a general decline in industrial labor. This should provide a heavy backdrop as we move into an account of the Visteon plant in its final years and the galvanization of the plant's workforce along collective lines.

3.3 The Social Dynamics of the Declining Factory

According to Unite convenor John Maguire, a key figure in the occupation, the labor force at Belfast had long been under siege by the Visteon UK adminstration and as a result of this had developed a sense of militant camaraderie. However, another leader of the occupation[16], Gerry Campbell, suggests that a significant portion of the workforce had little experience in resistance tactics and most simply did not know what else to do. These two accounts are perfectly reconcilable, however, and both employ a consistent theme of a workforce under-siege by Visteon UK in contrast to the greener pastures of their years under the direction of the Ford Motor Company. What follows is a broad narrative of this struggle as cobbled together from the accounts of my three key informants.

Visteon UK was set up by Ford as a controlled demolition; the pensions, salaries and protections of Ford's UK labor pool presented an expensive problem that the company sought to solve by moving production to areas like South Africa, Hungary, and the Philippines where labor is less protected. In order purge their labor pool of these costs without a confrontation, Visteon began to buy-out employees with a "£30.000 carrot" four years before it achieved bankruptcy. This lured many younger workers and those without families out of the labor pool but as a consequence left a wary workforce of family men and women whose

16 'Leader' is a problematic term addressed in section 3.4

dependency on their continued employment and eventual pensions was all the more pronounced. The temptation of this carrot was more than some workers could take; one of my informants recounted the story of an employee, not particularly prone to stress or mental anguish, who suffered a rapid psychic deterioration from the pressure of this decision resulting in intensive counselling and his eventual removal from the factory and institutionalization after an attempted suicide.

There was also a marked change in the Belfast worker-management relationship in the second half of the Visteon decade. "Honorable" and "Christian" personnel managers and production heads were driven out in response to increasing pressures to deceive and under-treat the ever-ailing production force. "They were playing with your head for years." In their place came an unqualified floor manager who ran his every decision past the now-gutted personnel office. This manager was a former engineer-turned-career bureaucrat who, in my informant's narrative, adopts the quisling role of a collaborator in this cold war against the Belfast workers. This man, whose memory caused my informant's face to contort with disgust, repeatedly lied to the Union and the workers about the security of the employees' Ford contracts while he and his colleagues in the Belfast administration established a wholly new company before the declaration of bankruptcy called Visteon Engineering Services in which their jobs and pensions could be protected whilst those of the rank-and-file were tossed overboard.

The Visteon bankruptcy itself was manufactured just like the car parts the company produced. By focusing on production of bulky, difficult to transport parts and selling them either at a loss or for only "£2 more than their cost to make", Visteon UK was thrown into a downward spiral of loss and un-profitability despite the warnings and practical suggestions of the workers and the union to which they all belonged. The Belfast workers experienced this

strategy by the company as a series of constant management changes, labor cuts, and production shifts, shifts which made them the flexible and broadly skilled workforce mentioned above. These shifts in production and administration, coupled with the realization amongst the workers of the diminishing value of their labor on the UK market, began to galvanize the workers as a self-aware group in opposition to a hierarchically superior enemy.

The plant was a closed-shop system, though not officially. If a worker would not join the union, the other workers would put pressure on the Belfast management until they were forced to dismiss them. This, however, did not mean that Unite the Union was the primary medium through which the Belfast workforce battled the administration. State laws for labor unions are complex in the United Kingdom; any strike action must be preceded by a one month notice as well as a secret ballot carried out via post and must adhere to a predefined start and end date. Failure to comply to these strictures illegalizes the strike and as a consequence the involved union can have its assets permanently stripped by the state. Needless to say, organized labor action through official channels is extremely difficult and immediate responses to crises as they present themselves are simply impossible. The Belfast plant's chapter of Unite seems to have gotten around this during the Visteon years simply by dint of their militant solidarity and close relationship to their convenor, John Maguire. When Visteon attempted to gut the workforce by eliminating the night shift, Maguire was called by one of the night workers and he immediately arranged for every employee of the day shift to call in sick, after which he suggested to the management that the sudden epidemic among the workers could go on for some time and that they ought to reconsider their dismissal of the night shift. The company acceded and nobody lost their jobs. In other instances an “overtime ban” would be put into effect and employees would be encouraged to refuse to work overtime thus slowing their overall production time. “We didn't have a meeting and say there was no

overtime," says Maguire, "we just told the whole factory to say you were washing your hair this weekend".

