

FROM SOCIAL CELEBRATION TO POLITICS AS USUAL:  
NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE LEGISLATIVE OPENING IN ONTARIO, 1900-2007

by

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## Abstract

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This dissertation analyzes twentieth century changes in the representation of political authority in Ontario. It does so by conducting narrative analysis and framing analysis of newspaper coverage of the ceremonial Opening of the Legislature. In contrast to standard political science approaches to this key civic ritual, the dissertation builds upon cultural theory that views news as central to the social construction of reality and addresses three research questions: In what ways has the meaning of the legislative opening been represented in mainstream Ontario newspapers? How have mass mediated processes of ritualization changed over time? And what do answers to the first two questions suggest about the development of popular conceptions of political legitimacy in Ontario?

Textual analysis demonstrates that social knowledge about the legislative opening has changed significantly between 1900 and 2007. During the first half of the twentieth century, journalists approached and described the Opening of the Legislature as a Social Celebration: a popular festival at Queen's Park that was also a break from routine policy discourse and partisan battle. By contrast, by the 1970s coverage was organized around the Speech from the Throne. Increasingly aggressive journalistic tones and techniques represented the ritual as a performance of rationality—a special iteration of Politics as Usual. Once a celebration of social order centred around Ontario High Society, the legislative opening is now depicted as a debate among competing interests in Ontario society.

While remaining critical of the emergent ritual of liberal-pluralism for its part in normalizing systems of inequality, the dissertation argues that changes in newspaper coverage both reflect and reinforce the rise of what Smith calls “electoral democracy”, a conception of politics in which extra-parliamentary actors are legitimized as participants in government.

At the level of scholarly practice, the study makes an original contribution to recent debates in media anthropology by using longitudinal textual analysis to study *the ritualization of civic ritual*; and shifts in news coverage are used to advocate further interdisciplinary studies of legislative politics in Canada.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*The press should be viewed as the embodiment of human consciousness.*  
— James Carey, “The problem of journalism history”

### Introduction

This dissertation examines the evolution of political symbolism in Ontario. Specifically, it uses narrative analysis and framing analysis to analyze shifts in twentieth century newspaper coverage of a key civic ritual: namely, the ceremonial Opening of the Legislature, the day of the Speech from the Throne.<sup>1</sup> Taking a cultural history approach to legislative politics, the dissertation assumes (1) that by studying civic ritual, researchers are offered “a glimpse into the logic underlying the construction of power and legitimacy” (Kook 2005, 152; Bell 1997; Kertzer 1988), and (2) that “the media form our psychic environment, especially with respect to matters beyond our direct personal experience, a realm into which most aspects of politics fall” (Fletcher and Gottlieb Taras 1990, 221; Edelman 1988; Thompson 1995). As a “constitutive ritual”, a civic ceremony investing “some individual[s] with authority to manipulate primary rules in such a way as to be regarded as legitimate within the terms of the larger political system” (Goodin 1978, 285), the legislative opening both establishes and gives symbolic expression to particular forms of political legitimacy. However, in order to better understand the historically-situated processes through which this event is made meaningful in the public sphere (see Karpinnen 2007), the Opening of the Legislature must be analyzed not only in terms of its administrative and formal qualities, but also by examining the ways in which it has been given life in mass mediated news.

Because this study is at once an examination of popular understandings of an important but understudied ritual in Canada's system of parliamentary government, and an argument about the advantages of conducting political research in a manner that takes into consideration mass mediated representations of politics, it is helpful to conceive of the dissertation as discussing the social construction of knowledge on two levels. On one level, where scholarly practice is of primary concern, the study is critical of traditional approaches in the field of political science for failing to view legislatures through the lens of mass media, or, more broadly, politics through the

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<sup>1</sup> For especially thorough accounts of the ceremony at Ottawa, see Bejerimi 2000; McMenemy 2006; Monet 1979; and Tindal 2005.

lens of culture.<sup>2</sup> In response to this weakness in scholarly knowledge production, at a different level, where the intent is to learn more about dominant conceptions of political institutions, the dissertation examines a particular form of political knowledge—that is, knowledge produced by newspaper journalists (cf. Lambert et al. 1988). Contrary to standard approaches to parliament, the dissertation takes a cultural approach to the Ontario Legislature, whereas culture is defined as the web of meaning “expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [humans] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz 1973, 89).

Although political science textbooks declare that “political institutions both embody and create legitimating symbols” (Ellis and MacIvor 2008, 32), little empirical work in Canada has been done on what Edelman (1964) calls “politics as a symbolic form” (2). The significance of “political language, political symbols, and political dramaturgy... hardly requires elaboration”; and yet these areas of Canadian politics “have attracted relatively little attention from Canadian political scientists” (Young 1981, 683-4). Research on legislatures in Canada “has never been highly theoretical” (Atkinson and Thomas 1993, 424; see also Sproule-Jones 1984), a trend borne out by Malloy's (2002) recent call for a new generation of legislative studies that moves beyond traditional conceptions of responsible government and “toward greater engagement with alternative conceptions of representation and democratic accountability” (13).

Crude but striking evidence of present-day potency in Young's (1981) aging claim that symbolism is understudied in political science in Canada: between 1935 and 1967 the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* did not publish a single work with the word “symbol”, “symbolic”, or “ritual” in its title; since then, the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* has included four such works: two short notes on the topic of the prime minister as symbol (Stark 1973; Szablowski 1973), and two original research essays: Parel's (1969) “Symbolism in Gandhian politics”, and Russell's (1984) “Constitutional reform of the judicial branch: Symbolic vs. operational considerations”.<sup>3</sup> The official programme of the Canadian

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<sup>2</sup> In Canada, as elsewhere, political science has a strong tradition of studying media coverage of elections (ex. Attallah 2004; Fletcher 1975b, 1987, 1991a, 1991b; Hackett 1991; Mendelsohn 1994; Nesbitt-Larking 2007, chap. 12; Soderland 1984; Trimble and Sampert 2004; Wagenberg et al. 1988; Waddell 2004; Wilson 1980). The same is not true, however, of moments between electoral contests; there is a paucity of literature on news coverage of legislatures (cf. Abu-Laban's [2007] praise for Jiwani's book on mediations of race, gender, and violence—media analysis in political science that goes “beyond the traditional study of elections” [811]).

<sup>3</sup> Since 1967 an additional three studies (two in English, one in French) have included the word “symbolic” in the

Political Science Association's annual conference in 2008 does not include a single paper carrying the word “symbol” or “symbolic” in its title. The sole conference presentation including the word “ritual” is an extension of the present dissertation. Rose's (2000) semiotic analysis of government advertising is an innovative take on political communication in Canada; and there is a growing body of literature that draws on cultural theory in order to analyze the representation of women in politics (ex. Gidengil and Everitt 2000; Robinson and Saint-Jean 1991, 1996; Sampert and Trimble 2003; Trimble 2007). But cultural approaches to legislative politics remain outliers in the field.

The dearth of research into political symbolism in Canada is disconcerting, for “if the glue holding together society is not entirely an implicit consensus, not exactly a set of taken-for-granted assumptions, but conscious discussion and activities aimed explicitly at shaping public debate, then symbolism, symbol production, and symbolic practices all become central to the study of public culture” and public politics (Wuthnow 1992, 10). In contrast to standard political science interpretations of the legislative opening, which, by ignoring mediated representations of the ritual neglect to consider its full symbolic character, the mediated approach taken here draws on insights from process-oriented ritual research (Becker 1995; Bell 1992, 1997; Couldry 2003; Handelman 1998), and identifies historically specific frameworks for understanding the meaning of the legislative event. Guided by the theoretical perspective that views news as an integral part of the social construction of reality (Hartley 1996; Thompson 1995; Nesbitt-Larking 2007), the dissertation describes transformations in newspaper coverage of the civic ritual and, subsequently, ways in which representations of political authority in Ontario have changed over time.

Results of the textual analysis demonstrate that until the 1950s, the province's mainstream dailies approached and described the Opening of the Legislature as a social celebration. During these years the central focus of newspaper coverage was what journalists described as the popular

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abstract. Franks' (1993) *The myths and symbols of the constitutional debate in Canada*, which draws from Edelman, Barthes, and Frye, is another noteworthy exception to the general trend in political science in Canada. It is worth pointing out, however, that the book holds the distinction of being the lone response to a request through Canada's largest collection of library holdings (that of the University of Toronto library catalogue) for material linked to the author-supplied phrase, “symbolism in politics Canada”. By comparison, searches for the other two subject phrases supplied by Franks, specifically, “Meech Lake Constitutional Accord (1987)”, and “Canada – Constitutional Law – Amendments”, turn up forty-four, and eleven titles, respectively.

festival taking place on the legislative grounds; the costumes and interaction of guests at the Legislature figured more prominently in news stories than did policy proposals described in the government's Speech from the Throne. Routine partisan attacks were virtually, and often explicitly, absent from coverage, as the event was brought to life through a narrative of provincial unity and prosperity. Conversely, in the latter half of the century, the legislative opening was framed as politics-as-usual. During these years coverage of the opening ignored the pomp and ceremony of the occasion; it was dominated, instead, by commentary on the Throne Speech, assessments of partisan strategy, and depictions of conflict among politicians, journalists, interest groups, and citizen stakeholders. Once framed as a multidimensional variety-show centring on the activities of provincial High Society, the ritual has been transformed into a forum for the symbolic performance of rational debate among competing interests in Ontario society.

**Research problem: Standard political science interpretations of the legislative opening**

Political science interpretations of the legislative opening in Canada are conceptually restricted by a prevailing disposition to view the event as an exclusively parliamentary affair. To rephrase, the traditional organizing principles around which definitions of the legislative opening are constructed have effectively cordoned off alternative ways of interpreting the ceremony—ways which have the potential to generate rich new ideas about the nature and evolution of politics in Canada. When the topic of parliamentary openings is discussed at all—it is worth noting that neither the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* nor *Canadian Parliamentary Review* has ever published a study about parliamentary openings, and no monograph devotes itself to the matter—it tends to occur against the backcloth of an investigation of: the administration of Parliament; the ceremonial functions of the Crown; or the government's (explicit or hidden) agenda. Moreover, despite institutional and cultural differences that divide the bicameral Parliament at Ottawa from the unicameral Houses of the provinces, virtually every scholarly description of the parliamentary opening refers to the federal scene. The study of legislatures in Canada is without provincially-oriented conceptions of this key constitutive ritual. The following three-part framework summarizes standard political science interpretations of the event, points to their conceptual limitations, and introduces the contributions of this dissertation's new media history

approach.

*The administration of parliament*

Perhaps more frequently than any other conceptual link, the Opening of Parliament is discussed in connection with its practical parliamentary functions. These sorts of statements can be further divided into those concerned with time, and those concerned with space. With respect to the former, the ritual is cast as the enabling mechanism of Parliament's commencement. The main point here is that there are "a number of smaller cycles within the life of a Parliament" (Whittington and Van Loon 1996, 519), and each of these parliamentary sessions "begins with a formal statement of what the government intends to do" (White, Wagenberg, and Nelson 1972, 129). Only after the Speech from the Throne comes "the first opportunity available to the House of Commons" to address any other particular concern (Ward 1987, 139). Yes, convention holds that prior to debate on the Throne Speech, the leader of the government will introduce a pro forma bill in order to demonstrate the power of the House to consider business at its leisure (Hambleton 1951); but even this ancient rite can be performed only after the delivery of the Speech itself. By analogy, from the temporal perspective, the opening ceremony is to legislatures what the starter's pistol is to a marathon: a signal that the game has begun.

In contrast to temporally-based analyses, Mallory's (1984) discussion of the opening is found in a chapter on the Canadian Senate. This choice is especially interesting given that the same book contains chapters on both the formal and political executives in Canada (33-75; 76-125). Discussing the ritual in the context of Parliament's Upper House—the space in which the federal Throne Speech is delivered—indicates that Mallory places high priority on the ceremony's physical setting. Also driven by spatial concerns, Jackson and Atkinson (1980) emphasize the ritual's contribution to what here will be called intra-parliamentary bonding. Parliament's individual components are rarely examined as a whole (Smith 2003); yet the parliamentary opening is a most obvious case of "'Parliament Assembled' in its three constituent parts: the House of Commons, the Senate and the Sovereign" (Marleau 1988, 3). Evoking intra-parliamentary bonding, Smith (1995) discusses the Throne Speech in a chapter entitled "The Crown-in-Parliament" (110-133; see also Docherty 2005), and Hogg (1993) notes that one of the

governor general's powers is the ability "to summon into session the members of the elective lower house" (22). Although temporal qualities are not absent from the picture, spatially-based interpretations of the ritual focus on the virtual and literal merging of different parts of Parliament.

#### *A ceremonial function of the Crown*

A second popular description of the Opening of Parliament anchors the event to the "important symbolic role in the legislative process" played by representatives of the Crown (Archer et al. 1999, 228). Smith (1995) observes that at least one former governor general actually "desired a hand in composing the throne speech," yet bearing in mind the conventional authority vested in the prime minister and cabinet, it is no surprise that this turned out to be "a goal neither [Jules Leger] nor his successors achieved" (124; see also Landes 2002, 117-18). Rather, in Canada, where most analysts (rightly or wrongly) perceive the Head of State as wielding no real political power, but acting instead as "the transmitter of legitimacy and the personification of the state" (Guy 2006, 156-7), it is common to see the Opening of Parliament cast as one of the Crown's ceremonial functions (cf. MacIvor 2006). Putting aside whatever else the ritual accomplishes, it is possible to interpret its enactment as part of the political culture imported from Great Britain—a ritual that recalls "the struggle between parliament and the crown" (Jackson and Atkinson 1980, 87). As Ricker, Saywell, and Skeoch (1982) point out, although the ceremonies surrounding the Speech from the Throne are the product of a bygone era, they offer "a reminder of the majesty and drama of a thousand years of struggle for the free institutions we enjoy today" (90).

Wallace's (1935) *A reader in Canadian civics* fails to mention the opening by name in a chapter on provincial government and one on dominion government, and yet the book does include a full two-page photo-spread of the delivery of the Throne Speech (156-7). Similarly, the hardcover of Ward's (1960) book, *Government in Canada*, features a brilliant colour photograph of Queen Elizabeth II sitting upon the Throne in the Canadian Senate. The fact that neither author explains why a photograph of this event holds such a prominent place lends support to Monet's (1979) declaration that the ritual is widely presumed to be the ultimate symbol of parliamentary politics in Canada. It should be noted that this dissertation shares conceptual ground with Monet

and others who argue that the Opening of the Legislature is an important symbol of parliamentary democracy. However, in contrast to interpretations which define the ritual as being inherently symbolic of either Crown authority or some other ancient parliamentary tradition—interpretations that view symbolic power as though it stood outside of history, fixed within artifacts and rites typically associated with Canada's British heritage—this dissertation theorizes the ceremony's symbolic qualities as being reflected in and reinforced by historically-embedded narratives articulated in mainstream mass media, and as being about the represented political order of society more broadly.

### *The government's (explicit and hidden) agenda*

A third common way of characterizing the legislative opening is to reduce the entire affair to the contents of the Throne Speech, thus interpreting the ritual as an expression of the government's agenda. It is useful, however, to subdivide this organizing principle into two different perspectives: on the one hand the Speech is interpreted as an explicit statement of government policy; on the other it is treated as a reservoir of hidden meanings, ripe for ideological analysis. Many observers note that while the Speech is delivered by the governor general, "it is prepared by the prime minister's staff" (Malcolmson and Myers 2005, 123; see also McMenemy 2006), thus "provid[ing] the cabinet with an opportunity to outline its legislative program" (Dyck 2006, 319). This makes it possible to treat the Speech itself as "an outline of what the government hopes to achieve in any given session of parliament" (Phillips 2006, 162). The Throne Speech "sets the agenda for most parliamentary business" (Franks 1987, 127); thus it is logical that Soroka (2000) uses the Speech as "an indication—albeit an inconsistent one longitudinally—of the Government's policy priorities" (114). Brooks (2004) links the event to future legislative action by listing eight proposals included in the Speech of 2002; and Docherty (2005) strengthens this connection by noting that "almost all bills that flow from the speech are considered matters of confidence for the government" (141). Former cabinet minister Mitchell Sharp (1989) cautions that the Speech should be used to "give Parliament an indication of the legislation the government intends to place before it", not as "a vehicle of government propaganda" (16).

A handful of other observers have shown less interest in the specific policies outlined in

the Speech, instead examining the documents as if they contained clues about underlying features of a particular government or era in Canadian history (see Brodie 2002, 2003; White 1971; see also Weber 1979 on the Queen's Speech in Great Britain). For example, Evans (2006) argues that the Throne Speech can be viewed as a contract within the government itself, textual evidence of which ministries were successful in their bids to have projects approved for future legislative action. On this view, centuries-old bickering over proximity to the King at public rituals (see Trout 1977) finds present-day form in jockeying for position within the Throne Speech. A different interpretation is Brodie's (2003) effort to use transcripts of the Speech to "provide a historical record of how different ideas about Canada and 'Canadianness' are evoked in order to rally support for governing practices and public policies" (21). Specifically, she examines federal Throne Speeches since Confederation and identifies the discursive construction of three ideal-type Canadians: "The Imperial Subject", 1867-early 1940s; "The Caring-Sharing Canadian", 1943-late 1970s; and "The Entrepreneurial Canadian", 1980-present (21-29). Not only is the analysis innovative, but it makes a compelling argument about how national myths can change over time.

### **A media history approach to the legislative opening**

It should come as no surprise that parliamentary issues are well represented in scholarly texts. The opening is a parliamentary affair; but is it exclusively thus? Reflecting back upon the three standard interpretations of the ritual, it becomes apparent that what has been consistently excluded from debate is the People—Canada's great unwashed. Whatever else modern politics is about, surely it is about relations between citizens and governments (cf. Schroder and Phillips 2007); and although the Canadian citizenry is not the only audience for which the opening is performed, it does constitute a significant audience, perhaps not by rule, but certainly by convention. Political science has failed to theorize the democratic implications of this constitutive ritual. Where are citizens located in relation to the legislative opening? In what shapes are the bonds between rulers and ruled represented in public narratives? Have these narratives changed over time? And how can citizens be introduced into scholarly assessments of the opening?

In treating the Speech from the Throne as an expression of the ideal Canadian, Brodie's work succeeds in bringing the citizen a step into the frame of analysis. However, this work also makes an unstated assumption that weakens its overall contribution. By emphasizing the importance of the depiction of the ideal Canadian offered in the Speech, Brodie implies that this message—the message of the Speech itself—circulates among the people it works to define. For example, the observation that during the First World War, “the speeches praised the Canadian people and, especially, Canadian soldiers for their bravery” (22), is strongly suggestive that Canadians are listening to (or watching, or reading) the Speech. When noting that “in the present era, the ideal Canadian, indeed all Canadians... have been asked to play their part” in improving Canada's place in the neoliberal global economy, it appears that Brodie believes that the Speech has spread beyond the walls of Parliament (26-7). But how does the Speech make its way into the public sphere? The question is never asked.

Yes, the legislative opening embodies a government's vision—in an hour-long Speech, the event expresses grand sentiments and articulates grand objectives. Yes, it is a highly symbolic affair, one capable of reflecting “historical traditions which remain important and are recognized and reinforced through the continuation of the ceremonial features” (Tindal 2000, 142). It is *the promise* of parliamentary politics, in both literal and figurative senses of the term. “By incorporating the people, the House creates the nation” (Smith 2007, 5); therefore, the legislative opening should be viewed as an act of national affirmation, “the symbolic elaboration of the commonalities claimed by groups calling themselves nations” (Spillman 1994, 4; cf. Miedema 1999; Weinroth 1998). Borrowing from Boyer's (1983) analysis of political conventions, through the opening ritual, “democracy is not only done, but is seen to be done” (11; cf. Pfau 2006). And this legitimizing function is essential, for in a healthy democracy “even when they are not persuaded of the merits of the action finally taken, the public should feel at least that their [sic] concerns were considered and that the process of decision-making had legitimacy” (Dobell and Berry 1992, 3). It is practically political gospel to suggest that for representatives and their actions to be effective, “they need to be visibly connected to their constituents and Canadians generally” (*Occasional Papers* 2003, 7; cf. Thompson 2005). But where does the public encounter the ritual that is the legislative opening? Only a fraction of the population has ever sat

in the galleries and watched live legislative debate; doubtless an even smaller proportion of that small group has been in the Legislature to see the Chamber open in the flesh.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time as they set in motion specific constitutional mechanisms, constitutive rituals symbolically express a particular way of doing politics and “may serve as texts that afford insight into the way in which political legitimacy is defined, imagined, and articulated” (Kook 2005, 152). Political ritual authorizes the “values and goals” of a political community “by establishing their iconicity with the perceived values and order of the cosmos” (Bell 1997, 129; see also Arnold 1935; Baas 1978; Cottle 2006; Geertz 2000, 2007; Kertzer 1988). But how do people come to see and hear the Opening of the Legislature in Ontario? The answer is this: Like the bulk of official political activity, the event is made public through news reports (see Black 1982; Taras 2001; Thompson 1995; Trimble 2007).