The nationalistic sectarian divisions which still define daily life in many parts of Belfast's more deeply entrenched Unionist/Protestant and Republican/Catholic districts appear to have been wholly absent in the Belfast plant, a condition indicative of modern Northern Irish trade unionism as a whole (Cradden 1993)[17]. While my three key plant informants were all Catholic, one of them even admitting to throwing petrol bombs at police in his youth, and the plant was lodged in a definitively Catholic neighbourhood, they and my secondary informants all assured me that the plant's workforce was equally Protestant in its make-up and that this fact had no effect on the plant's fundamental solidarity as a labor force. Moreover, long-time tensions between staff and production workers were breaking down as the plant management became more and more disinterested in the life of the factory and its employees, "There was only one enemy now, and that was Visteon".

3.4 Leadership and Representation

The concept of leadership is constantly referenced in my interviews with both the Belfast workers and those that supported them. While much emphasis is placed on workers "thinking for themselves" in adopting individual tasks during the occupation, the need for representation none-the-less arose when meetings with the Visteon or Ford administrations, the state legal apparatus, and the news media had to be dealt with. John Maguire, the Unite convenor for the factory was the obvious choice for most of these matters, especially the final meetings in London, and former shop steward for the staff workers, Gerry Campbell, also met with Ford officials in New York. Campbell has close connections to Sinn Fein's current MP for West Belfast, Gerry Adams, and believes that without Adams showing strong and

17 My field work began on May Day, 2010; the speeches and texts I encountered during the May Day demonstration in Belfast focused on ethnic and religious inclusiveness in trade unionism.

responsible political leadership, the occupation would not have lasted. Maguire also recognizes the contribution of Adams and his party to the success of the occupation, saying that they might not have achieved what they did without Sinn Fein's support.

Leadership in all three cases was dialectically established as both a closeness to the workers and a willingness to be "in it for the long haul" as well as the ability to commune with apparently broader scales of power and distance; rank-and-file participation exhibited qualities identified as leadership when one or another occupier showed personal initiative or proved to be an effective speaker, as was the case with my informant James, however those people that would be called 'leaders' were those with that special access to the world of relations outside the gated plant. This world did not include the non-State and non-capital cluster of external relationships as exemplified by local activist groups, families of the workers, and local small businesses making contributions to the occupation; connections to the immediate community surrounding the plant therefore did not transfer leadership qualities to occupying workers in the way the connections to the verticalizing and encompassing state-effects of the distant political and capitalist orders who are seen to have the power to change the lives of the exploited workers. A ready implication of this division is that the workers themselves and their communal ties would appear to be seen as comparatively unempowered and unable to produce the conditions sought after by the occupiers, though this was not stated by my informants.

In Pierre Bourdieu's (2008) influential writings on political representation, he convincingly establishes the central role in leadership as a metonym for group-ness. He claims that by raising-up an empowered individual and allowing them to speak on your behalf, members of groups dispossess themselves of their own capacity to self-identify (204). While the Visteon experience would seem to support this in some respects, for instance the

final meeting in London which resulted in an unequal distribution of redundancy pay and a vote to end the occupation that many felt was premature, the primary metonym by which the occupiers appeared to be identified as a group was not, in general, the public face of their leaders, but the occupied factory itself. In other words, it was the very project, and not the spokespeople, of the occupiers that allowed the community to relate to them as a group with a singular identity and conversely allowed the occupiers to identify 'the community' by their relationship to that project.

3.5 The Community

Between informants, 'the community' in the Visteon occupation ranged from the ultra-specific, like a local spate of grocers and hotels or woman named Moya running the canteen, to the extremely general as in the entirety of Northern Ireland or even the Irish-American political action groups in New England.

> I said to ford motor company, "You come in and you attacked two hundred people, what you don't realize is you've attacked the community, a community that stretched from the Shankills to the Falls, from Northern Ireland to Cork, and from Cork over to New York where the Irish American sympathizers are... You don't know who you've attacked here," and that was it, because we had support from everyone.

The fundamental logic of community in the case of my informants seemed to encompass all those affected negatively by the company and those who affected the occupation positively. Therefore, although workers in county Cork had nothing at all to do with the occupation, Maguire included them in his 2009 City Hall speech on the community quoted above because they were similarly impacted by Ford Motor Company in the past; conversely, the press, who did not suffer from industrial decline in Northern Ireland and who had no identifiable familial relations with the occupiers, were included as members of 'the community' by my informants simply for their coverage of the event which gave the workers' struggle international visibility.

Though capitalist in nature, the owners and managers of the local Balmoral Hotel and Curly's Grocer expressed and materialized an enthusiastic solidarity with the Belfast occupiers. While neither were willing to contribute interviews to this project, their activities during the occupation are well remembered by the participants. The supermarket would deliver entire palettes of milk, bread and other food items to the canteen each week unsolicited and the hotel offered their building as a free celebration space after the occupation's conclusion. This is an example of what labor sociologist Rick Fantasia (1988) has dubbed the "breakdown in the work/community dichotomy" (218); the struggles of a group of contending workers are blended with the territorial or nationalistic inclinations of the surrounding social environment leading to an outpouring of support from local capitalists, which Marxian theory would suggest goes against their own interest. It is tempting to postulate that this work/community breakdown is the labor corollary to the capitalist state, though that is beyond the scope of this paper.

"When we left the factory," said Campbell, "the canteen had more food in it then when we occupied it that day." This fact, for Campbell, infused the occupation with an extra layer of social responsibility. They were now fighting, not only for their pensions, but for the community; they had to make sure their support was not for nothing. The rhetoric from the occupation was even tailored to this principle; to the delight of the Socialist Workers Party, whose members spent many days inside the occupied factory, the public demand of the occupiers was the re-opening of the plant and reinstatement of full employment. When asked why a specifically public rhetoric for the occupation was needed at all, Maguire's response was largely based on the phenomenon of media power. Given the moral sensitivity of acts which could be easily, though in my view inaccurately, construed as dishonesty on the part of the occupiers, it is important to me that Maguire's own explanation be presented here in full,

> Well, I'll turn the question to you, if you were part of the community and you saw me on the news shouting, "I'm standing here to occupy this plant because I have to pay my house off," or had I said, "I'm standing here to get this plant reopened," which would more than likely to get you up to support me? I don't mean that we were fooling people, 'cause we weren't, its just a bit sensational. The right-wing media would have said, "Greedy so-and-sos," right? So the right-wing media would have jumped on it and the reality of it was if we don't stand and occupy this plant, all our kids are going to be moved out of their houses; they're gonna have no money they're gonna have to sell, they're gonna have to go to new schools. Now, I didn't want to have to get into a media thing explaining that. The simplest solution was to say- and remember they were talking to all different people at the time, so I told everybody in the plant, "Just tell them, even though it isn't gonna happen, anybody in the media wants an answer, 'What do we want?' 'We want the plant reopened'," that would have to be the tactic. Don't get me wrong, when we were talking to them, when the community came up we explained it to them, it was for the media so the right wing couldn't- you know? Most of the community who came knew the plant couldn't reopen and we were fighting for our kids. We're fighting for our kids and our families but we wasn't going to allow the right wing media the chance to exploit. So if we had got someone like you up to the plant then we could've explained and you would have supported it, but if we had have explained and let the right wing media exploit us you would have known but other people wouldn't have known.

The public 'saving jobs' rhetoric, though designed to protect the occupiers from media misrepresentation, also had the effect of being a symbolic rally-point for would-be community members, of whom it is not clear if the right-wing media was among or merely the friendly media, of from various localities who would not have known about the occupation otherwise. This rhetorical flag flown over the battlements of the occupation is a “shared symbol”, and though various media sources, grocers, political groups, etc. may bring their own notions of the specific weight and meaning of a struggle to keep a plant open (worker power, Irish solidarity, potential votes, etc.), the symbol itself nonetheless “constitutes, and gives reality to, the communities boundaries” (Cohen 1995:21).