“News imparts to occurrences their *public character* as it transforms mere happenings into publicly discussable events” (Tuchman 1978, 3, italics in original), and therefore provides “not only most of the information upon which political discussion must be based, but also the interpretive frameworks that shape the debate” (Wallace and Fletcher 1984, 1; cf. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989, chap. 4). Politics and media are more than closely related spheres of activity; they are, rather, mutually reinforcing, inseparable parts of an overarching social field that more than one communication theorist has begun calling *Mediated politics* (Bennett and Entman 2001), *Media democracy* (Meyer 2002), and “the media-politics relationship” (Street 2005, 20). In his study of the ritualized “sociodrama” of presidential elections in the United States, McLeod (1999) declares that “the media coverage of the election has become the election; the media coverage is not a simulation of real events, but the actual election process itself” (369). Edelman (1988) elaborates on the theoretical assumptions underlying this interpretation when writing that “it is language about political events, not the events in any other sense, that people experience; even developments that are close by take their meaning from the language that depicts them. So political language *is* political reality; there is no other so far as the meaning of events to actors and spectators is concerned” (104, italics in original). It is a truism that politics is a performance; but it is “a mistake to try to separate political reality from political performances”

<sup>4</sup> Live broadcasts of the event have been available on radio and television for decades, but for a variety of reasons, it is not always easy to tune in, even if people wanted to.

(Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989, 173). In the words of Everett and Fletcher (2001): “For the majority of citizens in mass societies such as Canada, the principal continuing connection to leaders and institutions is provided by the words, sounds, and images circulating in the mass media” (167). Therefore, in practice, to think about the meaning for citizens of the Opening of the Legislature is to think about news coverage of the Opening of the Legislature. To understand popular interpretations of civic ritual is to analyze the interpretive frameworks used to represent civic ritual in the mainstream press.

*Research questions, methodology, qualifications*

An “interpretive explanation” of politics—“and it is a form of explanation, not just exalted glossography—trains its attention on what institutions, actions, images, utterances, events, customs, all the usual objects of social-scientific interest, mean to those whose institutions, actions, customs, and so on they are” (Geertz 2000, 22). On the assumption that major political events reach the bulk of newsreader/citizens not through face-to-face encounters, but through mass mediated representations (Fletcher and Gottlieb 1990; Taras 2001), the dissertation addresses the following research questions: Over the course of the twentieth century, what have been the defining characteristics and dominant themes of newspaper coverage of the legislative opening in Ontario? If news helps to frame “social meaning by imposing a coherent interpretation on the whirl of events and actions around us” (Fisher 2003, 162), how have newspapers framed the meaning of the legislative opening; and in what ways have *mediated processes of ritualization* changed over time? Finally, what do answers to the first two questions suggest about the evolution of political symbolism in Ontario? What can be concluded by studying transformations in the shared but unstated knowledge inherent in prevailing news narratives (cf. van Dijk 1988a, 1988b, 1991), the implicit assumptions in news stories that are necessary for the ritual to be made meaningful in the eyes of both journalists and newsreaders?

To answer these questions, the dissertation conducts textual analysis on twentieth century coverage of the legislative opening in four widely-circulating Ontario newspapers: the *Toronto Evening Telegram* (*Telegram* from 1949 to 1971), *Toronto Globe* (*Globe and Mail* since 1936), *Toronto Daily Star* (*Star* since 1971), and *Toronto Sun*. Produced by a method of maximum

variation sampling, the textual corpus includes 660 newspaper items relating to 22 opening ceremonies that occurred between 1900 and 2007. As chapter 2 explains, qualitative textual analysis is operationalized through a coding schedule that includes categories from Foss' (2004) narrative analysis and Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) framing analysis. Quantitative content analysis is used to support arguments arising out of qualitative coding (cf. Seale 2003). Five interviews with journalists and other people working at Queen's Park supplement textual research.

Bearing in mind the argument that civic rituals of the nation-state shed light on how political legitimacy is “defined, imagined and articulated” (Kook 2005, 152), what reasons justify a study of the legislative opening in Ontario, as opposed to one focused on Parliament at Ottawa? The answer, in short, is that Ontario itself is but a subnational form of the national community. Without diminishing the legitimacy of non-state-based group identities, it is worth being reminded that the nature of the bond among Ontarians is juridical, as well as cultural: Canada's federal framework “is a system of divided loyalties: each [Canadian] is a citizen of both a province and a country, ruled by two different governments” (Malcolmson and Myers 2005, 84). National symbols and rituals “provide an explanation of the world and one's position in it” (Franks 1993, 63); but so too do those of the provinces. Therefore, although it is true that what little writing has been done on legislative opening ceremonies in Canada has been directed toward the federal scene, the fact that virtually nothing has been said about the ceremony in Ontario points to the paucity of research about political symbolism in the provinces and, subsequently, one of the primary reasons for the present study.

As Brownsey and Howlett (2001) point out, “one of the most neglected areas in the study of Canadian history and politics is the development of the provincial state” (13). By analyzing journalism about Ontario politics in a way that builds on Whittington and Van Loon's depiction of legislatures as “symbol[s] of our system of governance” (1996, 507; cf. Sabha 2003), the study contributes to the relatively recent growth in research that views Ontario as a distinct political culture. Despite being “the largest, most powerful, and wealthiest province in Canada... [Ontario] has been called the 'unknown province’” (Mills 1994, 296), for at times it has been “too easy to view its affairs as national” (Jones 1982, 105). As Wiseman (1996) notes, “of course, Canada is

neither Ontario writ large, nor is Ontario a microcosm of Canada” (47), an obvious statement, perhaps, albeit one that goes a considerable distance toward justifying a provincially-based study of political symbolism. There is no need to go as far as Jones (1982) and suggest that “all parts of Canada are a part of Ontario's experience” (115), in order to appreciate the desire to learn more about the production and maintenance of political culture in Ontario. Geographic boundaries, legislative jurisdiction, and a social network of people and industry constitute a unique, even if understudied, political community (cf. Careless 1969). Focused generally upon the maintenance of the politics of the nation-state, but specifically upon political practice at the subnational level, this mediated approach to civic ritual in Ontario sheds new localized light upon “nationalism as a central discursive formation in the modern world” (Calhoun 1997, 123; cf. Menzies, Adamoski, and Chunn 2002).

But why newspaper coverage? Why not focus on new media technologies, or compare coverage among mass media? First, despite the tremendous growth of electronic news over the course of the twentieth century, from radio, to television, to the internet, and the concomitant decline of newspaper circulation, print news continues to be uniquely authoritative in the sphere of public affairs (see Bird 2001; Desbarats 1996; Hall 2001; Wallace and Fletcher 1984). “While North Americans rely more heavily on television than newspapers as a news source, prestigious dailies... still tend to set the news agenda for the broadcasting media” (Hackett, Pinet, and Ruggles 1996, 261). Despite the fact that television news is the choice of more consumers, a study of dominant political discourse is right to examine press coverage.<sup>5</sup>

Second, a study of newspapers is justified on the grounds that print is the only form of mass media to span the entire twentieth century. Not only is it more practicable to access historical newspapers as opposed to newscasts, but staying focused on print media avoids the theoretical and methodological problems arising in a study that analyzes one form of media over several decades, before adding a different form later on. This is not to say that such an investigation is either impossible or undesirable; nor is it to say that this dissertation ignores

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting here that despite the growing popularity of the internet, the 2000 Canadian Federal Election study reported that “very few Canadians (1 percent)... used the Internet as their main source of information about the election... [and] only one Canadian in six reported *ever* using the Internet to be informed about politics” (Gidengil et al. 2004, 31, italics in original).

television altogether. On the contrary, it is widely understood that “the rise to dominance of TV has had both a direct and indirect impact on the way newspapers report public affairs” (Fletcher 1981, 108), and that “newspapers have co-opted some aspects of the later-arriving electronic media” (Bird 2001, 29). As chapter 4 argues, one of the best ways to understand the movement from celebratory to critical coverage of the Opening of the Legislature in Ontario is by examining the emergent discursive forms and norms of television news and the subsequent pressures on competing media industries (cf. Bird 2001; Donovan and Scherer 1992; Rutherford 1990; Taras 1990; Williams 1975). But regardless of the potentially interesting insights that would come from in-depth comparison of print and electronic coverage of the legislative opening, such questions lie outside the focus of the present study.

### **Empirical findings and theoretical contributions**

The main finding of the textual analysis is that the meaning of the legislative opening changed significantly between 1900 and 2007. To be sure, certain aspects of the ritual have remained constant; for example, the event has always included a Speech from the Throne and it has always authorized the start of a new legislative session. These aspects of the ritual, the legitimizing functions within Canada's system of parliamentary government, are the ones most frequently described in the field of political science. However, looked at through the lens of the mass media, the symbolism surrounding the event has undergone a substantial transformation. In the first four decades of the century, journalists understood the ceremony itself—the scene and setting at Queen's Park—to be the most salient issue of the day. Clear connections were drawn between the physical performance of activities on the legislative grounds, and the health and strength of Ontario society in general. Year after year the “tide of femininity and fashion [that] swept over the parliament buildings” (*Star* 5 February 1930, 27) over the course of the ceremonies was read as confirmation of Ontario's bright future. Whatever else it was, the opening was “a social function. Mere statesmen were backed into the obscurity of the back seats... while society had its fling. And what a day society made of it!” (*Telegram* 16 February 1915, 4). Even the editorial page was known to interpret a “clear, cold, bright day” surrounding the “gala display” as constituting “happy auspices” for the “banner Province of the Dominion” (*Globe* 15 February

1900, 6). The crush of the crowd, the dazzling attire of prominent guests, and the stateliness of the royal procession were held up as examples of Ontario's wealth and prosperity. The ritual was understood to mark a moment of rest in the routine battle of legislative politics. Good humour—on the floor of the House, in the galleries, at post-Throne Speech tea, and indeed, in newspaper pages—held sway for the day, as expressions of nonpartisan provincial unity replaced the aggressive tone typical of parliamentary debate and press coverage. Newspapers depicted the event as a holiday, a performance of life in Ontario; but, in accordance with the prevailing press values of the era—modernity, order, harmony, and sanity (Rutherford 1982)—it was a celebration that operated in the service of order and consensus.

Postwar news coverage, though less concerned about the aesthetic components of the ceremony and less colourful in its depiction of events on the legislative grounds, was no less active in producing a symbolic image of Ontario democracy. However, rather than reproducing narratives about the multidimensional ceremony at the capital, the Politics as Usual frame, which emerged in the 1950s and 1960s and rose to dominance in the 1970s, interpreted the ritual as a day for rational-critical debate about a policy document—namely, the Speech from the Throne. New journalistic forms were used to analyze the Throne Speech from new angles. For instance, opening-day news conferences exposed the government to interrogation from a more professional corps of journalists and offered the opposition an unprecedented forum to express policy ideas (and partisan attacks) within the context of the ritual. Multiple stories analyzing individual policies became the norm; they replaced older narrative forms, including verbatim accounts of the Throne Speech. Perhaps most important, the birth of direct quotations from government and opposition MPPs, interest group spokespeople, and ordinary citizens, contributed to a mediated conversation about provincial policy that simply was not a part of the ritual prior to World War II. As chapter 5 argues, by the end of the 1960s, newspaper columnists had emerged as expert commentators within this expanded “Sphere of Legitimate Controversy” (Hallin 1986, 116-7).

By the final decades of the twentieth century the meaning of the ritual was no longer understood to be embedded in activity at Queen's Park. Instead, it was situated in the intangible sphere of rational discourse, where policy ideas and partisan strategy could be explained and

debated among citizen-newsreaders across the province. The event continued to be set apart from the work-a-day world of politics and society—the predictive and prescriptive nature of the Throne Speech imbued the day with the sense of specialness and transformation characteristic of civic ritual (Bell 1997; Kertzer 1988; Goodin 1978). But overall, the modes of social interaction constituting the event shifted from the corporeal to the cognitive: “ritual appeals to higher forces and designs” (Bell 1997, 130) changed from embodied interaction at Queen's Park to the performance of rational decision-making and partisan competition among politicians, journalists, and extra-parliamentary groups and individuals. The Opening of the Legislature no longer symbolized the ideal of social order in a British colonial outpost, but rather the ideal of a vibrant, multicultural liberal-pluralist democracy.

At the same time as it reveals shifts in mediated processes of ritualization and, indeed, in the meaning of the centrepiece of the parliamentary calendar, the dissertation also points to changes in the public character of journalists, politicians, and citizens. Of course there are limits to what one study of a single civic ceremony can explain about Ontario politics; but it cannot be denied that the implications of specific developments in the history of news about the legislative opening extend beyond the narrow realm of legislative ritual to reveal broader changes in the provincial public sphere. The disappearance of the discursive connection between the ritual and Ontario's colonial status; the proliferation of quotations from MPPs and stakeholders; the emergence of political columnists who pronounce judgment on the event; the sharp rise in expressions of partisanship—all of this is suggestive of an evolution in the roles and responsibilities assumed by various parts of Ontario society.

The fact that mediated processes of ritualization have shifted from expressions of solidarity on the legislative grounds to rational debate among competing interests does not necessarily mean that representations of provincial political culture are now without a sense of social cohesion; but it does suggest that the appearance of meaningful pluralism has come to occupy a more central place in Ontario's “social imaginary” (see Taylor 2004, chap. 2), and that within the sphere of legislative politics a break from partisan scripts is increasingly unavailable. Moreover, adding support to the work of scholars who note the rising authority of political reporters within the realm of parliamentary politics (ex. Kaplan 2002; Nesbitt-Larking 2007;

Rutherford 1990; Taras 1990), the dissertation documents a shift in journalistic attitudes to events at the legislative opening. Choosing to cover some things and not others, journalists at the opening once positioned themselves as uncritical stenographers, if not gleeful cheerleaders; in recent decades they have changed their focus and assumed the role of public watchdogs. This trend has not only made extra-parliamentary actors more central players within policy debate surrounding a ritual of legislative sovereignty, but also, as chapters 5 and 6 argue, it has effectively replaced a celebration of communal identity with a demonstration of journalistic expertise. The dissertation provides empirical evidence of the growing power of the media within the sphere of legislative politics and, in turn, suggests that the Assembly as a place has lost some of its centrality and authority (cf. Meyer 2002).

The study also contributes much-needed empirical analysis to recent debates about mediated ritual in the burgeoning field of media anthropology (Alexander and Jacobs 1998; Becker 1995; Coman and Rothenbuhler 2005; Couldry 2003; Couldry and Rothenbuhler 2007; Cottle 2006, 2008; Ettema 1997; Lardellier 2005; Rothenbuhler 1998). Specifically, it problematizes what is often characterized as a simple binary between functionalist and process-oriented research on secular ritual (see esp. Bell 1992, 1997; Couldry 2003, 2005; Handelman 1998). Drawing on neo-Durkheimian theorists to argue that the legislative opening is a symbolically-laden, regularly occurring, subjunctive, serious, social performance (Bocock 1974; Chaney 1983; Dayan and Katz 1992; Rothenbuhler 1998; 2006), the legislative opening is interpreted as what Goodin (1978) terms “a constitutive ritual”. However, as chapter 2 explains, rather than allowing this categorization to determine conclusions about the ritual's social effects, or about precisely how the event is made meaningful within the public sphere, the dissertation builds upon recent work that advocates studying the social processes of “ritualization”, that is, ritual “as *form of action*” (Cottle 2008, 138, italics in original; Bell 1992, 1997; Couldry 2003, 2005). What specific communal assumptions, social performances, relations of power, and limitations on action effectively come together to create this ritualized experience? The dissertation's longitudinal empirical analysis, which has made it possible to identify historically distinct processes of ritualization governing the public expression of a single civic ritual, is an original contribution to media anthropology.

Finally, conclusions regarding changes to the ritual itself, and how these changes articulate with different parts of Ontario democracy, are pulled together to make an overarching claim about the need for the study of politics in Canada to develop new theoretical and empirical approaches that attend to the inextricable connections between politics and media. There is still truth in Wallace and Fletcher's (1984) decades-old critical commentary about the low status given to media in studies of politics in Canada. To note but one telling example, in Savoie's (2006) recent favourable review of Docherty's (2005) contribution to *The Canadian Democratic Audit*, the book is praised for dealing "with virtually all important aspects of the Canadian Parliament and provincial legislatures" (426). Doubtless Docherty's book is an insightful assessment of numerous issues central to legislatures in Canada, but it does not analyze mediated constructions of the legislative world. This is a problem, for without viewing the legislature through the lens of the mass media, Docherty misses a valuable chance to connect the legislature, the central democratic institution of the political community, to the citizenry at large. The fact that Savoie sees nothing wrong with Docherty's oversight—indeed, he appears not even to notice it—is indicative of the fundamental assumption in mainstream Canadian political science that politics and media, although related in some ways, are essentially separate spheres of life. This dissertation argues against that traditional view. It provides a case study in order to urge political scientists to do more than note the power of media to shape public opinion and then go back to isolating political institutions from what Hartley (1996) calls "the mediasphere... the context within which mainstream journalism actually circulates" (13). Certainly, on one level, news does report information about individuals, events, and institutions. The crucial point to understand, however, is that in doing so, news also "defines and redefines, constitutes and reconstitutes social meanings" (Tuchman 1978, 196). Daily news reports are powerful: "We read them; but they form us" (Terdiman 1999, 372). The mediated approach taken here constitutes one innovative way to address the fact that politics cannot be separated from processes of mass mediated representation. Political institutions will be more fully understood only after examining how they are brought to life in the news.

In contrast to the predictable results of trying to pin down just exactly what the legislative opening is, a project that works to demonstrate ways in which the ritual has been variously

depicted in news coverage thrives in the rich world of ambiguities. It lays the foundation for a perspective from which the opening can be viewed as both practical *and* ceremonial, anachronistic *and* relevant, capable of producing both arousal *and* quiescence; it sees policy *and* posturing, plans *and* uncertainties, fears *and* assurances; it notes promises *and* failures, power *and* fragility, past *and* future. Most important, in a way that challenges Resnick's (1984) thesis that Parliament and People are inherently at odds with one another, it creates a space for thinking about the legislative opening through the eyes of the person (with the paper)-on-the-street. As the cultural approach to the study of mediated citizenship suggests, while that person may well use legislative news to acquire information about government policy, he or she "is also just as likely to embrace political material that expresses, reifies, confirms, or celebrates the core beliefs and values he or she connects to the state, or those things that affirm his or her identity as a citizen" (Jones 2006, 369). To refer to the "symbolic creativity", or "semiotic productivity" inherent in sense-making practices (see Street 2000, 24) is not meant to suggest that a thought experiment about how people interpret parliamentary news coverage is a substitute for different ways of fostering political efficacy. Indeed, surely another ambiguity would be the tension between the opening as symbol-of-citizen-power and symbol-of-government-domination. But to argue that it is exclusively one or the other is to overlook a mountain of variegated news coverage that has to a great extent changed shape over the past one hundred years.

### **Chapter overview**

Chapter 2 elaborates on the argument that news plays a central role in the social construction of reality. After discussing the processes through which news produces both information and publics, the chapter reviews literature on media and ritual, and describes the analytical advantages of an approach to news coverage of Ontario's legislative opening that draws on both functionalist and process-oriented ritual research within the broader context of media history. The final part of the chapter, the research methods section, explains the construction of the textual corpus, as well as the coding procedures used in the operationalization of narrative analysis and framing analysis.

Chapter 3 is the first of two empirical chapters; it examines the dominant news

narratives used to make sense of the legislative opening between 1900 and 1945. With the purpose of bringing readers into the foreign mental universe of the variety-show that was the ritual through the frame of Social Celebration, the chapter opens with a chronological account of the day-long event as it was described in newspapers of the era. After explaining the form and popularity of the ceremony in relation to Ontario's self-styled British culture, the chapter concludes by arguing that the ritual was defined by the diversity of its constituent parts, and the unity of its meta-narrative. Providing examples in which newspaper items managed social tensions by downplaying conflict and, instead, emphasizing Ontario unity, the chapter concludes that the ceremony's multidimensional nature was understood to operate in the service of social order and consensus.