One important part of this community was the ideologically motivated groups, especially the Socialist Workers Party and the anarchist proto-union Organise!, who provided

both moral and material support. Informants from the SWP, now of the International Socialists, were in the factory for several days each week and claim that it was they who forwarded the position that the public demands of the occupiers should be the reopening of the factory. While they claim that they were not there to proselytize, members of Organise! criticize the SWP's involvement as a way to "sell papers" and recruit while the anarchists brought food and supplies; conversely the SWP informants dismissed the anarchist support for not devoting the same amount of time in the plant as the socialists did. Regardless of these generally friendly inter-group tensions, the occupiers themselves clearly appreciated the support and issued commemorative medals made from the production machinery and spare materials to members from both organizations. Incidentally, it was in fact the information produced by these organizations, the five issues devoted to the occupation in the SWP's *Socialist Worker* publication and Organise!'s continuous coverage on *libcom.org*, an anarcho-communist internet community, that I became aware of this occupation at all and from which much my initial research was based.

The SWP and the Sinn Fein organizers that Gerry Adams assigned to the occupation both organized concerts in the parking lot of the plant. These were important morale boosters for the occupiers and all of my informants recalled them fondly. The concerts, which in the SWP's case were filled with songwriters and reggae acts, also attracted press attention and therefore had a secondary utility as well. On Easter, local children were encouraged by an unknown organization to deliver painted Easter eggs to the plant and a bounce-house was set up in the parking lot, now well established as point of community interaction along with the canteen, lending the occupation a familial veneer which counterbalanced the stark illegality and aggressiveness of the struggle over the plant and the livelihood of the workers.

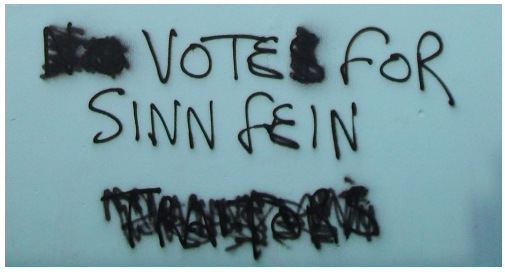
Though the occupation was illegal and therefore very dangerous for official unions to

support publicly, letters, solidarity demonstrations and factory visits were nonetheless quite common from other Irish and UK trade unions. The clearest and most dramatic show of solidarity between workers, though not clearly within a union framework, was when the Belfast transport workers halted their routes during the extremely busy lunchtime rush-hour one day late into the occupation; the specific mechanics of this strike were not forthcoming but one should assume that it was not a sanctioned act by the transport union due to its illegality and the impossibility of registering an official and legal strike in such a short amount of time. Though not themselves sympathy strikes, the Lewinsham elementary school occupation by its teachers and the Thomas Cooke travel agency occupation in London are both referenced as part of the community of the occupation. Both invoked the Belfast Occupation as a motivator to occupy and both were visited by members of the Belfast Occupation as a show of support and solidarity; the community was not only those who devoted resources and time into the Belfast Occupation but also those to whom time and resources were devoted *by* the Belfast occupiers. After the occupation finished, the Belfast Occupiers continued to attempt to build connections between other local labor battles but after a disappointing experience with the Nortel strike that winter, continued efforts seem to have ceased. Nonetheless, the Visteon Occupation is still invoked in labor discourse and class politics, as seen on May Day 2010 in Belfast and the ongoing local campaign to stop a particularly aggressive amendment to Parades Legislation.

3.6 Politicking and Realpolitiking

As long as Sinn Fein has existed, West Belfast has voted for them. Though there is a Unionist party operating in West Belfast, the overwhelmingly Catholic area has a long

Figure 2: Graffiti on Falls Road, "~~No~~ Votes ~~for~~ Sinn Fein ~~Traitors~~"



republican history. During the conclusion of the 2010 election season in the UK, the famous Falls Road area of West Belfast even sported graffiti calling Sinn Fein 'traitors' for not being republican *enough* (see figure 2) and home-made RSF (Republican Sinn Fein) flags were bolted to street corners along the main road; Gerry Adam's face, like the Gaelic script so popular on the shops and pubs, was ubiquitous in this area. As I mentioned above, Adams was closely involved with the occupation of the Visteon plant; he was speaking to the occupiers on a weekly basis while a team of his people acted as organizers and morale officers for the plant throughout the occupation. As an MP, Adams communicated with Gordon Brown, the outgoing Prime Minister, as well as high level executives in the Ford and Visteon companies. The illegality of the occupation leant his campaign a sheen of militancy which, if the rise of the Real IRA and the aforementioned anti-Sinn Fein graffiti are any indication, still carries currency in the social market of West Belfast. Perhaps most tellingly of all, by the end of the occupation several life-long loyalists pledged their votes to Sinn Fein, an account supported by the published voting results of that area (BBC News 2010).