Chapter 4 analyzes news coverage in the second half of the twentieth century. It begins by describing the decoupling and gradual demise of the Social Celebration frame. Against the backdrop of Ontario's rapid postwar industrialization and modernizing forces in the economic, political, and social spheres, the chapter charts the emergence of a more professional, more aggressive type of coverage of the legislative opening; that is, the various assumptions and techniques that come together to form the frame of Politics as Usual. Noting the remarkably short period of time in which the multidimensionality of the ritual was replaced by narrow interest in the Speech from the Throne, the chapter identifies a host of developments connected to the birth of a new type of journalistic professionalism. Arguing that newspapers turn the event into a special occasion by material drawn from the everyday world of legislative politics, the chapter concludes that the ritual has become a forum for the symbolic performance of rational debate. The legislative opening is now a symbol of the ideal of liberal-pluralism.

Chapter 5 uses Daniel Hallin's (1986) work on mediated boundary maintenance in order to bring the century's two dominant news frames into comparative context. Comparing Social Celebration and Politics as Usual by dividing journalistic perspectives into three discursive spheres—the Sphere of Consensus, the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy, and the Sphere of Deviance—the chapter discusses the democratic implications of the major shifts in mediated processes of ritualization. It concludes that the century's pivotal change in discursive boundary maintenance is the dramatic expansion in the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy, a development

that should give pause to media malaise theorists who take for granted what Schudson (1997) calls the “decline-and-fall” view of modern mass media. However, after noting the positive aspects of increasing extra-parliamentary representation in a policymaking ritual of parliamentary government, the chapter closes by analyzing specific ways in which the emergent symbolics of rational-critical debate legitimize specific types of political inequality, despite being cast as a neutral forum in which meaningful pluralism can thrive.

Chapter 6 discusses the dissertation's empirical and theoretical contributions in light of the possibilities opened up by an interdisciplinary approach to politics. It summarizes the study's main findings, acknowledges both its limitations and its larger implications regarding the need to inquire further into the dilemma of maintaining common rituals in late capitalist, multicultural society, and suggests possibilities for future research.

Newspaper coverage of the legislative opening offers a glimpse into shared understandings of political legitimacy. An historical approach to the media ritual sheds light upon ways in which these understandings have evolved. In contrast to increasingly popular statements about how politics in recent years has become more sensational and less serious, more image-based and less policy-oriented (Compton 2004; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Striech 2000), this dissertation describes the *de-sensationalization*, or the rationalization, of a key political symbol in Ontario. Turning away from the time-honoured pomp and circumstance of the legislative ritual and focusing, instead, upon government policy, partisan battle, and extra-parliamentary participation in legislative politics, newspaper coverage has played a crucial role in transforming the ancient centrepiece of the parliamentary calendar into a ritualized representation of dominant values in an advanced industrial, multicultural, liberal-pluralist society.

At the same time as they map unexplored parts of Ontario history, the following chapters provide new insights into the representation of political legitimacy in transition. While this issue is central to the broadest questions about “the way in which we organize our social life together, and the power-relations which this involves” (Eagleton 1996, 169), central, that is, to *the* questions of politics, it is especially significant in a parliamentary system such as Canada's—one that relies largely upon convention in the practice and maintenance of political authority. And in this particular historical moment, as a chorus of political observers declares that we are living in

the midst of a crisis of legitimacy, a widespread democratic malaise, the issue is essential to thinking about what politics might become, as well as what it ought to become, in the times and lives ahead (cf. Nevitte 1996; Gidengil et al. 2004; Nadeau and Giasson 2003; Stoker 2006).

## Chapter 2: Theoretical perspective and research methods

### Social constructionism

The theoretical perspective that guides this dissertation stems from the large body of research which views news as an integral part of the social construction of reality. On the understanding that “our human experience is literally meaningless when separated from our capacity to think, feel, and convey our thoughts and feelings to others through a range of commonly understood symbols” (Nesbitt-Larking 2007, 9), the dissertation adopts Hartley’s (1996) position that, “as *the* sense-making practice of modernity, journalism is the most important textual system in the world” (32, italics added). The philosophical underpinnings of this approach are rooted in what different scholars refer to as the “interpretive” (Burrell and Morgan 1969; Geertz 1973, 2000), “narrative” (Bormann 1985; Fisher 1984, 1985), or “constructionist” paradigm (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Phillips and Jorgenson 2002). Positioning itself in opposition to positivist epistemological approaches that conceive of reality as an ontological field operating outside social sense-making practices, one that is both objective and universally knowable through standardized methods of empirical analysis, the constructionist approach defines reality as a story emerging through a process of constant social negotiation (Berger and Luckmann 1966). On this view, meaning is not something that stands apart from social interaction, nor can it be said to reside *in* anything, whether this painting, that word, these stones, or those books (Hartley 2002). To the social constructionist, meaning is actively produced—continuously made and remade—through shared and contested interpretations of actions, objects, feelings, relationships, ideas, and so on (Hall 1997). Even when nothing seems to be progressing, reality is a work in progress.

Social constructionists do not argue that there is no such thing as reality; on the contrary, they acknowledge that different realities exist at different times and others coexist simultaneously. There is, indeed, a taken-for-granted reality of “everyday life”, in which we experience as real both natural (for example, the weather) and human interactions. In their seminal articulation of the social constructionist viewpoint, Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest that customs, morals, laws, and institutions can be called “objective” insofar as they seem to exist in an “external reality”. Nevertheless, “it is important to keep in mind that the objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced,

constructed objectivity. [...] In other words, despite the objectivity that marks the social world in human experience, it does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human activity that produced it” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 60-61). The constructionist project rejects the request to tell the world “like it is” and, instead, inquires about the connective processes through which worlds are made to seem as they do. Truth, Goodness, Love, Hate, Evil, Lies—these concepts are very much *real* in the way that they help people categorize and explain the world around them, but the source of their reality is shared social knowledge. To put the point aphoristically: “socially constructed reality is real reality” (Rothenbuhler 1998, 57).

At its best, social constructionism trains analytical sights on aspects of the world which hide their contingency and challenges the taken-for-grantedness of social affairs and the relations of power maintained by normal cultural practices (cf. Thompson 1990). For example, there is little doubt that the modern world turns upon the notion of “dailiness.” Dailiness is real to the extent that economy, education, religion, and rest are informed by the idea of the day-after-day-after-day. What could be more natural than dailiness? Yet, as Barthes (1972) demonstrates beautifully in his famous *Mythologies*, it is this very question—*What could be more natural?*—that is the social constructionist's call to arms. And as Terdiman (1999) argues, though the sun rises and falls at regular intervals, the concept of dailiness is no force of nature; rather, it came into being largely as a result of the growth of the daily press (see also Anderson 2006). He goes on to argue that because it is the dominant storyteller about public affairs, “the newspaper calls for investigation beyond its quotidian banality precisely *because of its quotidian banality*” (356, italics in original). We know what we mean by “daily”; millions of lives are structured around this mass hallucination. The question is: Which stories are given prominence and which are ignored through being represented by the machine that breaks life into days? This is the social constructionist's mantra: what seems natural resides, in fact, in history. Meaning-making is a dialectical process: human expression constructs and repairs social reality within the confines of a reality constructed and repaired by human expression (Carey 1989; Phillips and Jorgensen 2002).

Emphasizing the role of interaction in reality-construction should not be taken to suggest that it is useless to study cultural texts in the hopes of learning more about how meaning is made.

In other words, the fact that the meanings of a text depend to some extent upon the historical context and reading practices through which the text is confronted (cf. Hall 1980) does not invalidate textual analysis as a method of research. Texts are the footprints of process. And although the basic assumption of social constructionism is that reality and meaning are inherently malleable, the reason that this epistemological approach is such an insightful way of understanding human experience is that, even as it calls attention to the historical contingency of the organization of bodies and ideas—the complex networks of assumptions, routines, and rules which comprise our “structures of feeling” (Williams 1977, 132)—it simultaneously highlights the ways in which social processes make the world seem as though meaning is immutable. The upshot of a theoretical perspective which views cultural texts as reality-making in action is that texts cannot be reduced to truth or lie, right or wrong, fact or fiction (cf. Foucault 1990). By contrast, whatever their guise or perceived credibility, cultural texts are manifestations of the unending process of reality-maintenance—contributions to the dialogue of lived existence—and, as such, clues about the nature of reality in a particular time and place.

For example, in 2007, in response to a single *Globe and Mail* article that remarked upon the choice of clothing of the Governor General and prime minister at the Opening of Parliament at Ottawa, one angry *Globe and Mail* reader saw his words appear among daily letters to the editor:

Score another one for the chattering classes. With all the newsworthy items to be had regarding the Throne Speech, why does The Globe think readers need to know the Governor-General 'chose to wear a classic black skirt suit with a silk shawl collar designed by Montrealer Michel Desjardins...'[?]

Similarly, is it news 'the Prime Minister wore a conservative dark suit and red tie and not the dove-grey formal suit that prime ministers usually wear to the occasion'?

The wardrobe focus has no place in an ostensibly serious political report. This sort of fluff is best left to the society page. And the society page, with all its inane gossip, is best left out of The Globe. (Parish 18 October, A18)

The letter makes two noteworthy assumptions. The first is that the Speech from the Throne is the main feature of the parliamentary event and should be treated as such; and second, that newspaper stories that attend to questions running beyond the boundaries of rational policy debate abdicate their democratic responsibility to keep citizens informed about the affairs of

government. The article to which the letter refers is an outlier among modern news coverage of the opening: it sits under a banner specially marking the report as a note on “imagery and symbolism” (Taber *Globe and Mail* 17 October 2007, A7). However, in the context of this discussion of social constructionist theory, the important point to consider is not that the *Globe* printed a story that broke with standard reportorial practices. What is remarkable is that popular assumptions about the ceremony's meaning are so deeply ingrained in public discourse that all it took was a single reference to the prime minister's suit for a vigilant citizen to cry foul on behalf of his political community. To borrow a phrase from Geertz's (2000) “Common sense as a cultural system”, the dominant assumption about the form and function of the ceremonial Opening of the Legislature “lies so artlessly before our eyes that it is almost impossible to see” (92). And yet, as empirical analysis of historical newspaper coverage demonstrates, commonsense interpretations about the meaning of the ritual are not immutable; rather, it has taken different forms at different points during the past one hundred years.

### **News as culture**

#### *News produces stories*

Two main reasons explain why the study of mass mediated news is essential to understanding politics and culture. First, news is a privileged type of story about the infinite stories that run through space and time. If news is “a story about reality” (Bird and Dardenne 1997, 346), then journalists are “among the pre-eminent story-tellers of modern society” (Allen 1999, 83), the “professional story-tellers of our age” (Bell 1991, 147). There is an element of truth in the cliché that news is information about what is “new”, but to define news simply as the public manifestation of preexisting narratives neglects the social processes through which news assumes its elevated position (Schudson 2000; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Tuchman 1978). As Hall et al. (1978) explain: “The media do not simply and transparently report events which are 'naturally' newsworthy *in themselves*. 'News' is the end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories” (53, italics in original).

Part of what makes news a distinctive type of discourse is its promise to deliver a special

kind of public knowledge—one that is capable of explaining even the inexplicable (see Barnett 2005; Kitch 2003). Different stories compose the daily newspaper, but each one joins a silent chorus in singing: “This is news!” Recall the motto of the *New York Times*—“All the news that's fit to print”—implying at once that news exists prior to printing and that this particular collection of paper provides a comprehensive view of the world. In earlier times, too, news has claimed to be an authority, even when the authoritative statement has been admittedly lewd, lighthearted, or one-sided (Darnton 2000; Hartley 1996). For example, while journalists of the pre-revolutionary French press made no claim to journalistic objectivity, by focusing upon “the gossip, glances, affairs, scandals, sexuality, potency and sexual performances” of France's King and Queen, they assumed a special position from which to criticize “the political legitimacy of the monarchy” (Hartley 1996, 12-3; see also Darnton 2000, esp. 11-19). Describing a shift in the legitimacy claims asserted by the press in Canada, Rutherford (1982) argues that at the turn of the twentieth century, newspapers operated as “a social authority working on behalf of consensus” (230), whereas, by the postwar period, the voice of the press had become “a sort of utility dispensing the truth about society” (233).

Over the past one-hundred and fifty years, as news production morphed from a cottage industry into a corporate enterprise of monumental money-making proportions (see Desbarats 1996; McChesney 2004), news has appealed to readers on the basis of offering an impartial account of “the facts” of everyday life (Brennan 1994; Kaplan 2002; Schudson 1978). Numerous studies have shown that between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the partisan press, the dominant producer of news for the better part of the 1800s, was gradually supplanted by a new journalistic form—one explicitly dedicated to nonpartisan coverage of a wide variety of human experiences (ex. Baldasty 1992; Sotiron 1997; Starr 2004). The partisan press was an organ of the political party, its contents largely political and unabashedly one-sided. Partisan newspapers “presented a political world and encouraged readers to view it in partisan terms. [...] They reinforced patterns of popular thought and provided the common language of politics” (McGerr 1986, 21). In Ontario, although it is true that “between 1914 and 1930 the partisan press rapidly declined” (Beaven 1983, 348), it is worth noting both that “partisan' is a notably imprecise term as a blanket description for 19th-century newspapers” (Allen 2008, 146), and that

there lingered well into the twentieth century “the partisan reporting of the old factional papers, accepted by editors, reporters, and readers as the norm” (Desbarats 1996, 20). The partisan leanings of Ontario newspapers coloured news content long after the rise of the commercial press (Tataryn 1985, 141-5); in fact, some would argue that they still do (cf. Desbarats 1996; Kesterton 1967; Knight 1998; Sonmor 1993). But there is no doubt that explicit partisanship was a much more prominent feature during the first decades of the twentieth century—a fact that makes it all the more remarkable, as chapter 3 explains, that nonpartisanship was one of the defining features of newspaper coverage of the legislative opening between 1900 and the 1950s.

Contrasting with the ideal of the partisan press, the emergent commercial press suppressed potentially unsettling partisan commentary and included non-political stories in an attempt to sell more newspapers by appealing to an untapped group of potential consumers (for example, women, the growing working class, people without strong partisan affiliations, etc.). As the twentieth century wore on, and “as circulations grew and the number of newspapers declined, it became vital for each paper to appeal to the largest possible audience. This tended to reduce the political and ideological differences that had characterized newspapers of an earlier era” (Desbarats 1996, 20). The shift from partisan to objective reporting occurred within a broader cultural context in which a growing segment of the reading public believed that information about an array of phenomena was both attainable and verifiable.

This perception that the appeal of 'facts' was intensifying among newspaper readers, arguably attributable to the ascension of 'realism' in areas as diverse as science, architecture, literature and the fine arts, encouraged journalists to strive even harder to present the information on their pages in the most literal way possible. The penny press thus began to reflect a marked preference for factual news coverage (at its most literal this would simply consist of verbatim transcripts of official statements), over ('subjective') editorial explanation. Ironically, then, as an elite press previously preoccupied with partisan interests gave way to a popular one which sought to prioritize a public interest, the goals of explanation and critique were increasingly being played down in favour of a panorama of facts ostensibly devoid of evaluative comment. (Allen 1999, 17)

Scholars continue to debate the cause, course, and consequence of the professionalization of news, but it is widely understood that the first principle of modern news is objectivity (Bennett 2007; Chalaby 1996, 1998; Kaplan 2002; Schudson 1978; Sotiron 1997). “Within the

professional ideal, events unfold independent of the media, and conventions of journalistic coverage are designed to minimize evidence of the media's presence from the representation the public sees or reads" (Becker 1995, 633). For example, "to suit factual accounts set down objectively, writers use a language that is usually plain, straightforward and clear" (Kesterton 1967, 152). Employing a common repertoire of legitimizing techniques—the inverted-pyramid story structure; quotations from experts; photographs; adherence to an industry lexicon; distinctions between report and editorial, and hard and soft news—news marks itself as the fount of reliable information on people and events near and far (Brewer and Sigelman 2002; Chalaby 1996, 1998; Cohen 2005; Hartley 1982; Thornborrow and Fitzgerald 2005; Tuchman 1973).

Although journalistic conventions, along with proud journalists and editors, serve to defend the Truth-seeking mission of news (Bennett 2007; Carey 1974; Tataryn 1985; ex. Bain 1994), the fourth-estate is not the only place where the myth of neutral news is perpetuated. Research in the liberal-pluralist tradition has helped to keep the dream alive by drawing up models of democracy based on a free, unbiased, objective press (see Curran 1991; Schudson 1991; Nesbitt-Larking 2007; Keane 1991). In a study on bias in television news, Gunter's (1997) comments are symptomatic of this scholarly point of view: "At the heart of all good journalism lies the practice of objective reporting. This means giving a full and accurate account of events being reported which reflects as closely as possible the true facts of a matter. Thus, the facts of a matter can be independently verified and shown to be true" (9). Sutter (2004) concurs: "Objectivity separates reporting and commentary, with opinion relegated to the op-ed page or to clearly labeled news analysis or commentary articles" (560). Increasingly the articulation of the liberal-pluralist vision has been phrased in the form of a lament (Langer 1998). More and more liberal-pluralists are joining critics from the Marxist tradition in arguing that the externalities of a commercial media system have turned news media into "a significant *anti-democratic* force" (McChesney 1999, 2, italics in original), one that aggravates already "serious ruptures in the civic sphere" and accelerates the "decline in citizens' engagement in democratic processes" (Hass and Steiner 2002, 325; see also Fallows 1996; Miller 1998; Postman 1985). Nevertheless, the recurring lament of the loss of an ideal media system that never existed in the first place is enduring evidence of the prevailing assumption that news is best when it is objective.

Of course, news could never be objective, for “mediated language practices do not simply relay or ‘talk about’ a reality that occurs ‘out there’... they actually constitute this reality, in the process of communication” (Chouliaraki 2000, 295). Moreover, at the same time as news is a story, a myth, a communal mental space, it is also a commodity, bought and sold on the market. Whether the object of analysis is the recent convergence of communications technologies and the concomitant “megamergers” of media organizations (Du Boff and Herman 2001; Desbarats 1996; Fletcher 1981); journalistic values sustained by profit-driven work-routines (Everett and Fletcher 2001; Hackett and Zhou 1998; Hartley 1982); or the commodification of news content (Garnham 1990; Golding and Murdock 1996) and news audiences (Mosco 1996; Smythe 1981), the influence of capitalist imperatives in mainstream Western media cannot be overstated. “In Canada, the majority of media concerns are profit-making enterprises that seek to maximize audiences and attract the advertising revenue on which they depend. The idea that news work is a calling with a higher moral purpose frequently clashes with the reality that mainstream mass media are businesses” (Everett and Fletcher 2001, 166). Thus, although Canadian historian Frank Underhill was right when, in 1955, he identified the press as one of the “chief instruments in democratic communities for mediating between the government at the centre and the citizen body at the circumference” (in Desbarats 1996, 147), the statement must be qualified with the political economic reality that “mass media do not exist primarily for the purpose of enhancing political communication” (Everett and Fletcher 2001, 166).

Critics of capitalist media argue that since becoming big business, news organizations have focused on revenue generation through advertising at the expense of the collection and dissemination of quality information. This overarching problem plays out in various ways. For example: journalists seeking information for news stories are forced to rely even more heavily on official sources (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989; Herman and Chomsky 1988); news coverage offers the average citizen, to say nothing of voices of radical dissent, “no room... to express political opinions and offer solutions to problems” (Lewis, Wahl-Jorgensen, Inthorn 2004, 154); civic discourse is represented in highly aggressive tones (Franklin 1996); commercial images and products have begun to infiltrate the realm of political journalism (Parenti 1993; Winter 2002); and issues concerning less affluent groups in society have been marginalized in order to appeal to

potential consumers in the middle and upper classes (Hackett and Gruneau 2000). In McChesney's (2004) words, "the notion of journalism as a public service institution aimed at the entire population has vanished" (McChesney 2004, 87).

The overarching point to consider, to develop Tuchman's (1978) oft-repeated metaphor, is that although news may be a special window on the world, let it not be forgotten that windows have frames: the window of news always reveals some things and hides others (Gamson et al. 1992; McCombs and Shaw 1972). The outside world looks different depending upon which direction a window is facing, as well as the position of the person looking through it. Even when the curtains are open wide, objects appearing through the glass are only ever part of broader events: "The reader of newspapers, then, is not entirely the recipient of *new information on recent events*. He or she is the recipient of selected information on recent events", situated in a context where capitalist imperatives are a powerful force driving news production, "and this information may well be presented with an ideological 'spin' that makes it very difficult for the reader to make an independent decision on what his/her actual viewpoint of these events actually is" (Reah 1998, 9, italics in original).

News is a fabrication, a socially constructed narrative: "journalism, politics, government, as well as being what common sense says they are, *are all also fantasies*" (Hartley 1996, 201, italics in original). But from the social constructionist perspective, pointing out the constructed nature of news is not to render a guilty verdict. On the epistemological view that meaning is socially constructed, how could news be condemned on the grounds of its fictive qualities? Like other grand narratives, the idealized story of the free and impartial democratic press has been thrown off track by the linguistic turn in the social sciences and humanities (Bonnell and Hunt 1999; Carey 1988). However, as Carey argues, this need not imply that the core of human existence has been found to be rotten, or indeed, that life is without a core. On the contrary, upon the postmodern lesson that bonds and beliefs—*all bonds and beliefs*—are, both in the first and last instance, *social*, which means that they are uncertain, precarious, yes, even relative (Geertz 1984), it is conceivable that people may actually develop a greater appreciation for the essential role of our cultural traditions and myths (cf. Nord 2003). Long ago Nietzsche announced that truth was but a myth, and the sophists said as much long before Nietzsche. What Carey suggests

is that as the sting of this realization lessens and we grow more accustomed to living in a world where there is nowhere to turn but to one another in order to explain what we do and why, tradition and myth may take on new meaning.

Of course not every myth is as good as every other, but myth is a precondition for living together. “News is part of an age-old cultural practice, narrative and story-telling, that seems to be universal” (Bird and Dardenne 1997, 335), and as such, it warrants close scrutiny—especially at a time when the world of politics so often seems to exist only in news (see Bennett and Entman 2001; Meyer 2002). Therefore, while Koch (1990) is right to criticize the ways in which mass media “promulgate the social myth of a functioning, effective and progressive democracy in which each member is safeguarded by the vigilance of a potent and omniscient bureaucracy” (175), interrogating the form and function of modern news is not necessarily to attack the very existence of this high-profile public story. News is part of culture and should be studied as such.

The assumption that civic ritual acquires public meaning through news narratives is what drives Schudson's (1982) analysis of the historical evolution of news coverage of the State of the Union message in the United States. Arguing that news stories about the congressional event contain “vital assumptions about the nature of politics and the role of the press” (99), Schudson suggests that

the power of the media lies not only (and not even primarily) in its power to declare things to be true, but in its power to provide the forms in which the declarations appear. News in a newspaper or on television has a relationship to the 'real world,' not only in content but in form; that is, in the way the world is incorporated into unquestioned and unnoticed conventions of narration, and then transfigured, no longer a subject for discussion but a premise of any conversation at all. (98)

Noting that the constitutional function of the State of the Union address has not changed, Schudson argues that “changes in the way the message is reported... must be linked to changing precepts in journalism about the nature of politics and what a news story should be” (99-100). Dividing State of the Union news coverage into three historical eras of narrative form, Schudson concludes that, contrary to standard beliefs about the increasing move toward journalistic objectivity, “the reporting of the presidential message in each successive period became more interpretive” (100). That said, the move away from “the stenographic record of congressional

business” (the prevailing narrative form from the founding of the republic until the mid-nineteenth century) “has not made reporting less truthful, but has widened the scope for the journalist's discretion—indicating that, over time, the journalistic function has served rather different intentions” (100).

Although there are significant differences between the temporal scope and specific findings of Schudson's study, and those of this dissertation, there are also noteworthy similarities between the two. Especially interesting is the prominence that American newspapers gave to “the 'spectacle' of the opening of Congress” in the years between 1850 and 1900. Although the Social Celebration frame in Ontario held sway until after the Second World War, elements of it resonate in Schudson's description of late nineteenth century chronological narrative form, liberal use of superlatives to describe the ceremony's scene and setting, and remarks upon “the cordial greetings across party lines as Congressmen reassembled” (101). There is no direct correlation between the evolution of Ontario newspaper coverage and twentieth century American journalism's growing “focus on the significance of the address in the career of the president” (105). However, despite the fact that it occurred much later in the Canadian context, there is promising comparative potential between the personalization of the presidential address and the emergence of partisan battle among party leaders as a key feature of news narratives about Ontario's legislative opening (cf. Fletcher 1981; Fletcher and Gottlieb 1990). Putting to one side comparison of specific features of narrative form in the two jurisdictions, what this dissertation shares with Schudson's essay is the fundamental view that it is very different to say that

the news reflects the social world by describing it, and to say that it reflects the social world by incorporating it into unquestioned and unnoticed conventions of narration. When a changed political reality becomes part of the very structure of news writing, then the story does not 'reflect' the new politics but becomes part of the new politics itself. There is not only a narration of politics in the news; the news is part of the politics of narrative form. (106)

### *News produces publics*

The second reason to study news as culture, especially in relation to politics, turns on its role in the constitution of a social formation. In short, the argument is this: at the same time as it

produces a story, news also produces “the public” (see esp. Thompson 1995, chap. 2 and 4). The best articulation of this idea is still Carey's (1989) seminal piece on the “ritual” nature of communication. Here, Carey criticizes traditional approaches to communication by arguing that media analysts must do more than merely trace unidirectional “transmissions” of information; rather, they must explore “the actual social process wherein significant symbolic forms are created, apprehended, and used” (30). The cornerstone of Carey's argument is the notion that communication “is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs” (18). In a recent collection on communication theory, echoes of Carey were heard in chapters which defined communication variously as ritual, social identity, political participation, and public memory (see Shepherd, St. John, and Striplas 2006).

In everyday use, the word “public” denotes something about a group of people, such as in the expression “public opinion polling” (see Champagne 2004; Lewis 2001). But what is this group, and who are these people? From whence does a public come, and what forces hold it together? Presumably a public has something to do with shared space and shared ideas— notwithstanding the fact that some publics are known to be large and to house dispute—but the nature of this communion is difficult to define. Because the notion of a public is so familiar, because it refers to what many would call a palpable connection among people and places, it is easy to conceive of the public as an ahistorical, cohesive body, about which and for whom modern media speaks. Yet, in tracing the historical development of how news has come to play “a central role in the formation of modern social consciousness” (Allen 2008, 146), media studies suggests that the public does not precede, but is, rather, produced by, mass media.

In Habermas' (1989) seminal book, he traces the dialectical process whereby the spread of early news pamphlets along European trade routes laid the basis from which private people were brought together over time “to form a public” (25), which, in turn, helped to transform the basic structures of social and political organization. Although Thompson (1995) and others (ex. Fraser 1992; Garnham 1993; Raymond 1999) are right to question the historical accuracy, latent gender-blindness, and class bias of the grounds on which Habermas crafts his notion of the public sphere, the fact remains: it is a compelling argument that a public is *called into being* by

individuals sharing a common communicative sphere. Though rooted in a particular history, the concept of the public sphere has proven to be “an immensely fruitful generator of new research, analysis, and theory” (Calhoun 1992, 41). When it is used in this dissertation, the concept is not meant to signify the ideal forum for the exercise of bourgeois rationality, but “as a general context of interaction in which deliberation and discussion take place and citizens in general inform and form themselves into the public” (Karpinnen 2007, 497). Following Schudson (1992), the dissertation perceives the concept to be most useful as a way of asking questions about “what the conditions have been in different periods that encourage or discourage public participation in politics and public involvement in rational-critical discussion of politics” (147). The enduring cross-cultural utility of Habermas’ analytical framework is evident in McNairn’s (1998) claim that in early nineteenth century Upper Canada, “the publication of parliamentary debates transformed newspaper readers into participants in the legislative process” (48). Exploring the “connections between the newspaper form and democratic civic culture” across three centuries, Barnhurst and Nerone (2001) piece together a narrative describing the dialectical development of newspapers and politics in the United States (1).

In Anderson’s (2006) famous formulation, the nation-state—today’s primary unit of social organization (Calhoun 2007)—is, in fact, an “imagined community”, brought to life in large part through the development of print capitalism. As a result of reading the same stories, people far removed from one another in terms of space and time are united in meaningful ways, despite remaining isolated in others. People who will never encounter one another feel themselves part of a group. An especially powerful part of this process, argues Anderson, is the experience of reading the daily newspaper: the act constitutes a “mass ceremony” which affords the opportunity for isolated individuals to imagine themselves as part of a larger whole. Reading the newspaper

is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned? At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in

everyday life. (35-6)

Friesen (2000) draws attention to this same process of mediated bonding when describing Canadians in the early twentieth century catching glimpses of each other “simultaneously reading similar or identical [news] stories and recognizing the synchrony” (147). As one British scholar puts it, the media are responsible not only for informing, but for actually *forming* the electorate in modern liberal democracies (McNair 2000). Regardless of their ideological outlook and self-styled public voice, all newspapers “address their readers as members of the nation” (Billig 1995, 11).

Certainly there once were (and still are) non-mass-mediated social relationships. Even before books, newspapers, and internet, it was possible for people to feel part of a larger whole on account of living in close proximity to one another and engaging in periodic face-to-face encounters. Yet, in a world where forms of mass communication facilitate endless social experiences, people “are able to act for others who are physically absent, or act in response to others who are situated in distant locales” (Thompson 1995, 4). When thinking about the constitutive quality of news coverage of civic ritual in Ontario, Thompson's concept of “mediated publicness” is essential. After distinguishing three different forms of interaction available in the age of mass communication technologies, Thompson argues that there is not one type of “publicness”, but multiple types.

The development of the media has created new forms of publicness which are quite different from the traditional publicness of co-presence. The fundamental feature of these new forms is that, with the extension of availability made possible by the media, the publicness of individuals, actions or events is no longer linked to the sharing of a common locale. An action or event can be made public by being recorded and transmitted to others who are not physically present at the time and place of its occurrence. Actions or events can acquire a publicness which is independent of their capacity to be seen or heard directly by a plurality of co-present individuals. The development of the media has thus given rise to new forms of 'mediated publicness' which have assumed an increasingly important role in the modern world. (126)

Rantanen's (2003) study of nineteenth century telegraph news echoes several of Thompson's insights. Countering Meyrowitz's suggestion that news in the electronic era has dulled, if not eliminated, readers' sensitivity to spatial considerations, Rantanen argues that the

early spread of telegraphic news actually “*increased* readers' sense of place; it brought them simultaneous news from many places” (438, italics in original). The argument is that news makes space in two ways: 1) by bringing home events occurring in far-off lands, and 2) on account of such foreign extractions, by expanding the mental space commonly called the public mind. As Rutherford (1982) notes of the ideological reach of big-city newspapers in early twentieth century Canada, “the leading papers of Toronto and Montreal did exercise an important influence over the views of dailies in the hinterland” (230). And from the spatial to the temporal aspects of journalism's public functions, Schudson (1986) notes that “the newspaper not only uses time but keeps time for its readers, a kind of mass media wristwatch, close by for frequent consultation” (101).

Even after accepting that news creates a public, it is reasonable to ask who, specifically, journalists are addressing. Faced with this question, Toronto *Star* columnist Thomas Walkom (2007) responds: “I don’t write for political scientists at the University of Toronto (although I don’t mind political scientists at the University of Toronto); I don’t write for decision-makers (although I have nothing against decision-makers); I write for, just, people. People-people.” The humility in the response is admirable at any time, yet the remark is especially relevant to the present discussion about the constitutive quality of news. As Thompson points out, the non-dialogic nature of “mediated quasi-interaction” means that the journalistic statement is always addressed to the amorphous, even phantom-figure that is the public (cf. Lippmann 1993). The open-letter is a familiar journalistic form, but in a sense, all journalism is an open-letter. Everyone knows that news is read by individuals, but no person pretends that the story was written for her or him alone. This one-size-fits-all quality of news stories is indicative of the way news builds bridges between part and whole. When Walkom's former editor would say that he writes for the people who live on his street, he may have meant it most literally—he may have actually pictured individual people reading his words. But the conceptual trick only helps inasmuch as it evokes the image of a representative sample of the reading public.

Faced with the challenge of addressing all and yet none, “newspapers assume the existence of groups that may not actually exist as groups within society”, for they know that the news cannot be tailored to fit the unique tastes and capabilities of every reader (Reah 1998, 35).

Notwithstanding the sizeable number of specialized newspaper stories (on sports, investing, or fashion, for example), in order to overcome the challenges of addressing with a single voice a diverse mass of people, major news stories speak to the “‘created’ reader, the implied reader” (40)—the imagined reader who, ideally, is perfectly average in every way. At certain times, newspaper stories, most often newspaper editorials, engage in “*taking the public voice*”, speaking not only to the public but for it (Hall et al. 1978, 61, italics in original; see also Hampton 2004). The altered tone of e-mail sent to a group, as opposed to one person, is but a microcosm of the challenges presented by the normal discursive manoeuvres of mass media. Yes, different news outlets assume different “social personalities”, depending on the segment of the population to which their stories are primarily directed; however, as the profit-driven nature of Ontario's media system is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that even the “public idiom” of the individual newspapers examined in this study operates within the context of certain ideological boundaries (Glasgow University Media Group 1976; Hartley 1982; Knight 1998; Golding and Murdock 1996; Philo 2007). In the words of Hall et al. (1978): news-reading publics, “however distinct, are assumed to fall within that very broad spectrum of ‘reasonable men’, and readers are addressed broadly in those terms” (61). At the same time as it creates the conditions in which a public can emerge, news also creates an assumed reader—perhaps an idealized citizen—through the discursive act of public address. “News is a visualization of society, an actuality-discourse that calls into being as its readership a public for modern political communities, a semiotic guarantor of the existence, identity, and actions of the nation for which it is news” (Hartley 1996, 210).

### **News and ritual/Ritual and news**

Ritual can also be conceived as a public expression of how people live together, a social performance helping to represent “the borders, structures, and hierarchic relations that characterize and constitute society” (Lincoln 1989, 75; see also Carey 1989; Cottle 2006; Couldry 2003; Elliott 1980; Hall et al. 2003; Rothenbuhler 1998; Santino 1996). However, despite there being “no general agreement on... what ritual is, how it works, what it feels like to perform a ritual or participate in one”, to say nothing of the effects imposed by ritual, if indeed

ritual imposes effects (Schechner 2007, 15), there is a theme in the literature that theorizes ritual as being a special type of social performance (see Bell 1997). In the hopes of setting down at least some conceptual boundaries, a working definition might define ritual as action repeated with some regularity (Alexander and Jacobs 1998; Cottle 2008), in accordance with a set of rules governing performance (Couldry 2005; Lane 1979), for the purposes of displaying before others the symbolic expression of (what are purported to be) collective assumptions about social life (Geertz 1973, 2007; Etzioni 2004; Rothenbuhler 1998; Shils and Young 1953). There is no question that the notion of ritual “is problematic in that scholars in communication and other fields have been unable to agree on what ritual is” (Ehrlich 1996, 3; cf. Corner 1999b; Goody 1977); and yet the term continues to be approached from a variety of angles on the basis of a prevailing, albeit elusive sense that ritual has “something to do with the fundamental organisational level on which we are, or imagine ourselves to be, connected as members of a society” (Couldry 2005, 61).

As the following pages explain, one strand of social theory with which this dissertation is closely aligned uses the term ritual to refer to secular “ceremonies that make visible a collective connection with some common symbol or activity” (Moore and Myerhoff 1977, 6), and interprets such ceremonies as windows through which light is shed upon a social formation's “mental world” (Podruchny 2002, 194). However, invoking the argument of Thompson and others that “the public” itself is called into being through processes of mass mediation, the dissertation argues that rituals, inasmuch as they express some part of the political order, “can have social functions only via their communicative capacities”—a proposition which makes it of the utmost importance that “studies of civil ceremonies [are undertaken] by students of communication, who are equipped to analyze their specific communicative devices” (Rothenbuhler 1998, 104).

Later it will be clear why Ehrlich's (1996) “heuristic, pluralistic understanding of ritual” (3) is essential to the use of the concept in this study, but for now it is necessary to point out the significance of Becker's (1995) work, which argues that in the age of mass media, it is through the very process of mediation that public events get turned into public rituals. Echoing Becker, the dissertation assumes that the social meanings of civic ritual—which always exist in tension between cohesion and conflict (Couldry 2003; Cottle 2006; Ehrlich 1996; Etzioni 2004; Kertzer

1988)—are enabled by, explained in, and circulate through, mediated practices:

The active roles media play in the construction of ritual preclude the possibility of positioning them as external observers to these—and very possibly any—events. Through their actions, media signal when and where the performative character of the event begins and ends, and contribute to the ways the internal structure of the events is defined and sequenced. Yet their most critical role remains the ways their presence continually shifts the focus of the event into reflexivity, pushing the performance into meta-narrative. (Becker 1995, 641)

Research on the sense-making functions of news explains why mass mediated rituals are seen to “provide the cultural grounds for attachment to the social imaginary of civil society” (Alexander and Jacobs 1998, 28). Encoded through news texts, circulating through the body politic, “they provide plot points for updating the ongoing public narratives of civil society and nation” (ibid). Thus, a study that approaches the legislative opening as a constitutive ritual must examine the event through the lens of the mass media, for “media play a role in constituting public events as rituals” (Becker 1995, 629).

In Geertz’s (2000) study of the “master fiction” of politics he describes the power of ritual as the ability to construct what is experienced as “the inherent sacredness of central authority” (123). The essay’s brilliance stems from its argument, offered in Geertz’s characteristically perceptive and playful style, that the sense of there being a social core around which human life is ordered is the product of neither biological hardwiring, nor of geography, but of specific historical ways of symbolically reproducing authority:

At the political center of any complexly organized society... there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in truth governing. No matter how democratically the members of the elite are chosen (usually not very) or how deeply divided among themselves they may be (usually much more than outsiders imagine), they justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities, and appurtenances that they have either inherited or, in more revolutionary situations, invented. It is these—crowns and coronations, limousines and conferences—that mark the center as center and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built. The gravity of high politics and the solemnity of high worship spring from liker impulses than might first appear. (124)

None of the examples of centre-making that Geertz uses in this essay involve mass media;

however, his assertion that the maintenance of social order is inextricably tied to the discursive production of a social centre is precisely what drives this dissertation's mediated approach to the ceremonial opening of Ontario's central legislative institution. It is regrettable that Geertz himself never turned his attention to connections between the ritual construction of spatial power and the public/knowledge producing power of news in general; however, the relationship has been theorized in the burgeoning field of “media anthropology” (see Rothenbuhler and Coman 2005).

For example, Dayan and Katz's (1992) seminal work on “media events” singles out for ritual analysis live television broadcasts of certain highly popular social ceremonials. The study breaks theoretical ground by examining instances in which mass media effectively transform dispersed audiences into full-fledged participants in ritual. In short, media events are defined as preplanned “contests, conquests, and coronations” (25) deemed to be of such monumental importance that news organizations interrupt the regular flow of programming to report, “with *reverence* and *ceremony*”, the event as it unfolds (7, italics in original). The framework investigates a particular type of media ritual, one which “induce[s] people to dress up, rather than dress down, to view television” (9). By definition, Dayan and Katz's media events “function as Durkheimian celebrations of social solidarity” (Rothenbuhler 1998, 81), leaving the concept vulnerable to attack from scholars from the critical perspective. For although it is widely assumed that “the essence of a ritual is that a collectivity is postulated or affirmed which might otherwise only have an ambiguous social existence” (Chaney 1983, 120), the ritual studies literature is filled with debate about whether rituals organically integrate, or deviously manipulate individuals and groups (see Bell 1997, chap. 2 and 3).

The classic work from the integrative, or functionalist perspective is Shils and Young's (1953) study of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, in which the ceremony is depicted as “a series of ritual affirmations of the moral values necessary to a well-governed and good society” (67)—values such as justice, generosity, and respect for authority. In *The elementary forms of the religious life*, Durkheim writes that society cannot exist if it does not “feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality” (quoted in Shils and Young 1953, 67); thus, on the assumption that the coronation constitutes one such reaffirmation, Shils and Young interpret the event “as the

expression of the people's commitment to the sacred values" (Bocock 1974, 102). Other neo-functional works in sociology explain the integrative power of ritual by studying social behaviour around military commemorations (Warner 1959), presidential inaugurations (Bellah 1967), and the death of political leaders (Verba 1965). From an anthropological perspective, Rappaport's (1968) seminal work develops a theory of ritual which accounts not only for social cohesion within a particular community, but also the processes through which a community aligns itself with the natural environment. In his neo-functionalist work on media ritual, Lardellier (2005) uses the term "vectorization" in referring to the power of mass media to capture the attention of dispersed individuals and facilitate collective emotional responses—a process that produces a massive communal experience "which is evanescent and virtual, indeed, but oh, how powerful and dense!" (77).