On the established judicial end of the political apparatus, the Belfast occupiers were pleased to find both a sympathetic judge and a less-than enthusiastic prosecuting team overseeing their battle against Visteon UK's court-order to have them removed from the plant. The lawyer for the occupiers was able to buy the occupation time by arguing that he did not have the chance to prepare a proper defence, a claim that met little resistance by either the judge or the prosecution's lawyer with whom Maguire himself had a long personal history; both of them had coached Gaelig together to West Belfast's youth. The courts gave them an extra week in which nothing was litigated at all in this time negotiations between the occupiers and Ford were carried out in London unhampered by Belfast court-dates and, most importantly, with a still firmly halted production line costing the global Visteon/Ford more

each day in both capital production and public image. It was during this time that the final agreements were made between the occupiers and the company.

When the administration in charge of closing down the bankrupt plant threatened the occupiers with police action at the beginning of the occupation, Maguire responded bluntly, "I've been fighting the police since I was sixteen, firing petrol bombs at them, so you don't threaten me by calling the police!" In fact, the police proved to be no threat at all to the occupiers in Belfast, though they single-handedly shut-down the Enfield occupation in South England. By contrast, in Belfast when the police drove up to the occupied plant, it was to "to make sure we were OK". On one occasion, the occupiers even called the police to check-out a 'suspicious' car parked near the south gate which they suspected was filled with private security forces. Had the police actually acted on the court-order for the eviction of the occupation or had the challenged order survived the appeal of the occupiers, the scene might have been quite different, as Campbell suggests:

> At that point we had a phone call … about week three or week four. The administrator… I am not sure if this is true or not… we got the phone call that the administrator had asked the police to remove us. [The occupation] was illegal and he called in the law to get us removed. I made a couple of phone calls in the community, made a couple of phone calls to the local TV stations, and told them that we hear there is going to be a police escort coming here at 10 o'clock to remove us. The TV was turned up, the community turned up. If Ford Motor Company want to see people with cuts and bruises and bloody heads so be it. We got word back, no. There would be no police or riot squads coming. But that is the call you have to make. Are you going to get beaten up? Do you sit down in the road? Do you fight? What way do you fight it? Do you physically fight the forces of law and order or do you have a peaceful protest, but let them drag us out and let the TVs tape it?

While the Belfast experience did not have to directly confront the police, the occupiers were nonetheless under the constant spectre of a forceful eviction and the possibility of state violence. The Unite convenor at Enfield, Kevin Noland, actually was taken into custody and

the occupation there was thus ended. When a similar threat was made to the Belfast convenor, Maguire responded with his customarily sardonic defiance:

> So I told em, "You wont have to get the police to remove me off the site because I'll leave it. I'll just go camp outside the door. But when your factory burns down don't blame me!" So at that point, strange as it is, they said no, you're a convenor, you have to stay in there. You had this corporation telling me to stay in the site, you know?

By playing on fears of the company that important production materials might be lost, on the unwillingness of the State to commit to violence in a labor dispute in Belfast, an image with deep historical significance, and on the assumption by both that the occupation was centralized around his authority, Maguire achieved precisely the opposite outcome of his counterpart in Enfield.

An additional threat of violence was embodied by the private security firm reportedly hired by Visteon ten days prior to their declaration of bankruptcy to the workforce. Belfast was also unique in this regard compared to the other two plants; though they were never put to use, a fact accounted for by my informants by the presence of the media and the profound community support, Belfast was the only plant to have such security forces assigned to it even though the Enfield plant had nearly one-hundred more employees than the Belfast plant had. This fact testifies to the special conditions of this occupation, as does the apparent impotence of the force itself.