Conversely, from what Gusfield and Michaelowicz (1984) term the "manipulative" perspective (426), Lukes (1975) takes issue with Shils and Young "first, because their conception of social integration is too simplistic, and second, because their assumption of value consensus is empirically questionable" (298). The implication here is that even if rituals do help to forge social bonds (a proposition that Lukes believes is tenuous at best), that does not necessarily mean that people are genuinely satisfied with the normal state of affairs (see also Durrill 2006; Kertzer 1988; Weintrob 2005). Rather than manifestations of the public mood, rituals are described by the critical camp as yet another method through which powerful groups maintain mass "allegiance to the elite's authority" (Gusfield and Michalowicz 1984, 424; see also Edelman 1964, 1971, 2001; Lane 1979). Although Bagehot's (1963) famous work, *The English Constitution*, is less critical of the manipulative power of royal/parliamentary ritual, writing in the 1860s he was no less aware of it: "The apparent rulers of the English nation are like the most imposing personages of a splendid procession: it is by them the mob are influenced; it is they whom the spectators cheer. The real rulers are secreted in second-rate carriages; no one cares for them or asks about them, but they are obeyed implicitly and unconsciously by reason of the splendour of those who eclipsed and preceded them" (249).

Speaking directly to Dayan and Katz's work, Couldry (2003) notes that there is no question that the processes through which royal weddings, Olympic Games, and presidential

inaugurations are turned into “media events” effectively place these rituals at the centre of social life; however, he criticizes the media events framework for being insufficiently sensitive to questions of social power. In contrast to Dayan and Katz, who seem to view media events as emerging organically from society's inherent need to celebrate social cohesion, Couldry argues that media rituals should be viewed “as the articulation of contingent and historically specific (even if persistent) patterns of power”, as opposed to “the expression of something permanent and universal” (35). In Couldry's self-described “post-Durkheimian” interpretation, “the primary sociopolitical activity of the media is maintaining the myth of the mediated centre—that there is a social centre and that the media provide citizens with meaningful access to it” (Rothenbuhler 2004, 409). Therefore, “media rituals,” according to Couldry (2005), “do not so much express order as naturalise it” (65).

This detour into one of the longest and hottest debates in the history of ritual studies is relevant for two reasons. First, because it draws attention to the lack of consensus around the concept of ritual (Hughes-Freeland 1998; Muir 2005; Schechner 2007), a fact that has inspired new research inquiring into the variety of individual interpretations of mass mediated ritual and ritual-like activity (see Cottle 2006; Kellner 2003; Selberg 1993; Wenner and Gantz 1989). Thus, in light of what has been said about the contested nature of the very concept of ritual (cf. Cottle 2008), this dissertation argues that a more promising approach than that which confines itself to either functionalist or manipulative assumptions is one that builds on Etzioni's (2004) assertion that a single ritual “may have different effects on the integration of the society at large than it does on the integration of some member units” (34). In other words, it is assumed that rituals may include some and exclude others. Moreover, it is acknowledged that different rituals use different means: some, what Etzioni terms *recommitment holidays*, use “narratives, drama, and ceremonies to directly enforce commitments to shared beliefs”, whereas others, *tension management holidays*, also strengthen social ties, but do so “by releasing tensions that result from the close adherence to beliefs” (11, italics in original).

To restate the previous point, not all rituals successfully strengthen social ties, even if that was their original purpose; on the contrary it is possible for rituals intended to achieve specific ends to fail. As Geertz (1973) demonstrates in his work on the failure of a Javanese funeral,

though cultural imperatives demanded certain funeral rites be enacted in order to maintain normal social relations, the ritual failed because of “an incongruity between the cultural framework of meaning and the patterning of social interaction” (169). Loewenstein’s (2007) study of changes in a writer’s discussion group in post-Stalinist Russia records a similar occurrence but produces a different conclusion. Whereas during Stalin’s reign, this discussion group was used to censor and censure literary figures and their works, conversely, in the political confusion following Stalin’s death this same ritual space was appropriated by writers and used to challenge the power of the Communist Party. The point appears again in Estabrook’s (2002) conclusion that “ritual performance in contested spaces” can express “a redistribution of power” (595). In an example from the United States, in Virginia, gubernatorial inaugurations have barely changed in more than one hundred years; however, although it was traditional Southern pomp that brought L. Douglas Wilder to power in 1998, the fact that Wilder was the first African American to win the governor's office in all the United States invested new meaning into the old ceremony (Tarter 2001). The lesson is clear: continuation of ritual form does not guarantee continuity in the meaning of a ritual.

Similarly, an established ritual can change shape over time (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Kertzer 1988). For example, many of the seemingly archaic “fairytale features” of British royal ritual were actually “invented” in the late nineteenth century (Cannandine 1985). Once it became clear that the British working classes were enamoured with the splendour of royal ceremonies, British elites were quick to accentuate the “spectacle and pageantry” of an imagined past in the hopes of easing tensions within contemporary social relations (see also English 2006 on Empire Day). Ritual may be a time for reflection, but “memory, like history, is concerned not just with the past but with the legitimisation of the politically desired future” (Papadakis 2003, 254; cf. Kitch 2005; Zelizer 1995). What all of this points to is the fact that there is great potential for rich insights to be drawn from research open to the existence of both the positive kind of integration envisioned in Durkheim’s work, as well as the negative forces detected by Lukes and others. Recalling Ehrlich's (1996) rejection of the episodic call for narrow definitions of ritual: “ritual may serve as a reflexive means of change in news, while at the same time... preserving the status quo both inside and outside journalism” (14). Drawing on both functionalist and critical

scholarship, this study is interested in the way that news coverage of the legislative opening could serve as an expression of social cohesion, as well as the ways in which it might work to perpetuate imbalances of social power.

Second, debates about the form and social effects of ritual are a good way of turning the discussion back to the narrower issue of media ritual and the advantages of the news-as-social-construction approach taken in this dissertation. In the wake of the “the performative turn” (Burke 2005, 47), there is a growing number of scholars who reject the idea that there is “some independently existing object, named ritual, with a set of defining features that characterize all instances of ritual” and achieves specific functions—whether integrative or manipulative (Bell 1992, 219). For example, Handelman (1998), Bell (1992, 1997), and Couldry (2003), argue that ritual should not be understood as a specific type of event, nor be assumed to impose one or another social effect. Handelman takes this argument to its extreme and refuses to use the term “ritual” altogether. In its place he develops a theory of “public events” that is “closer to a technology of events, of the identification of logics of their design, themselves embedded in cultural matrices that imbue these designs with significance and that put them to work in cultural ways” (7). But even if they disagree over the precise use of the term ritual, process-oriented critics agree that the focus of the cultural analyst should turn away from predetermined categories of ritual and examine, instead, “the logics of organization... the logics of the practice of these events” (xi)—in the language of the field, the unique practices of *ritualization*. The practice approach argues that

ritual should be analyzed and understood in its real context, which is the full spectrum of ways of acting within any given culture, not as some a priori category of action totally independent of other forms of action. [...] This type of analysis of ritual practice affords the opportunity of analyzing more and less effective rituals, the various degrees of ritualization that are invoked, and the great diversity of cultural schemes and styles of ritualization. [...] This approach to ritualization is less concerned with the issues of social control that most other theories of ritual address, and more concerned with mapping the orchestration of complex relationships of power—especially how the power at stake is deemed to be of nonhuman or nonimmediate (god, tradition, virtue, and so on) and is made amenable to some degree of individual and communal appropriation. (Bell 1997, 81-2)

The concept of ritualization is essential to the present study; it serves as theoretical fuel to the argument that the meaning of the legislative opening has changed over the course of the twentieth century. To recap for a moment: it has been suggested that, through the eyes of the average Ontario citizen, the “real context” or lived experience of the legislative opening is the representation of the event constructed through mass mediated news narratives. Thus, a study of the legislative opening must be a study of news coverage of the legislative opening, for whatever qualities the ceremony possesses—integrative, manipulative, severe, or banal—these are inseparable from what will henceforth be referred to as *mediated processes of ritualization*. The term draws attention to the fact that the ritual characteristics exhibited by the legislative opening are rooted in the representational power of mass media. And yet, it cannot be denied that at the same time as this logic depends on Bell's concept of ritualization, the ceremonial Opening of the Legislature has been defined from the start as a “constitutive ritual”, notwithstanding the ways in which it happens to be described in the news. There is tension here. On the one hand, the claim is that the social meaning of the legislative opening must be understood by analyzing the ways in which the event has been represented in the mediated public sphere. But on the other, the reason for studying the legislative opening in the first place is because it is deemed to be a unique event—a civic ritual—a symbolic performance capable of “reveal[ing] a great deal about the culture of the performers” (Burke 2005, 47). What is to be done?

Instead of claiming to have solved the problem by forging a unified theory out of two contradictory viewpoints, the dissertation derives analytical benefits as a result of retaining the distinction between functionalist and process-oriented perspectives. As a general social theory, functionalism has been roundly criticized, some would say wholly refuted (Cottle 2008; Couldry 2005; Holmwood 2005; O'Sullivan et al. 1994; Swidler 1986). But the fact remains that the legislative opening does perform integrative social functions: it summons elected representatives to the capital; it requires the government to articulate its policy agenda; it confers legislative authority upon a group of people by setting in motion the law-making moments of provincial life; it symbolizes a widely-shared belief in a particular form of political legitimacy. In Geertz's terms, it marks the centre as centre in Ontario politics. Couldry (2003) goes too far when suggesting that “in reality... there is no such social centre that acts as a moral or cognitive foundation for society

and its values, and therefore no natural role for the media as that 'centre's' interpreter" (45). The problem with this view, as Postill (2005) notes, is that people tend to be "well aware of the concentration of political, economic and cultural resources not in a single 'centre', but rather *in a few urban centres*—a concentration that Couldry himself stresses. Are they deluded in assuming that media professionals have better access to the nation's 'central' organizations, that is, those which allocate strategic resources? I don't think they are" (90, italics in original).

A different question worth asking is: are central organizations, despite being socially constructed, not indeed *central* to life as we know it? As Handelman (1998) points out, "it is vital to the ongoing existence of any more-or-less dense network of persons that there exist media through which members communicate to themselves in concert about the characters of their collectivities, as if these do constitute entities that are temporally coherent. Public events are conveyances of this kind" (15), and the legislative opening is a time-honoured and widely-discussed public event. The provincial parliament, by virtue of its unique legislative authority, the special types of civic discourse that it houses, not to mention its impressive spatial presence in the heart of the capital, is the centre of government and functions as the centre of society (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989, 172). And though one must always be careful when hypothesizing about causal links that hold society together, no one would argue with the fact that the Opening of the Legislature produces at least the handful of centripetal effects named above.

Based on Rothenbuhler's (1998) definition of ritual, the fact that these functions are achieved through "*the voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behavior to symbolically effect or participate in the serious life*" (27, italics in original) means that the opening is unique among social activity: it is a ritual. But at the risk of repetition, in addition to being a ritual in the sense that it is a specific type of ceremony conducted at Queen's Park, in the context of Ontario's public sphere, that is, through the eyes of the Ontario citizenry, the legislative opening becomes this "highly formalistic, repetitive social activity distinguished by its symbolic nature" (Lane 1979, 254) through processes of mass mediated ritualization. As the empirical analysis in chapters 3 and 4 demonstrates, the event is made meaningful in different ways at different times, the practices of journalism being constitutive of the meaning of the event. In this instance, then, the relationship between the ritual's constitutional functions and its

unique history of (mediated) ritualization is dialectical: because of its relatively stable (and central) form and function, the legislative opening has become an annual news event, but the journalistic narratives used to make sense out of the civic ritual are not fixed in the same way as are constitutional obligations; on the contrary, the dominant news narratives about the ritual have changed; and so too, then, has the meaning of the legislative opening. This is a study of the ritualization of civic ritual.

Predating Dayan and Katz's book by nearly a decade, Chaney's (1983) work touches upon this particular mutually reinforcing relationship between ritual and news. Examining variations in media coverage of three different royal ceremonies in the UK, Chaney argues that news routines are shaped by the nature of the ritual being conducted; yet the form of the ceremony itself assumes its shape largely through constant anticipation and awareness of being transformed into news, leading to the conclusion that “national festivals have become effectively media occasions rather than occasions to which the media has access” (134). Chaney's specific take on the relationship between ritual and news is original, but the process itself is centuries old.

Waldstreicher (1997) identifies the very same phenomenon in the wealth of political rituals during the American Revolution. He argues that “from the beginning, celebrants of the nation took their cues from printed sources. They improvised upon events they read about and then publicized their own interventions in public life” (11). One particularly fascinating example centres on the practice of tarring and feathering. Waldstreicher shows that the emergence of this form of ritual-attack mimicked visual rhetoric first appearing in political cartoons: “Whether or not a true American invention, tarring and feathering drew on the conventions of satirical prints, in which political offenders appeared as geese, and 'turned the prints into real life.' Moreover, the connection between political tracts and street politics was not lost on rebel crowds. When a stamp man or an author was not available, they often tarred and feathered a pamphlet instead” (27). Completing the loop around ritual and news, Patriot newspapers responded to the growing practice by making ironic commentary on a newly-feathered Tory looking sporting in “a new set of clothes”!

Evoking this longstanding recognition of the news-ritual dialectic, Chaney notes that people organizing and attending today's civic rituals conduct themselves in demonstrated

awareness of the mediated nature of the event, confirming the knowledge that they are at once spectators and spectacles. People perform the ritual, and in a sense, they do so in a public of co-presence, but the event is organized not just for people in the room, but for people in distant locales. Similarly, those in attendance understand “that for the vicariously listening or viewing mass audience they as onlookers are as essential for the success of the spectacle as more starring performers” (121). As Becker (1995) observes, it is cameras, microphones, and journalists themselves that draw boundaries around the “demarcated space” of civic ritual (636). In front of these objects, which are at once both recorders and signs of recording, action acquires a certain self-reflectiveness, even if this transformation occurs at a level below the threshold of immediate consciousness.

For example, in the early years of the twentieth century posing for press photographers at the legislative opening may have been a totally normal thing to do, yet it is the normalcy embedded in the pose which interests the analyst of media ritual (Frosh 2001). The process of mediated ritualization “organises our movements around space, helps us to experience constructed features of the environment as real, and thereby reproduces the symbolic authority... on which ritual draws” (Couldry 2003, 29). The pose, the interview, the choice of clothing and hairstyle—each “underscores the mutual recognition of the moment as significant”, suggesting that the individual act is directed to the public at large (Becker 1995, 638). Thus, in addition to requirements spelled out by the ritual itself, the very act of mediation imposes an additional set of performative imperatives. “The sponsors of civic ritual in seeking to democratize the appeal of that which they are staging are forced to adapt to the expectations and presuppositions of the communications forms which make their audience accessible. In doing so the dramatic impact of the ritual is transformed” (Chaney 1983, 121).

Thomas (2004) argues that television viewers oscillate between modes of “perception” (encountering information) and “communication” (interpreting meaning), which makes it possible for people to experience themselves as participants in mediated events, at the same time as being fully aware of the distance that separates them from the location from which events are transmitted. As Kapferer (1984) points out, in the context of ritual the concept of performance should not be used “in its restricted sense as enactment”, but instead, as “an inclusive term that

focuses on how the relationships of all those gathered at a ritual occasion... are both constituted and ordered through the ritual” (179). On this view, the roles of spectators are just as important as those of the people who physically carry out the rites. Thus, the same cognitive mechanisms which prompted millions of people to cry upon Lassie's death, despite the fact that “except for the youngest, the mourners all knew that Lassie didn't really exist” (Schelling in Thomas 2004, 122), produces within media rituals, “a kind of presence that substitute[s] for physical co-presence in classical rituals” (Thomas 2004, 121). And though Thomas deals specifically with the case of audiovisual communication, Thompson's concept of mediated publicness provides theoretical grounds for applying these insights to the study of print communication.

The work of Habermas, Anderson, Friesen and others has already demonstrated that print media present opportunities for people to imagine themselves within a community of news readers, to become what Lardellier (2005) calls “spect-actors” in media ritual (70). When Thompson (1995, 100) notes that “producers usually orient their behaviour towards receivers”, he echoes Chaney's argument about the reciprocal relationship of present and non-present participants in the ceremony. On the understanding that media ritual is contingent upon the creation of the implied reader—it exists precisely because of a community which participates through “action at a distance” (Thompson 1995, 109)—it is essential to include newsreaders in any analysis of civic ritual. “Starting out singular, the ritual gaze subsumes itself in a collective gaze and there reconstitutes itself to find the symbolic means of *performing* the ceremonial spectacle, to the point of transforming political and institutional realities” (Lardellier 2005, 70, italics in original).

### *The promise of media history*

In the context of this study, relationships between core and periphery, performers and audiences, journalists and readers, Legislature and citizenry, are analyzed against the backdrop of media history, creating a unique opportunity to negotiate the aforementioned tensions between functionalist and process-oriented ritual research. Politics, the press, and the public are inseparable. Arguing that they must be studied as such, Carey (1974) declares that “the press should be viewed as the embodiment of human consciousness” (27). Whether one is moved by

this particular metaphor is of little consequence to the general approach taken here; nevertheless, one hears echoes of Carey's quotation in Vipond's (2003) more measured plea for new scholarship on media history in Canada: "What is most important is that the mass media become opaque, that is that they lose their transparency and become subjects in themselves, objects of analysis" (4).

The historical perspective is invaluable in a study of the ritualization of civic ritual because it emphasizes the contingency inherent in social affairs by revealing changes in seemingly natural patterns of living (Bonnell and Hunt 1999; Nord 2003). It is the power of media history to test theory—"to queer what seems perfectly clear outside the archives" (Nerone 2005, 111)—that has led to its rapid development over the past fifteen years (see Dahl 1994; Gitelman 2006; O'Malley 2002). In this dissertation, the power "to queer" basic assumptions about legislative politics manifests itself in concrete examples of the same ritual being ritualized in different ways. It provides empirical evidence for the assumption that "the concentration of society's symbolic resources" in the hands of mass media industries "affects not just what we do, but our ability to *describe* the social itself" (Couldry 2003, 39, italics in original). In Bell's (1992) words, "ritualization is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done to other, usually more quotidian, activities" (74). And yet despite the critical camp's emphasis on the need to "historicize" media rituals by arguing that they are "in crucial respects *constructions* not expressions, of 'the social order', processes which construct not only our sense of a social 'centre', but also the media's privileged relation to that 'centre'" (Couldry 2003, 56, italics in original), little empirical analysis has been done on transformations in mediated ritualization, or on the question of historical breaks in mass mediated representations of civic ritual. By organizing itself around a specific shift in social knowledge, this dissertation combines the insights of media history and those of media anthropology in order to learn more about how politics is understood and represented in Ontario.

Foucault's (1977) *Discipline and Punish* is an especially good reminder of the significance of historical discontinuity. At the opening of the book, Foucault declares: "We have, then, a public execution and a time-table. They do not punish the same crimes or the same type of delinquent. But they each define a certain penal style. Less than a century separates them" (7). To

be sure, no one has ever been drawn-and-quartered in the history of legislative opening news in Ontario; nevertheless, textual accounts of the event should be reviewed with the purpose of identifying whether and where significant breaks (in form and/or content) have occurred. Indeed, the following analysis reveals that coverage of the opening in the second half of the twentieth century uses modern news forms to explore contemporary themes—ones that we would recognize today—but news coverage prior to World War II is of a different textual order. For the first five decades of the twentieth century the ritual was framed as the climax of a social celebration. Though the lieutenant governor and the premier were given leading roles in these stories—their precise movements chronicled in chronological order—it was the crowd at the Legislature that stole the show: “Crowds at the main entrance, crowds on the main staircase, crowds in the corridors, crowds at every entrance to the chamber, crowds in every available space on the floor and in the galleries, crowds everywhere” (Toronto *Daily Star* 1905, 7). Much ink was spilled describing not only who was in attendance and what they wore, but where they sat in relation to one another and how they interacted. Spatial qualities of the ceremony were pivotal points of commentary. The Speech itself was a document from the government; but the event was a celebration of the people. By direct contrast, recent news coverage inverts the old order by linking the opening to the lives of ordinary citizens (through extensive Throne Speech analysis), and casts the ceremony as a legislative anachronism of little importance. The earlier spatial interpretation of the ceremonies has disappeared; the opening has become a day of a document. Political columnists in attendance complain of boredom; they note the number of people put to sleep by the ceremony. To borrow from Foucault, this dissertation posits: “We have, then, a social celebration and a policy document. They do not confront the same questions or address the same collection of newsreaders. But they each define a certain journalistic style and a certain image of politics in Ontario. Less than a century separates them.”