On the surface, these facts would appear to subvert the generally functionalist Marxian notions of the state covered in Chapter II to which I fundamentally adhere; however, as my interview with Campbell would support, the State did in fact protect the principle logic of its form and one of the basic necessities for the reproduction of capitalist labor: the contract. Jessop (1977) notes that while the capitalist state will often police in opposition to specific capitalists and their needs, this does not undermine the project of the capitalist state

as a whole (363). "So the judge, was very sympathetic to us because we had the moral high-ground," Campbell recalled, "everybody knew that it was to deprive people of redundancies and pensions." The reason why this deprivation was so clearly immoral and not simply a case of a company trying to reduce its overhead, usually not a cause for indignation among a given people in a late-capitalist state, is because of its establishment via the contract form of relation:

> Without that guarantee, we would have voted as a trade union not to agree to [the transfer of Ford labor power to Visteon control] and there would never have been Visteon! And when we made the guarantee in the agreement it was done with ford executives like Jack Nasser, David Thurston... there was no Visteon so we couldn't have agreed with Visteon. We made the agreement with Ford and now Ford are saying, "No, you are Visteon employees its got nothing to do with us".

The state adhered to the logic of the contract in the Visteon case by playing both sides at first. In Basildon and Enfield, where few people were watching and where community support was non-existent, they adopted the view of Ford that the employees were under Visteon contracts and therefore the bankruptcy of Visteon nullified the company's obligation to honour them. In Belfast, the situation was different; the incredibly public nature of the dispute in Belfast and overwhelmingly popular support for the workers put the state in the position of considering the view that Campbell described above.

Now, this position is clearly problematized by the addition of qualifying adjectives like "sympathetic" and "less-than-enthusiastic" to the *l'hommes d'état* mentioned above and one could also make an argument that the driving motivations of the capitalist state were sabotaged by the personal and cultural eccentricities of its human composition. Such a view would be strongly supported by the evidence gathered from fieldwork, though its adoption is not necessary to uphold a 'Marxian' theory of the state in the Visteon case. As I covered in Chapter II, the contract is a logic of equivalence which allows for the free passage of freed

labor into the production apparatus; one does not have to prefer the capitalist's end of the contract over the worker's in order to protect its formal integrity, in fact, doing so would likely undermine that integrity. Without dismissing the importance of soft human underbelly of the State form of organization, it must be emphasized that the Belfast occupation confronted the same Leviathan that the Ssongyang occupation did at the same time; however, where it favoured our Northern Irish subjects, it devoured their Korean counterparts.

3.7 Constants of Commodity Capitalism

The final and inevitable condition which guaranteed the success of the Belfast occupation lies in the very structure of commodity capitalism itself[18]. Taking the labor theory of value at its word, we can see here how the constant need to extract surplus labor value by compressing as much as possible the socially necessary labor time, "that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time" (Marx 1999 [1867]:9), of the production of a particular commodity is absolutely contingent on their uninterrupted operation of the production process. Since labor power is the progenitor of value in commodity production, and since that power lies fallow in the absence of production materials, the inability of Visteon to move those materials from Belfast to South Africa forced a daily increase in the socially necessary labor time of the final product, the completed vehicle. While in normal capitalist production, "the domination of labor by capital is the domination of time" (Postone 1998:62), during the occupation this principle was inverted; time was on the side of the workers.

labor, of course, it not the sole source of a commodity's value. "A thing can be useful, and the product of human labor, without being a commodity," writes Marx (1999 [1867]):

> Whoever directly satisfies his wants with the produce of his own labor, creates, indeed, use-values, but not commodities. In order to

18 Though not cited directly, I have found the work of David Harvey (1999) extraordinarily helpful in understanding this problem.

> produce the latter, he must not only produce use-values, but use-values for others, social use-values... Lastly nothing can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labor contained in it; the labor does not count as labor, and therefore creates no value. (10)

While the Cape Town labor power may not have the protections that UK labor enjoys, one can be assured that the UK markets for whom they produce are rife with stricture and regulation. In order for a vehicle to be made useful to its buyers on the British Isles, it must pass rigorous safety examinations. As I mentioned in section 3.1, the only machine on Earth which has been proven against these standards was locked behind the walls of the occupied Visteon plant in Belfast.