In the eyes of the modern reader, earlier forms of ritualization can seem too High Society to be of broad relevance, too chummy to constitute meaningful politics, too optimistic about life in Ontario; in short, too silly to be taken seriously. However, as the great cultural historian Robert Darnton (1985) teaches: “When we cannot get a proverb, or a joke, or a ritual, or a poem, we know we are on to something. By picking at the document where it is most opaque, we may be

able to unravel an alien system of meaning. The thread might even lead into a strange and wonderful world view” (5). Moreover, by attempting to comprehend the normalcy in a faraway past that appears, at this point in time, very strange, we develop the capacity to observe the strangeness inherent in present practices, which, though oddities of history, today seem completely normal. Geertz (1988) is right when he argues that cultural research is at a highpoint when, in the tradition of Jonathan Swift, Erving Goffman, Ruth Benedict, and Kenneth Burke, “the culturally [and historically] at hand is made odd and arbitrary, the culturally [and historically] distant, logical and straightforward” (106).

## **Research methods**

### *Textual analysis as a way of learning about social knowledge*

On the assumption that “narratives organize the stimuli of our experience so that we can make sense of the people, places, events, and actions of our lives” (Foss 2004, 333), and that mass mediated “news frames guide audiences toward a 'dominant' or 'preferred' reading that *constrains alternative meanings*” (Atwood-Gailey 1999, 112, italics in original), the dissertation's methodological approach combines elements of narrative and framing analysis. However, before describing the operationalization of the textual analysis, that is, before providing details about the textual corpus, rounds of qualitative and quantitative coding, and supplementary interviews, it is necessary to clarify certain assumptions about the ongoing usefulness of textual analysis as a way of learning about social knowledge.

Few would deny that hermeneutic approaches have contributed substantively to the study of media and culture (cf. Anders et al. 1998); however, in the wake of the surge in audience studies propelled by those of Radway (1984), Ang (1985), and Morley (1980, 1992), textual analysis has fallen out of favour in some fashionable intellectual circles (see Boyd-Barrett and Newbold 1995; Corner 1991; Couldry 2005; Livingstone 1998; Nightingale 1996; Wood 2007). Textual analysis has become the media studies equivalent of the minuet in the realm of music composition: a mighty force in its time, a necessary step toward present practices, but one that rests far from today's cutting-edge. At a 2006 conference on media history at Ryerson University, a textual critic no less impressive than John Langer expressed concern to one admiring young

scholar that perhaps textual analysis has taken us as far as it can go. Pressed from one side by growing interest in poststructural processes of self and social understanding (ex. Butler 2007; Lyotard 1984; Oguibe 1996), and from the other, the deeply ingrained Marxian tendency to privilege political economic structures and organizations (ex. Parenti 1993; McChesney 2004; Winter 1998), there is scant opportunity to propose analyzing media texts without immediately being accused (by poststructuralists) of essentializing meaning, or (by neo-Marxists) of naively overlooking the *real* sites of media power. Students of communication and culture repeat it in their sleep: *meaning cannot simply be read off the page*.

It would be difficult to defend the argument that media content can be analyzed without asking questions about the broader political economic climate in which it exists. Clearly, the text must be studied in its material context (Grossberg, Wartella, and Whitney 2006; Philo 1990, 2007; Rutherford 1982). Patterns of ownership, incentives for production, work routines—the sociology of media does not disappear at the fancy of the analyst. Neither can one deny the appeal of the primary thesis of active audience theory: namely, that multiple meanings are made through multiple acts of reading (Hall 1980). Thus, a call for new textual explorations in the field of mediated-politics cannot be a call for a return to the bad-old-days of a textual analysis that, in searching for something meaningful to say, refuses to look beyond the corners of the printed page (see Eagleton 1996, 79-109). Nevertheless, in attending to both the influence of business imperatives and the multiplicity of reader interpretations, let cultural analysts not forget that *texts are important too*.

This much is obvious in Barnhurst and Nerone's (2001) declaration that active audience theories “have overemphasized the sovereignty of the reader” (7). Yes, multiple interpretations can be made of the same form, but from one angle, form precedes meaning; form restricts available interpretive options. “The form of news constructs the audience’s field of vision.” Although they do not refer directly to the literature on news framing, Barnhurst and Nerone's theoretical assumptions are similar to those found in Gitlin's (1980) well-known definition of media frames as “largely unspoken and unacknowledged” conceptual boundaries that effectively organize the world both for journalists who report and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. *Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion,*

*by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual.* Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences. (7, italics in original)

In a sense, Barnhurst and Nerone's "form" is Gitlin's "frame", but in physical, as opposed to cognitive, guise (see Johnson-Cartee 2005, 156-66). The assumption that newspaper-as-text matters is what permits the authors to argue that the form of news in a particular era is not simply an outgrowth of advances in technology, or a porthole through which any old meaning can be pulled, but rather a crucial part of the democratic culture which "imagines, constitutes, and reinforces political systems" (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001, 23) through journalistic practices and visual design techniques.

Even if we agree that "meaning is the outcome of communication", and as such, "should not be assumed to reside *in* anything" (Hartley 2002, 140, italics in original), it is still useful to think of texts as repositories of some kind. There is no need to treat texts as if they contain singular, timeless Meaning, in order to understand that, just as texts must be studied in their contexts, texts themselves hold clues about their producers, as well as about the purposes and people for whom they were produced (cf. Straw 2007, esp. 4-6). Texts are windows into other worlds—ones that may be faraway in terms of both space and time. As Foss (2004) explains, critics of rhetoric "don't study an artifact for its qualities and features alone. Rhetorical critics are interested in discovering what an artifact teaches about the nature of rhetoric" (8). Foss' point about the connections between text and rhetorical (or discursive) context is a crucial one for students of political symbolism, for it highlights the fact that texts are more than material objects; rather, texts are the embodiment of conversations between writers and readers.

Scholars of culture and society still have much to gain from analyzing mass mediated texts with the purpose of better understanding the discursive strategies used to call into being "the 'created' reader, the implied reader" (Reah 1998, 46) of news. What are the defining features of the text? Who produced it, and what are the reasons for its existence? For whom was it written? Why? What does the text reveal about the producer? What does it imply about the reader? What knowledge does the producer take for granted about the reader? What knowledge must the reader take for granted about the producer (not to mention the technology, and the

political economic agreement underlying the text)? What are the assumed and implicit messages of the text—the things that are not stated explicitly but have to be assumed if the text is to make sense? As van Dijk (1988b) has observed, mediated news reports assume a tremendous amount of shared but unstated knowledge on the part of readers. “The definition of news by the journalist, thus, is also reproduced indirectly by the readers, who would be surprised about (and probably resist) a drastic change in the choice, contents, or style of news reports” (28).

Approaching texts produced over a span of time offers the opportunity to ask: when, how, and in what ways do we detect transformations in the shape of shared knowledge?

From this perspective, textual analysis offers more than a report on a particular historical event, or insights about the contribution of an individual author; rather, by investigating the nature of shared knowledge in textual form, we enhance our ability to explore whole cultural systems (Van Gorp 2007). A text may not be able to answer all questions about the topic with which it is concerned; but it certainly helps to address questions about why certain perspectives are deemed worthy of expression in the first place, as well as the reasons for, and productive processes of, the text itself as it was brought into the world (Wood 2007). As Darnton's masterful work demonstrates time and again (1985, 1990, 2000), when the question of how meaning is socially constructed is placed at the heart of research, textual analysis can even shed light on practices of reading. Even in the absence of information about specific acts of reading, “much can be inferred... from a close scrutiny of exactly what was printed” (Rutherford 1982, 7).

### *Corpus*

#### Newspapers

The body of texts examined in this study consists of 660 newspaper items drawn from 4 Ontario dailies: the Toronto *Globe* (later *Globe and Mail*), Toronto *Daily Star* (later *Star*), Toronto *Evening Telegram* (later *Telegram*), and Toronto *Sun*. The primary reason for examining these particular publications is the combination of their ongoing focus on Ontario politics and their high rates of circulation. This is a study of dominant discourse, an analysis of mainstream media narratives that “circumscribe the limit of what seems reasonable in a society” (Berdayes and Berdayes 1998, 110), and these four newspapers have long been among the dominant voices on

provincial politics in Ontario.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to being chosen on the basis of prevalence and popularity, these publications reflect a range of political viewpoints within the relatively narrow ideological field of mainstream public opinion. The *Globe* was founded as a Liberal paper and harboured Liberal sympathies until being purchased by George McCullagh in 1936 and merged with the *Mail and Empire* to become the *Globe and Mail* (Hayes 1992); since that time, despite acquiring the label of Canada's "newspaper of record", the *Globe and Mail* has widely been considered to be "a conservative daily catering to the political and economic elites and the professional-managerial strata" (Knight 1998, 77). The Toronto *Star's* support for the Liberal party may be less apparent today than it was under the long and storied editorial direction of J.E. Atkinson (Harkness 1963); however, "catering to a more socially and economically diverse readership" than that of other mega-dailies in Canada, the newspaper continues to be looked upon as a counterweight to the right-wing push of the bulk of mainstream news outlets (Knight 1998, 77; Desbarats 1996). By contrast, before collapsing in 1971, the *Telegram* was a fervent supporter of Ontario's conservative, British culture. Long after the death of its founder, the "Orange rebel", John Ross Robertson (Poulton 1971, 132), the *Tely* "espoused views more or less indistinguishable from those of the Orange Lodge, the Conservative Party, and the chartered banks" (Fetherling 1990, 97; see also Kesterton 1967). Although the tabloid Toronto *Sun*, which made its first appearance the Monday after the *Telegram* folded, prides itself for its "cheeky, irreverent attitude" (*Editor and Publisher* 1996), like the Tory *Telegram*, the paper is both critical of left-wing parties and policies, and typically supportive of the Progressive Conservatives (Sonmor 1993). There has never been a mainstream Ontario daily dedicated to the success of Ontario's New Democratic Party, or to the NDP's predecessor, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF).

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<sup>6</sup> A cursory survey of legislative opening coverage in different Ontario newspapers, namely, the Hamilton *Spectator*, Kingston *British Whig*, London *Free Press*, Ottawa *Citizen*, and Sudbury *Star*, suggests that journalistic practices outside Toronto have been similar to those prevailing at the capital. However, without systematically analyzing newspapers across the province, it is impossible to know for certain the ways in which newspapers in the hinterland have viewed the legislative opening over time. However, as the analysis conducted here demonstrates, there is no question that the Toronto-based dailies have always interpreted the event as a moment of province-wide import. Even early twentieth century coverage, with its episodic references to local pride in the "gala display" (*Globe* 15 February 1900, 6), defines the local in relation to the larger (read provincial) social whole. Building on this dissertation, future research might compare historical developments in the discursive construction of civic space in heartland/hinterland coverage of the Opening of the Legislature.

## Scope

The sample's temporal scope runs between 1900 and 2007. The start date was chosen not only because by 1900 newspapers “informed, sometimes inflamed, a huge reading public about the great issues of national policy as well as the mundane round of daily life” (Rutherford 1982, 3), that is, because “the daily newspaper was a mass medium by the turn of the [twentieth] century” (Vipond 2000, 18), but also because 1900 was the year in which the *Globe*, the *Star*, and the *Telegram* emerged as the province's dominant newspapers.<sup>7</sup> Joseph E. Atkinson had just recently become editor of the newly-renamed Toronto *Daily Star* (it had changed from being the *Evening Star* in January 1900), and although in the first years of the century the *Star*'s daily circulation rate was considerably lower than those of its main competitors,<sup>8</sup> it rose sharply within the following decade. By 1913, the *Star* was “Toronto’s largest paper” (Toronto *Star* n.d.), and remained among the heavyweights in a decades-long battle over circulation and advertising with both the *Globe* and the *Telegram* (Fetherling 1990). In 2007, the Toronto *Star* was Canada's largest circulating English daily, selling, on average, 3 260 621 copies per week. The *Globe and Mail* was second, at 2 024 320 copies; and the Toronto *Sun* was third, at 1 524 582 copies (Canadian Newspaper Association 2007). In the terminology of the dissertation's theoretical perspective, the mediated public sphere that these newspapers have helped to create is both large and enduring.

It would have been impractical to attempt to analyze every newspaper story referring to every one of the 112 legislative opening ceremonies that have occurred since 1900. The challenge, therefore, was to construct a sample broad enough to reveal the main journalistic trends of the century, yet small enough to allow each newspaper in the corpus to be fully surveyed and each item referring to the legislative opening to be coded multiple times. As noted in the following section, after one round of open-ended coding (note-taking and memo-writing on newspapers published at various points in the twentieth century), the decision was made to use “maximum variation” sampling (Gobo 2003, 426) in order to create a corpus that includes

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<sup>7</sup> While both the *Globe* and *Telegram* were well established by 1900, the *Star* had been a smaller player in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

<sup>8</sup> For example, on the day of the Throne Speech of 1905, the *Star* reported an average daily circulation rate of 37 552 newspapers; whereas the *Globe*, on the same day, reported an average of 53 366.

two legislative openings per decade. The five-year interval that structures the sample—a period just longer than the term of a typical single government—is sufficiently narrow to capture a rich store of textual material, but not so narrow as to produce a number of texts large enough to prevent the close reading and multiple coding that are central to the analytical process.

In sum, the principles guiding text-selection are as follows: *beginning in 1900 and proceeding in five-year increments, the textual sample consists of all news items relating to the first legislative opening in a given year, appearing in any part of the Globe, Star, Telegram, and Sun, published on the day of the Throne Speech, as well as the day following the opening ceremonies.*<sup>9</sup> For example, in the case of the legislative opening of 1900, which occurred on 14 February, the corpus includes all items referring to the ceremony and Throne Speech published in the *Globe*, *Star*, and *Telegram* on both 14 February and 15 February.

Altogether, the guidelines produced a corpus drawn from 132 different newspaper editions. This number is the product of the decision to examine coverage of twenty-two legislative openings, by three different newspapers, over a two-day period per ceremony. (Recall that at no time was there overlap between the publication period of the *Telegram* and the *Sun*.) The *Globe* was accessed online (in PDF format) through the *Globe and Mail* Heritage Edition database; the other three dailies were accessed through microfilm at the Toronto Reference Library. After making hard-copies of all relevant news items, reference information was recorded in an electronic database.

Doubtless the five-year interval leaves more to chance than a corpus based on different selection criteria; but in this case, where the primary aim is to survey the evolution of typical news stories about typical openings, the element of randomness inherent in maximum variation sampling actually bolsters the dissertation's central efforts. It is the result of deliberate choices, not merely good fortune, that the corpus covers a variety of situations. In the end, the sample includes Throne Speeches delivered by male and female lieutenant governors, on behalf of majority and minority governments. It includes the commencement of ten first legislative sessions, five second sessions, three third sessions, one fourth session, and three fifth sessions. It

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<sup>9</sup> The reason that the sample ends in a year without a “0” or “5” at the end is because there was no legislative opening in 2000, which meant that the first opening of 2001 was analyzed instead. Five years after that there was no legislative opening in 2006, meaning that the corpus concludes with coverage from 2007.

captures openings during both World Wars. It captures openings during the reign of all four parties that have ruled Ontario since 1900, and during the administration of fourteen of the past twenty premiers—governments that held office during 88 of the 107 years that lie within the boundaries of the textual corpus.<sup>10</sup> The fact that the *Telegram* was an evening paper all its life, and the *Star* remained an evening paper until 1981, whereas, by contrast, the *Globe* and the *Sun* have always been morning papers, further adds to the sample's variation in journalistic perspectives on the opening ritual.

### *Coding*

Building on empirical research that identifies “underlying themes” in a collection of news stories (Mason and Duquette 2004, 162; see also Billig 1995; McKay and Bonner 1994; Rutherford 1982; Seale 2002) with the purpose of commenting on journalism’s “relative contribution to social and cultural processes at large” (Schroder 2002, 116), the actual textual scrutiny performed here—the operationalization of the textual analysis—commenced even before final decisions about the boundaries of the corpus were in place. Over the course of a year-long process intended to “break up and segment the data into simpler, general categories *and*... to expand and tease out the data, in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, 30), textual analysis proceeded over four rounds of coding—two qualitative, and two quantitative.

#### Round one

The first round consisted of what the grounded theory literature refers to as “initial coding” (see Charmaz 2006; Dey 1993, 1999; Glaser 1978). At this very early stage in the research process, neither the boundaries of the corpus, nor the exact features of the final coding sheet had yet been determined. Reviewing newspaper coverage of legislative openings in each decade of the twentieth century, the general purpose of the first round of coding was to “try to see actions in each segment of data rather than applying preexisting categories to the data” (Charmaz 2006, 47).

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<sup>10</sup> Governments not included in the sample include the premierships of George Stewart Henry (16 December 1930 – 10 July 1934); Gordon Daniel Conant (21 October 1942 – 18 May 1943); Harry Nixon (18 May 1943 – 17 August 1943); Thomas Kennedy (19 October 1948 – 4 May 1949); David Peterson (26 June 1985 – 1 October 1990); and Ernie Eves (14 April 2005 – 22 October 2003).

This round had two specific aims: (1) to decide upon a body of texts broad enough to capture the major journalistic trends of the century and, at the same time, narrow enough to be studied in detail; and (2) to experiment with and eventually decide upon a set of categories that would guide systematic analysis of the full corpus in a later round of coding. Using Charmaz's (2006) method of open-ended coding and constant memo-writing, it quickly became clear that coverage of the ritual in the early decades of the twentieth century differed significantly from coverage today. Facing front-page stories about the adoring masses gathering at Queen's Park in anticipation of the annual spring social event gave reason to check whether a mistake had been made in collecting coverage of the legislative opening. Yes, there on the screen sat a story about a special event at Queen's Park, but it was virtually unrecognizable from coverage of the modern event.

Everything seemed different. These were stories about people and social interaction at Queen's Park, not about policy issues across the province. There were no direct quotations, no reactions from opposition politicians, no opinion columns. The ritual was described in chronological order, not by ranking important policies, or witty opposition attacks. The following research memo was composed on 16 August 2006 as part of the initial stage of coding. It is included here for the purpose of conveying the mood of that research moment. Written minutes after reading coverage of the 1910 opening, the memo reflects that encountering these texts for the first time was not only surprising and intriguing, but more than a little confusing, too...

*... huh? what's going on here? Check this out... from a story in the Globe... this one starts by talking about the weather... "the sun broke effectively through the clouds and illuminated the brilliant scene at Queen's Park, where cannon boomed and gaily uniformed militiamen paced the snow-clad enclosure at the entrance to the Parliament buildings." Like the stuff in the Tely, it's like it's describing a carnival or something... note the "three rousing cheers given by carefully placed students from the University, when the gubernatorial party went by"... and this: "Within the brightly lighted Chamber was a veritable beauty show." And this is the main "hardnews" story in the Globe! I don't understand. Strange, too, that the Globe strikes this reverential tone, considering that at this point it's still a Liberal paper, but this is [Conservative Premier James] Whitney's opening.*

The unique characteristics of turn-of-the-century journalistic approaches made it logical to search for the period of transition between earlier forms of news and today's more professional coverage. That period was found running between the Second World War and the 1970s. The

discovery of a twenty-year transition period made it clear that a five-year sampling interval would not miss any substantial development in the evolution of the ritual. This made it possible to finalize text-selection procedures. Daily memo-writing emphasized that future coding would need to record not only the syntactical structure, characters, and condensation symbols of each news item,<sup>11</sup> but also the setting, temporal flow, and other narrative features of coverage. Building on the work of Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) framing analysis, and Foss' (2004) narrative analysis, a seventeen-item coding sheet was developed and tested on coverage of the legislative opening of 1910 and 1980 before moving on to round two—comprehensive coding.

### Round two

The general aim of the second round of coding was to use a single analytical device—the qualitative coding schedule—in order to break into its constituent parts every item in the textual corpus. Coding “by hand”, using coding sheets constructed with the open-source word-processor OpenOffice, round two fulfilled two functions. At an administrative level, it offered the opportunity to record the basic reference information of all relevant texts. Every story, photograph, cartoon, and other image relating to the legislative opening was coded according to the categories, “Date, page, author”; “Syntactical structure (headline, subheads, lead paragraph)”; and “Type of article & narrative voice”. Anticipating later efforts to draw together “a number of stories that cohere as a larger story—a 'metastory'” (Bishop 2001, 225) the unit of analysis was the newspaper item, or, what van Dijk (1988b) terms the “*semantic macrostructure... the overall topics or themes of a text*” (13, italics in original). The term “item” is used instead of the narrower “story” or “image”, because in all instances stories and headlines were treated together as a single unit. Similarly, wherever verbal text was elaborated in visual imagery, that is, in cases where information about a particular element of the ritual was conveyed through the interplay of text and image, rather than ignore what is known about standard news-reading practices, the conglomerate was also coded as a single item (see Barthes 1977; Hall 1973).

For example, in 1955, the *Star* published a story about the extreme heat inside the legislative chamber during the opening ceremonies. The story, “SERGEANT-AT-ARMS, PAGE

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<sup>11</sup> Following Gamson and Modigliani (1989), who write that “condensing symbols is the journalist's stock-in-trade” (7), five condensation symbols were included in the final coding scheme: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images. See discussion immediately preceding Figure 2.1 below.