Apart from the loss in labor value, it would be an extremely risky venture for Visteon-Ford to offer a potentially dangerous commodity onto a tightly regulated market as its use-use value could be stripped of it at will by an attentive governmental apparatus. Shockingly, this is exactly what the company did, according to my informants. In the final week of the occupation after the appeal of the court order to evict the workers had been allowed an extension, my informants received word that the South African plant had started up production of the very part Belfast had been assigned to manufacture, though on untested machinery. According to them, at least some of the Visteon vehicles now operating in the United Kingdom might contain these untested fuel hoses, a fact which made one of my informants express a sense of double betrayal.

> What they were counting on was you and me driving around with our families. Is production going to stop? Fucking sure it's not! It's going out the door whether it's tested or not. And they put them in the cars and away they went. And they knew that, they knew that! They're as guilty as heck...

My informant recognized that Ford-Visteon was pressed into this decision because the cost of the occupation on their production was becoming more than they could bear; they were, in his

words, “losing stock”. The accounts of each of my informants, including the 'blue-collar' members of Organise! and the International Socialists, reveal a very nuanced grasp of the structural mechanics of late industrial capitalism and its global flows. This observation begs a final discussion on consciousness, conditions and will.

Concluding Remarks: Consciousness, Conditions and Will

Just before the "Unite the Union" banners unfurled over the Visteon gates in Belfast, I was trying my hand at labor organization in Texas. The childcare facility at which I worked had just finished a particularly terrible management regime and was facing severe cuts in both supplies and hours. After some clandestine polling, I discovered that nearly everyone I had talked to believed that something had to be done and each felt betrayed and at risk by the administration and owners of our facility. I volunteered to organize a simple online forum or mailing list for the employees in order to keep abreast of each other's struggles with the company. After printing up a couple dozen carefully worded mission statements with a blank space where one could input their email address, I found to my great disappointment that almost no one was willing to commit to action even on the simple level of contributing their contact information. This was a massive blow to my assumptions about solidarity in the workplace, even amongst people I would call friends. Upon learning about the Visteon occupations which mobilized hundreds of people in minutes to take unlawful actions against a company that had wronged them and comparing this to my utter failure to assemble even a worker mailing list, I decided I had to take this topic on, not merely for its anthropological and historical significance, but to answer for my own shortcomings.

While much literature on radicalized labor power has taken on the question of class-consciousness (cf. Mann 1981, Lukacs 1971), I have discovered that the mobility of such power is less a question of consciousness and more a question of conditions. While many of the conditions in Northern Ireland were also present in North Texas, the degrees to which they were internalized in the *habitus* of the workers and the social milieu in which they found themselves were vastly unequal. Granted, the capitalist state in which Visteon operates has a

different character than that of Texas, principally due to the entrenchment of organized labor in the United Kingdom, even though the effects and fundamental functions are identical. My home lacks the deeply militant sense of communal solidarity so clearly present in Belfast and so easily drawn along labor lines. That said, the conditions presented here are not each unique to Belfast; one is apt to find them represented in any number of capitalist states or production apparatuses. This fact presents a final problem, if these conditions are mirrored elsewhere, in Texas for instance, what keeps others from following this same path?

Although the mechanics of capitalist labor and the conditions which allow for its reproduction may be ubiquitous in capitalist states, in the end, radical action is a form of wilful practice, of people committing to an instrumentalization of their labor power outside-of or against its normal alienated use under capitalist production. This will, this decision to say, in the words of my informant, "We're standing!", is the root of my attraction to the events described in this account and it is perhaps the only thing in this story that cannot be entirely explained. Though the sociology of labor and social movements has made valiant efforts to uncover the mechanics of the will (cf. Dixon and Roscigno 2003, McAdam 1997), this paper maintains the position that labor power, or better said, human potential is only limitable, not determinable; it can only be constrained, not defined. Post-structural sociology and anthropology gives us a vocabulary to name action and avoid mystifying it or contributing to unsavoury hegemonies or malevolent regimes, but it is our subjects who must act. In the words of Michel Foucault (1991), "the problem of the prisons isn't one for the 'social workers' but one for the prisoners" (84). The problem of labor under capitalism is not how best to represent it to the academy or how accurately one can predict strike actions and mediate grievances, the problem is the laborer him/herself and how s/he can assert their labor power, the birthright of our species, to the benefit of their potential and not just their profitability.

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