COLLAPSE AT QUEEN'S PARK” (9 February, 4), was accompanied by two photographs: one close-up of the face of the page that collapsed, and a similarly composed shot of the boy who prevented the fainter from falling to the floor. Should this be counted as three newspaper items, or one? There are fairly well defined borders around the story and each of the photographs, and the bean-counter may well be able to draw lines around three beans; and yet, in this case, text and image work so closely together in the narrative process that it would make a farce of typical reading habits to code each of these items separately. In this instance and ones like it, where text and image are part of the same larger “story”, the two (or more) are coded as a single entity.

The same logic guides the process of coding photo-collages—a form of legislative opening coverage that was common during the first half of the century. For example, the *Globe's* 1925 front-page collage entitled, “ONTARIO LEGISLATURE IS OPENED WITH PICTURESQUE CEREMONIAL” (11 February), which includes five photographs of prominent guests at Queen's Park, is coded as a single news item. To break each photograph apart and code it separate from the others would be to ignore the fact that the newspaper arranged the five photographs under a single heading. Conversely, in cases where images depict aspects of the day that differ in essential ways from other images or, more frequently, from the focus of an adjoining news story, each individual item is coded separately. For example, two items were coded in the *Sun's* 1980 coverage, in which a headline about the lacklustre Throne Speech sits beside a photograph of the lieutenant governor inspecting the guard in front of the Legislature (12 March, 1). Clearly the story itself, “Davis' promise for Ontario: More of same”, is primarily concerned with the government's legislative vision, but the photograph, entitled “THE MESSENGER”, focuses on the ceremonial scene and setting. To code the two as one would be a mistake, for it would merge what are essentially two different perspectives on the ritual.

Beyond the rather mechanical process of information mapping, at the level of critical analysis, additional categories in the coding sheet were used to identify “the ‘linguistic and cultural resources’” drawn upon by journalists in their stories, and ways in which the act of storytelling encouraged newsreaders “to accept the narrative as a realistic portrayal of events and people” (Bishop 2001, 226). Framing analysis, though originating in the social sciences, in contrast to the humanities-based study of narrative, complements the strengths of narrative

analysis (see Johnson-Cartee 2005), when it states that “to frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described” (Entman 1993, 52, italics in original).

Following Knight (1998), this dissertation draws on the insights of both analytical perspectives, for “framing and narrative analysis shed light on the prevailing field of social intelligibility and how this is enacted in the interpretive schemas of media institutions” (75). Thus, in an effort to reveal what Geertz (1988) would call the “text-building strategies” (27) of the journalist-author, the coding sheet includes not only all eight of Foss’ “dimensions of the narrative” (setting, characters, narrator, events, temporal relations, causal relations, audience, and theme) (see 335-9), but also “the five framing devices” defined by Gamson and Modigliani (1989):

keywords, catchphrases, and quotations; exemplars (“historical examples from which lessons are drawn”); metaphors; depictions; and visual images (3). As the example coding schedule in Figure 2.1 demonstrates, the analytical device also includes opportunities to record additional commentary, emergent sub-frames and themes, and potential dominant frames.

**Figure 2.1**  
**Sample coding sheet (*Globe* 15 February 1900, 5)**

<b>Date, page, author</b>	15 February 1900, p. 5, NA
<b>Syntactical structure (Headline, subheads, lead)</b>	OPENING OF THE LEGISLATURE “The most brilliant opening of the Legislature for many years was that which occurred yesterday afternoon. Five thousand invitations had been issued, fully three-fifths of which were accepted. As early as 1 o’clock visitors began to arrive and take up their places in the gallery, and when another hour had passed there was not even standing-room in the galleries.” notes buzz of crowd; arrival of presiding officials; opening rituals
<b>Type of article &amp; narrative voice</b>	Hard-news story; reverential participant
<b>Setting/scene</b>	Legislative chamber
<b>Events</b>	Crowd stirring; guests arriving; LG’s entrance; reading the Speech; LG’s exit; Mace placed on the table
<b>Temporal and causal relations</b>	Bigger and better than past openings (NOTE: <i>this gets repeated every year!</i> ) Good weather added to typical splendour; chronological storytelling
<b>Catchphrases, key words &amp; quotations</b>	“Society, favored by faultless weather lent its charming presence, <b>crowding every point</b> large enough to hold a human form.” “there was not even standing room in the galleries”; “A burst of conversation went up from the <b>vast throng</b> , broken occasionally by the interest displayed in the arrival of a prominent leader upon the floor of the House.”

	<p>“From the press gallery the scene was one of <b>rare beauty</b>. The members had yielded to <b>rustling femininity</b>, and not one occupied his own seat on the floor.”</p> <p>“Evening dress was the feature”</p> <p>“<b>Every inch of space</b> on the floor was taken up, while in the galleries the crowding was noticeably uncomfortable.”</p>
<b>Exemplars</b>	Better than previous openings
<b>Depictions</b>	Chamber as overflowing; ceremony as hottest-ticket in town; Ontario as blessed
<b>Metaphors</b>	Packed, filled, crammed;
<b>Who is quoted?</b>	Speech (whole thing verbatim)
<b>Other characters</b>	List of distinguished guests, honor guard, and those invited to State dinner
<b>Evaluations</b>	Successful celebration
<b>Foster audience identification</b>	Sensual depictions of the scene and chronological narrative (feel like you're there); glimpse of Ontario “celebrities”; pride in home province
<b>Noteworthy visuals</b>	5 playful headline font; Sketch of: front of leg, two busts (premier and Opp. Leader), mover and seconder
<b>Other comments</b>	Come back to this... might work as an exemplar for early type of coverage
<b>Sub-frames/themes</b>	Crowd; Legislature space-time; High Society; Fashion; Ritual acts; Femininity; Bigger and better than ever
<b>Frame</b>	Social Celebration

On the view that in interpretive research, “understanding and concepts are allowed (indeed, expected) to emerge from the data as the research progresses” (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006, xvi), the act of coding themes and potential frames should not be viewed exclusively as the product of gut-feelings, despite the fact that the most engaging methodological writing acknowledges that feelings in the gut should not be dismissed out of hand (ex. Charmaz 2006; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Geertz 1988). Identifying the precise moment in which a mass of coding sheets turns into a coherent argument is a bit like trying to pause the oven on the border between dough and bread. One thing is certain, however: Coding sheets, memos, and field texts do not transform into dissertation chapters either by magic or some other independent means; rather, “qualitative interpretations are constructed” by researchers (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 26).

As Denzin and Lincoln point out, “qualitative research is endlessly creative and interpretive”; therefore, the iterative formulation of sub-frames and themes, the constant comparison among categorizations of different texts, and the integration and rejection of previous labels after newer ones were found to be more instructive, should not be viewed as confirmation of the wishy-washiness of interpretive research, but as essential parts of doing trustworthy and authentic qualitative analysis (see Guba and Lincoln 1989). This is cultural analysis of politics

and society in Ontario; and “Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape” (Geertz 1973, 20). Although drawing attention to the subjectivity inherent in authorship of any kind, Geertz's words are not meant to suggest that any old interpretation will do; on the contrary, they are meant to encourage researchers to account for their ways of seeing the world (see also Geertz 1988).

The labels that most effectively and most frequently described the themes in coverage from the first decades of the century include: Chamber space-time; Bigger and better than ever; Ritual acts; Day of femininity; Crowds; Speech from the Throne; High-society fashion show; British connection and tradition; and Humour. Together, these labels informed the decision to name the dominant frame of the 1900-1945 period: Social Celebration. The labels that most effectively and most frequently described the themes in coverage of the postwar decades include: Speech from the Throne; Policy analysis; Partisan battle; Disappointment; Citizenization of Speech; Expert stakeholder analysis; Lack of details; and Anachronistic ceremony. Together, these labels informed the decision to name the dominant frame of the 1950-2007 period: Politics as Usual.

It is worth noting that the second round of coding was conducted in tandem with broad reading within the literature on media and democracy, as well as the history of Ontario. Intellectual inspiration moved in two directions: for example, on one hand, the prominence of Ontario's colonial ties in newspaper coverage of the opening led to the Ontario Archives and searches through the personal papers of early twentieth century lieutenant governors, and more general reading about the province's British heritage. On the other hand, familiar scholarly writing about the growing “culture of cynicism in the news media” (Fletcher and Everett 2000, 386) provided historical and theoretical context to the new language and tone appearing in later parts of the textual corpus. Throughout the entire research process, daily entries in an OpenOffice document entitled “Dear Dissertation Diary...” provided an unrestricted opportunity to think through and write about problems both substantive and administrative in nature. By February 2008 this research journal had grown beyond one-thousand pages.

To recap: Texts were coded, a corpus emerged, and texts were coded again. Memos and

log entries were written to elaborate on the coding, and ideas were exchanged with thesis supervisors. During the summer of 2007, the collections of findings and patterns were brought into contact with insights from theoretical and empirical studies, and preliminary data were rendered into working draft chapters.

#### Rounds three and four

After analyzing each item in the corpus using the qualitative coding sheet, and after three months of preliminary writing on the dominant themes emerging from the first two rounds of coding, the third and fourth rounds of coding, conducted between September 2007 and January 2008, counted specific features of news stories, with the purpose of providing numerical support for the study's main qualitative findings. From the outset it must be stated that quantitative content analysis has been used as a way of testing and strengthening the insights emerging from close reading and qualitative coding. In contrast to studies that use quantitative content analysis as the primary means of producing answers to research questions, this study uses numbers not to prove but to complement interpretations derived from non-numerical methods. In Seale's (2003) words, this is "a qualitative study supported by counting" (416).

It is often assumed that "interpretivist approaches are not readily amenable to quantification. Indeed, quantitative validity checks based on frequencies or percentages are viewed as fallacious because interpretivists reject the notion that frequency is an indicant of importance" (Lacity and Janson 1994, 149). Putting an even finer point on the matter, albeit, in a phrase that makes a sweeping and ultimately unfair assumption about the shallow intentions of quantitative researchers, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006) argue that interpretive researchers "respect the form or *genre* of the data, and word data are retained in their original form for purposes of interpretive analysis" (xix). Himself a qualitative researcher, Seale (2003) counters this perspective when suggesting that by not employing basic tallies as a way of supporting claims regarding "often" or "rarely" occurring textual phenomena, to say nothing of statements about "always" and "never", studies are left "open to the common charge made of qualitative research that the author only presents instances of data that support the claims being made, suppressing negative instances" (415). Although the evolution in news framing described by this study first emerged as a result of qualitative coding, a third and fourth round of quantitative

coding, a two-part effort to count significant features of the news, was used as support for the main claims taking shape.

For example, rather than stop with specific instances showing that, prior to 1945, the large crowd attending the legislative opening was a central part of the mediated ritual, chapter 3 includes a table comparing the number of instances in which leading stories about the Opening of the Legislature refer to the crowd at Queen's Park. A different example: It is intriguing to argue that in the later decades of the twentieth century opinion columnists assumed a position of authority in legislative opening news. However, it is more precise and, therefore, more compelling, to state, as chapter 4 does, that despite the 1920s emergence of the signed political column as a form of news (Tataryn 1985, 35), the 1900-1945 sample includes not a single opinion column about the legislative opening, whereas, by contrast, the 1950-2007 sample includes thirty-seven opinion columns. Other issues explored through quantitative content analysis include: whether the Speech from the Throne was published verbatim in the newspaper; the number and focus of editorials and opinion columns; and the number and source of direct quotations. Not only does this effort to count specific features enhance the strength of textual examples that reveal a dramatic shift in historical understandings about the meaning of the legislative ritual, it also helps to identify outliers, that is, exceptions to general trends. For example, as chapter 3 discusses at length, coverage of the 1925 legislative opening was, unlike all others of the period, heavily focused upon policy matters and partisan sniping, at the expense of the dominant celebratory perspective.

In addition to describing and reproducing textual examples that reveal the contrast between early twentieth century journalists' interest in the scene and setting at Queen's Park, and later news items focusing on politicking and policy analysis, all 660 news items were coded in terms of their main topic: either SS (scene and setting), or PP (politicking and policy analysis). Assuming with van Dijk (1988a) that specific features of the newspaper “define the overall situation and indicate to the reader a preferred overall meaning of the text”, headlines, leads, and captions were used to determine the “main topics... signaled by the news item” (40). To offer two examples: the *Star's* 1905 story, “THE CROWD THE FEATURE OF ASSEMBLY’S OPENING” (23 March, 7), and the *Telegram's* 1935 full-page of photographs showing twelve groups of

prominent ceremony-goers, were both coded SS (6 February, 27); by contrast, the *Sun's* 1980 story, “No fighting words in this Throne Speech” (12 March, 3), and the *Globe's* 1995 story “Tory speech makes it official: Ontario to impose workfare” (28 September 1995, A8), were both coded PP.

### *Interviews*

Textual analysis is supplemented by five interviews. At the earliest stages of research it was thought that the dissertation would include as many as twenty interviews, but after realizing that the contribution of participants spoke to the experiences of only the final decades in a study stretched across a full century, it was decided to limit the use of a research method capable of shedding light on only a fraction of the period being examined. That said, the project is stronger for including interviews with two journalists (Michael Valpy of the *Globe*, and Thomas Walkom of the *Star*), two former senior civil servants with the Ontario Public Service (Bryan Evans and Gord Evans [no relation]), and a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's Interparliamentary Research Branch (David Bogart).

A preliminary interview schedule was designed as part of the ethics protocol approved by Ryerson's Ethics Review Board in Spring 2006. Because the main purpose of the interviews was to hear respondents describe the meaning of the ritual in their own terms, the structure of the interviews was open-ended. To begin, Walkom, Valpy, B. Evans, and G. Evans were asked to describe their aims in relation to the legislative opening: What functions did they view themselves fulfilling? Which parts of the event did they conceive as most important? The journalists were asked to explain their thoughts on what information newsreaders needed most. Only after respondents felt that their own view had been adequately described were they asked to talk about neglected topics. In practice this meant waiting until after respondents finished talking about the policy and partisan character of the event before asking for their thoughts about aesthetic traditions and provincial symbolism. The interview with Bogart was used to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different offices at Queen's Park regarding the preparation and execution of a legislative opening. The request for an interview with a representative from the

Office of the Lieutenant Governor was rejected.<sup>12</sup>

The experiences shared by all five informants provide confirmation of the interpretations emerging from the textual analysis. All five, in their own ways, described the modern situation as being one in which political strategy and policy issues rule the day. Walkom, whose own PhD dissertation also examined the history of the press in Ontario (see Walkom 1983), especially enjoyed hearing about newspaper coverage of the legislative opening during the era of Social Celebration; but when he was asked to describe the extent to which today's newspaper reporters consider the scene and setting of the traditional ceremony, his response was: "They don't!"

## **Conclusion**

News narratives offer "a mirror for social truths, although not always an exact record of truth" (Barnett 2005, 13); and narrative analysis—a research method that examines the "structure, language, and emphases in content and presentation" of news stories (Kitch 2003, 216)—promises to help understand how people come to know what civic ritual "'is about' and how the various elements of [their] experience are connected" (Foss 2004, 333). Defining news frames as "'schemata of interpretation' used by journalists and editors to organize, justify, rationalize, attribute, assign blame, provide historic context, and otherwise represent the salience and significance of social phenomena to news consumers", framing analysis, like narrative analysis, attempts "to identify some of the ways in which news stories shape public consensus about social and cultural events and issues" (Atwood-Gailey 1999, 140). Grounded in a methodological approach that draws upon the interpretive mechanisms of these two mutually reinforcing empirical traditions, the following two chapters present the findings of the textual analysis.

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<sup>12</sup> When asked over the telephone for information about the Office's role in the legislative opening, an anonymous spokesperson responded that answers could be found by "doing real research... you know, like, in the Archives."

### Chapter 3: The era of Social Celebration, 1900-1940s

#### Introduction

On 5 February 1930 a headline on the front-page of the Toronto *Evening Telegram* carried the following announcement: “Woman First of Huge Crowd As 18<sup>th</sup> Legislature Opens”. The story, positioned below large photographic busts of Ontario's lieutenant governor, premier, and opposition leader, began as follows:

First session of Ontario's 18<sup>th</sup> Legislature was opened this afternoon before one of the largest assemblies that has ever witnessed the historic proceedings.

The legislative chamber, with its new seating plan, closed the entire floor space into one solid body, while the area bounding the seating space was completely filled. All galleries and every foot of available space from where a craning view of the proceedings might be had was occupied.

Hours before the Lieutenant-Governor entered the chamber, shortly after three o'clock, people commenced to arrive at the chamber. [...]

The first arrival into the legislative chamber was a woman, who took a seat in the ladies' gallery, shortly after ten o'clock [five hours before the official ceremonies began]. She remained seated until after 11 o'clock, then departed, but was back again shortly after.

Others commenced to arrive shortly after noon in order to secure seats.

The Speech from the Throne did not figure prominently in the *Telegram's* story. On the contrary, it was mentioned only once and in the final paragraph: “While the Lieutenant-Governor read the Speech from the Throne, a battery of field artillery cracked out the royal salute of twenty-one guns, from a position north of the Parliament Buildings.” Specific policy proposals in the Speech were ignored altogether. In this front-page story, details about the ritual's festive atmosphere were of central concern.

Thirty years before that brilliant scene took shape, the front-page of the Toronto *Daily Star* described the atmosphere at the legislative opening of 1900 under the headline, “SCENE OF GAIETY IN THE CHAMBER”:

The scene at the opening ceremonies to-day was an animated one, the galleries, the floor of the chamber, and the entrance being crowded with people. The members' seats were occupied by women, who came in elegant gowns and dainty chapeaus, to do honor to the occasion. Among the throng on the floor were the members who had vacated their seats for their fair friends, and friendly nods were exchanged as men and women caught sight of familiar faces in the crowd. In the gallery were men of note in the province, who watched with interest the changing

groups on the floor, or sent appreciative glances at the gayly-dressed ladies occupying the seats where the representatives of the province are wont to transact business. The beautiful walls and ceilings were aglow, and shed soft reflections upon the brilliant gathering. The gentle hum of voices filled the spaces between the arches, and those present declared the opening to be unusually interesting, brilliant and successful. (14 February)

Modern eyes are not accustomed to seeing front-page news stories about the beginning of a new legislative session centred around the crush of citizen-spectators at Queen's Park, or the visual splendour inside the legislative Chamber; but during the first four decades of the twentieth century it was commonplace to find newspaper coverage full of rich descriptions of the ceremony's scene and setting, as well as the activity and interaction of people on the legislative grounds. The ritual was represented as being meaningful for reasons far beyond its relation to legislative business. The ceremony was depicted as a popular social event, as indicated in the *Globe's* rhetorical question: "For a really popular function, what is there that can equal the opening of the Legislature of the Province of Ontario?" (15 February 1900, 7). Today, at a time when coverage is dominated by analysis of Throne Speech policy proposals and partisan strategy, early twentieth century accounts of the opening appear to describe something from a foreign political universe. It would be inaccurate to state that coverage totally ignored the contents of the Speech from the Throne and Ontario's party system; it is remarkable, however, that these pivotal elements of legislative politics were depicted as but two of many players in the province's annual popular variety-show.

As table 3.1 demonstrates, the scene and setting at Queen's Park is the primary theme of a strong majority of the 235 news items sampled between 1900 and 1945; by contrast, partisan strategy and the Speech from the Throne constitute the primary theme of just over a quarter of all items.

**Table 3.1**  
**Comparing themes of newspaper coverage of the legislative opening, 1900-1945**

	Total number of items	Primary theme is scene and setting	Primary theme is Throne Speech / partisan politics	NA
<i>Globe</i>	83	58 (70%)	25 (30%)	0
<i>Star</i>	76	44 (58%)	31 (41%)	1 (1%)

<i>Telegram</i>	76	61 (80%)	13 (17%)	2 (3%)
	<b>235</b>	<b>163 (70%)</b>	<b>69 (29%)</b>	<b>3 (1%)</b>

When data from 1925 are removed from the picture—a move justified by how drastically that year's totals conflict with those of all other years in the sample, an exception to be discussed later in the chapter—the percentage of scene-and-setting coverage moves up seven points, to seventy-seven percent, and that of Throne Speech coverage moves down eight points, to twenty-one percent. Bearing in mind the importance invested in news appearing on the front-page (Bell 1991; Fowler 1991; Hartley 1982; Reah 1998; van Dijk 1988a), table 3.2 is further evidence of popular assumptions about the meaning of the ritual very different from those underpinning newspaper discourse today.

**Table 3.2**  
**Comparing themes in front-page coverage of the legislative opening, 1900-1945**

	Total number of front-page items	Primary theme is scene and setting	Primary theme is Throne Speech / partisan politics
<i>Globe</i>	14	9 (64%)	5 (36%)
<i>Star</i>	21	12 (57%)	9 (43%)
<i>Telegram</i>	8	8 (100%)	0
	<b>43</b>	<b>29 (67%)</b>	<b>14 (33%)</b>

Removing 1925 data from table 3.2 reveals an even starker contrast: the total number of front-page items drops by ten, yet twenty-seven of the thirty-three remaining items—a full eighty-two percent—are primarily focused on the ceremony's scene and setting. Controlling for 1925, only six front-page items (eighteen percent) led with information about the Speech from the Throne.

In addition to providing information about the upcoming legislative session, coverage of the ritual offered newsreaders the opportunity to gaze at the spectacle of the capital city's fashionable elites; to cheer Ontario's place as the “banner province” in the British Empire (*Globe* 15 February 1900, 6); to laugh at the lighter side of provincial politics; and to negotiate social tensions through representations of unity among political and popular classes, and harmony between the province's British heritage and its part in the fledgling Canadian project. The “lavishness and extravagance” of the affair itself was interpreted as a sign of Ontario's progress and expansion (*Star* 5 February 1930, 1). From the turn of the twentieth century until the end of

the Second World War, newspapers in Ontario framed the Opening of the Legislature as a popular Social Celebration.

### **A chronological account of the ritual's main events**

The following section provides a global view of the day-long event at Queen's Park by drawing on newspaper narratives from the first half of the twentieth century. Broadly speaking, the Social Celebration frame rendered the ritual into a story that was meaningful to newsreaders by describing prominent bodies, actions, and events at the Legislature in relation to the linear flow of the ceremony itself. Chronicling the people and activity in and around the Pink Palace, news coverage imbued the ritual with a strong sense of physicality and temporality: it anchored the meaning of the ritual in *legislative place-time* (see Gieryn 2000). Mediated processes of ritualization transformed action at the capital into a province-wide “collective ceremony, a... 'dramatized ideology’” (Schudson 1998, 320, n. 85). Even reports that were not structured chronologically overall tended to present information, from section to section, from paragraph to paragraph, from sentence to sentence, in the order in which events occurred. Thus, in addition to identifying the ritual's specific components, a narrative approach is useful here because it mirrors the dominant rhetorical style of journalists writing about the opening. With the purpose of conveying the theatrical nature of the ritual as it was depicted in news stories, the first step toward saying “what some bit of acted saying... says” (Geertz 2000, 29), the following narrative is divided into three scenes.

#### *Scene one: The crowd assembles*

As demonstrated in the *Telegram* story about the first woman to arrive at the Opening of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislature, journalists marked the start of the ritual by identifying the moment that spectators began to assemble on the legislative grounds. There is no evidence of guests arriving before 10:00 AM; but it was common to see a crowd assembling before noon. Bearing in mind the fact that the official procession would not enter the legislative chamber until 3:00 PM, the prominence and accuracy with which the ritual's commencement was recorded should be read as part of the general mood of anticipation surrounding the whole event. The opening was the hottest ticket in

town; it was widely understood that people would need to show up early if they wanted to secure a spot in the Chamber. By early afternoon the Legislature would be overflowing with people, making it possible for journalists to quip that the “SRO [standing room only] sign was out early” yet again (*Telegram* 10 March 1920, 20; also *Globe* 26 January 1910, 6). Police and other security were recurring characters in news narratives, struggling to keep the growing crowd at bay. Their presence was crucial, for in the words of the *Telegram*, “Opening a Parliament is like opening a Government job—there are always more want to get in than can be accommodated” (*Telegram* 23 March 1905, 9).

Coverage suggests that the crowd around the Legislature ran into the thousands. On the morning of the opening of 1900 the *Globe* guessed that “if the demand for tickets is in any way indicative of the number who intend to be present and fine weather should prevail the ceremonies will be witnessed by at least 2,000 people” (14 February, 9). Five years later the *Evening Telegram* reported that “6,000 tickets were issued, although the capacity of the entire chamber is only about 1,000” (22 March, 6). Throughout the era stories refer to both the roughly nine-hundred guests packed inside the Chamber to witness the formal proceedings, as well as the “hundreds... turned away” at the door (*Telegram* 10 March 1920, 20). In light of the *Telegram*'s 1905 warning about the Chamber having been oversold by about 5,000 tickets, it is no surprise to learn from the *Star*, under the headline, “THE CROWD THE FEATURE OF ASSEMBLY'S OPENING”, that “More People Were Shut Out Than Gained an Entrance” to the ceremony (23 March, 7). In the words of the opening paragraph: “Never has there been such a crowd at any previous opening in the history of the Province of Ontario.” And under a section marked “TROUBLE FOR DOORKEEPERS”, the story offers a feel for the crush of the crowd:

Mobs of people used both force and persuasion to get past them [the doorkeepers], when they had been ordered to let no more pass, and they new to their jobs and hundreds just hungry for their places. For the most part they were as hard as flint and as cunning as serpents.

Every subterfuge was attempted. One man pushed his way to the doorkeeper at the Government lobby.

'I am a member,' he said, giving as his name that of a member from a Western riding. Now the man who was seeking admission was tall and stout and the man whose name he gave is rather small. It just happened that the door-keeper was acquainted with that fact, and his answer to the alleged member was brief and

pointed.

The crowd was greatest just outside the main entrance to the chamber, and Deputy Chief Stark and his squad of policemen had all they could do to keep a lane open through which the vice-regal might pass. Two ladies in the crowd fainted, and there was a great scurrying about for water and other restoratives.

Although journalists writing in the wake of the opening of 1905 depicted that event as having been an especially wild affair, coverage from the 1920s and 1930s suggest that later openings were hardly less frenzied. For example, in 1925 the *Star* referred to new security methods adopted with the purpose of avoiding the pandemonium of the previous year's opening, an event in which "ladies... had literally to fight their way into the chamber, to the ruination of many Paris gowns" (*Star* 11 February 1925, 7). Ten years later, however, the *Telegram* described the first opening of the first Hepburn Government as being "as crowded as ever" (20 February 1935, 1).

The attention journalists devoted to the crowds leaves no doubt that "the function [was] one of perennial interest" (*Globe*, 26 January 1910, 3). Yet it is worth remarking on the frequency with which newspapers declared that the most recent opening was also the "most brilliant" in the history of the province (*Globe*, 15 February 1900, 5). Thirty years after praising the unparalleled ceremony which opened the Ninth Legislature, on the morning of 5 February 1930 a *Globe* headline predicted "RECORD ATTENDANCE" at the Opening of the Eighteenth Legislature (13). Later that evening the *Daily Star* confirmed the prediction, concluding that the affair had been "perhaps the most brilliant event that the assembly hall has ever seen, in lavishness and extravagance" (1). The statement is especially remarkable, in light of the fact that ten years earlier, the same newspaper declared that "more interest" surrounded the Opening of the Fifteenth Legislature "than has marked that event since the first year of Confederation" (9 March 1920, 1). On 10 March 1920 the *Star's* front page carried a photograph of the crowd outside the Legislature. Evoking ideas of "modernity or far-sightedness" often associated with "car imagery" of the era (Baskerville 2005, 132; see also Coutu 2002), the caption explains that this mass of people was "typical of the scene at Queen's Park yesterday afternoon for an hour before and after the opening. Besides the hundreds who entered and left on foot, innumerable motors conveyed their human freight to and from the ceremony." In an editorial published the day after the opening

of 1930 the *Telegram* includes the roar of the crowd in its three-part sum of events: “The guns have boomed, *the populace have cheered* and the Speech from the Throne has been read” (6 February 1930, 6, italics added).

When the ritual was framed as a Social Celebration, one of the primary indicators of the opening's success lay in the crowd gathered on the legislative grounds. The image of “streams of people... wending their way through the avenues and park” (*Globe* 23 March 1905, 5) in a rush toward the legislative building, and the Chamber overflowing with “a steady stream of humanity, of all sorts and conditions” (*Globe* 15 February 1900, 7) resonate in Canetti's (1973) famous metaphor of the crowd as a swelling sea (87-92). A *Daily Star* story from 1905 uses the word crowd seven times in the first paragraph in order to emphasize the central role of the mass of spectators at Queen's Park: “Crowds at the main entrance, crowds on the main staircase, crowds in the corridors, crowds at every entrance to the Chamber, crowds in every available space on the floor and in the galleries, crowds everywhere—the crowd was the most marked feature of the opening of the Legislature yesterday afternoon” (23 March, 7). By the 1930s, although the inside of the Legislature was as packed as ever, the same cannot be said of the lawn out front. In 1935 there were still “some 200 spectators lin[ing] the roadway from the monument of Hon. George Brown to the monument of Hon. Sir James Whitney”, waiting in the cold to witness the arrival of the lieutenant governor, but this number is much smaller than those reported earlier in the century. Yet regardless of the specific number of people in attendance from year to year, the significant thing to note is the way newspaper coverage consistently depicted spectators as central participants in the ritual.

As table 3.3 shows, most leading stories about the legislative opening appearing immediately after the event remarked on the mass of citizen-spectators.<sup>13</sup> Not only is the crowd referred to in twenty-three of the thirty leading stories sampled between 1900 and 1945 (seventy-seven percent), but twelve of these stories appear on the front page of the newspaper. What is more, in seven of these twelve front-page stories, the crowd first appears in bold in the story's headline. In chronological order, these headlines are: “SCENE OF GAIETY IN THE CHAMBER Floor and Galleries Thronged With Fashion—List of the Invited Ladies and Notes Men Who

<sup>13</sup> “Leading” refers to the story appearing on or nearest to the front page. When more than one story about the opening appeared on the front page, both were included in the count.

Attended the Opening” (*Star* 14 February 1900); “A HOST OF VISITORS IN THE CITY” (*Star* 22 March 1905, 1); “WAS OLD-TIME OPENING OF PROVINCIAL HOUSE... Ladies Were in a Flutter—Seats on the Floor” (*Star* 9 March 1920, 1); “LEGISLATURE OPENS WITH MARTIAL POMP AND SOCIAL DISPLAY Session of Momentous Promise Witnessed by Crowded Galleries” (*Globe* 11 February 1925, 1); “EIGHTEENTH LEGISLATURE FORMALLY INAUGURATED IN BRILLIANT SPECTACLE ‘Fair Women and Brave Men’ Gather as New Speaker Ascends Throne” (*Star* 5 February 1930, 1); “Woman First of Huge Crowd As 18<sup>th</sup> Legislature Opens: Scores of Special and Other Police Keep Way for Lieut.-Governor and His Staff” (*Telegram* 5 February 1930, 1); “Hundreds Anxious To See No ‘Frills’” (*Evening Telegram* 26 February 1935, 1). It is worth noting, by comparison, that of the thirty-six leading stories of the twelve openings sampled between 1950 and 2007, the crowd is referred to only eight times (twenty-two percent), and of that small proportion, the crowd appears in headlines exclusively about the massive public protest of 1995—hardly the same type of gathering as those from earlier in the century. Two other points are also worthy of note: first, table 3.3 includes only the one story appearing closest to the front of the newspaper published after the opening, which is to say that, during this period, a host of other stories also mentioned the crowd. For example, the *Telegram*'s story of 1925, “QUEEN’S PARK THRONGED FOR OPENING OF HOUSE Extensive Preparations Made to Handle Large Crowd—First Arrival at 10:50 a.m.” (*Evening Telegram* 10 February 1925, 17), does not appear in the chart because it came after other stories about the ceremony. Second, stories throughout the era of Social Celebration included multiple crowd references; in fact, in many cases, the crowd was the dominant organizing principle of the whole story. Compare this perspective to stories from later in the century that note the “crowded galleries” only once and in passing, and the unique character of earlier news coverage is even more apparent.

**Table 3.3**  
**Does the leading story about the Opening of the Legislature published after the ritual refer to the crowd on the legislative grounds? (1900-1945)**

Year	<i>Globe</i>	<i>Star</i>	<i>Telegram</i>
1900	Y	Y	Y
1905	Y	Y	Y

1910	Y	Y	Y
1915	Y	Y	Y
1920	Y	Y	N
1925	Y	N	Y
1930	N	Y	Y
1935	Y	Y	Y
1940	N	N	Y
1945	N	N	Y
	<b>Y: 7</b> <b>N: 3</b>	<b>Y: 7</b> <b>N: 3</b>	<b>Y: 9</b> <b>N: 1</b>

*Scene two: Inside the Chamber*

By early afternoon a huge crowd had descended upon Queen's Park. Hundreds of people had pushed their way into the Legislature, while hundreds of others were left standing outside on the lawn. What happened next? What did people do once inside the Chamber? Newspaper discourse suggests that the most significant part of this stage of the ritual was accomplished through the simple act of sitting. Why was the layout of legislative chairs the source of perennial journalistic interest? First, because it offered some concrete form to what had previously been fluid matter. From their perch in the press gallery, journalists were able to pick out the fortunate souls who had made it inside the Chamber, to identify who chatted with whom, and to see who sat where in the crowd. “There were the representatives of organizations of various kinds. There were the members of Parliament fresh from the people looking forward to their new life and wondering what it would bring forth, and there, too, were the ladies, Cabinet Ministers' wives and wives of the members, sitting in the cushioned seats on the floor of the House” (*Star* 9 March 1920, 1).

And so to the second and more significant reason that seating arrangements appeared in the news: in contrast to all other moments of legislative business, the opening was a time in which women held centre-stage—literally. Prior to 1944, the year Agnes Macphail and Rae Luckock took their seats within the caucus of Ontario's Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the only time women appeared on the floor of the legislative Chamber was during the ritual that opened a legislative session. Women in Canada have held high political and judicial office since 1916, when Alberta's Emily Murphy was appointed the first woman magistrate in the British

Empire. MacPhail was elected to the federal Parliament in 1921, and Ontario's first woman mayor, Barbara M. Hanley of Webbwood, served from 1936 to 1944 (Doyle 1992). But for the first four decades of the twentieth century, the ceremonial Opening of the Legislature constituted the lone legitimate opportunity for women to sit on the floor of Ontario's Legislative Assembly.

As might be expected of an era when “many men argued that woman's physical and intellectual inferiority made her unfit for the harsh realities of life outside the home” (Morrison 1976, 47), the gendered spatial transgression taking place at the Opening of the Legislature was closely followed by journalists in the House. Order was turned on its head and it was said that “no one looking over the brilliant array in the Legislative Chamber would dare to intimate that women's sphere was the home” (*Globe* 17 February 1915, 6). In the years prior to the extension of the vote, a visitor to Queen's Park “might almost have lost sight of the fact that it was a Parliament, or for a moment fancied that the days of women's suffrage had come, and the women of the country had united to send only members of their own sex to make our country's laws” (*Daily Star* 23 March 1905, 7). Yet even after the franchise was extended, women's place on the floor was newsworthy: in 1925, “a view from the gallery showed a feminist millennium, a parliament of man become a parliament of women” (*Daily Star* 11 February, 7). More will be said later about the ways in which mediated processes of ritualization helped to construct a particular type of Ontario femininity. Here the point is to draw attention to the significance placed on the position of women in the Chamber. In the words of one *Daily Star* headline: “FEMININITY, FASHION, BEAUTY DOMINATED OPENING OF HOUSE” (11 February 1925, 7).

With women in evening gowns filling “every inch of space on the floor... while in the galleries the crowding was noticeably uncomfortable” (*Globe* 15 February 1900, 5), excitement grew in anticipation of the arrival of the lieutenant governor. In light of the conventional limitations on the powers of the lieutenant governor, the detail with which his arrival at Queen's Park was chronicled in the newspaper is a signal that the political culture of Ontario and the shared meaning surrounding the legislative opening were very different than they are today. In a story from 1935 the *Evening Telegram* described the event as follows:

A few minutes before the appointed hour, the Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs.

Bruce, attended by an escort of Royal Canadian Dragoons arrived by motor before the main entrance. Their arrival was heralded by the bark of field guns firing a salute.

The chatter which rose in incessant waves of sound from the tightly packed chamber subsided as the warning reports told of the Lieutenant-Governor's approach. He, in the meantime, inspected the guard of honor from the Royal Canadian Regiment, drawn up before the building's entrance.

Hon. Dr. Bruce and Mrs. Bruce were received by the Premier at the steps of the building and the party, preceded by the Lieutenant-Governor's honorary A.D.C., proceeded to the chambers along a course flanked by palms.

#### GOVERNOR ENTERS

A silent multitude received them standing. The Lieutenant-Governor, clad in court dress glittering with gold and carrying a sword, marched straight to the Throne. Mrs. Bruce, escorted by the Premier, followed and behind them were the Lieutenant-Governor's aides and garrison officers. Premier Hepburn escorted Mrs. Bruce to a chair to the right of the Throne and beside Mrs. Normal Hipel, wife of the Speaker-to-be. (20 February, 16)

Described on the women's page, the arrival could be even more colourful. Interrupting the pre-Speech Chamber socializing,

the sound of 'God Save the Queen' floating softly from the terrace outside proclaimed the moment of the opening close at hand.

A hush of expectancy, a little movement about the doors, a parting of the gay throng and there passed up to the dais resplendent in sword, epaulets and gold lace, the man whom Ontario delights to honor, Sir Oliver Mowat, K.C.M.G. Leaning on the arm of Commander Law, attended by Col. Cosby, Col. Delamer, Col. Bruce, and Col. Denison, the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario mounted the steps of the dais, assumed the position of state, and delivered the opening address. The voice that has been heard so often in debate on the floor of the Ontario Legislature is lowered now, and does not carry as it once did, but it is none the less firm and steady. (*Star* 15 February 1900, 5)

In 1925 both the *Star* and the *Telegram* reported that the packed Chamber momentarily mistook the entry of one Jim McCausland for that of the lieutenant governor. The humorous moment is depicted in a timeline in the *Telegram*:

2.54—Col. Ogilvie carries the mace into the Chamber for the first time, walking at lovely funeral pace.

2.55—Bugle notes float in from Queen's Park.

2.55(1/4)—Chamber door opens.

2.55(1/2)—Everyone jumps up and stands at attention.

2.55(3/4)—Excited lady flutters down floor of the House.

2.56—Jim McCausland enters [not the official procession everyone was expecting].

2.56(1/4)—Everyone laughs.

2.56(1/2)—Everyone sits down. (11 February, 24)

Despite the “ripple of laughter and giggles” that followed the Chamber's collective misjudgment, when the official procession did arrive, the sight of it was stunning as ever: “These armed men with jingling spurs and clanking swords making a sudden irruption into a peaceful assembly of legislators and ladies in evening gowns give a spectator a thrill of surprise” (*Star* 11 February 1925, 7).

If the ceremony opened a new session of a preexisting Legislature, then the lieutenant governor would read the Speech from the Throne soon after entering the Chamber. If, however, the ritual authorized the first sitting of a whole new legislative session, then a Speaker would need to be chosen before the Throne Speech could be read. As demonstrated in the following excerpt from a *Globe* story of 1915, this procedure was also described in intimate detail. It is worth noting that the following quotation is taken from the front-page of the newspaper. Under the subheading “New Speaker Elected”:

When Hon. W.J. Hanna, reading from a carefully-prepared ritual, informed the House that his Honor, in the absence of a Speaker, could not acquaint the members with the reason for summoning them together, Hon. W.H. Hearst proceeded with the nomination of Dr. Jamieson. The Premier's remarks opened with a reference to the historic place that the office of Speaker held from the time in 1376 in England when the House of Lords was separated from the Commons. Since that time there had been a succession of distinguished First Commoners that were worthy to represent any great deliberative assembly. Mr. Hearst made some interesting references to the prerogatives of the Speaker, his duties and responsibilities, and in offering the name of the member for South Grey to the House he felt assured that the best traditions of the office would be upheld. (17 February)

Premier Hearst's miniature history lesson on the Office of the Speaker was not without precedent. In fact, in 1905, the *Globe* used a full quarter of one page-long story on the opening to summarize Premier Whitney's comments on the historical role of the Speaker. Both the substance and style of the news item are suggestive of a political ritual very different from today's legislative opening—one that, in order to make sense to newspaper readers, must have operated

within a political culture very different from the modern situation. On Darnton's (1985) instruction to pick “at the document where it is most opaque” in order to “unravel an alien system of meaning” (5), it may be rewarding to break off an odd piece of this *Globe* story with the purpose of further exploring the “foreign mental world” of early twentieth century Ontario (6). According to the *Globe*, Premier Whitney explained to the crowd assembled in the Chamber that if they were

to discover the origin of the office they had to go back to the time when the representative assembly of England, as it was then, possessed practically only one privilege which had been wrung from their Norman rulers, namely the right to address the Sovereign. As time went on, and as occasion called for it, a messenger was sent from the House of Commons to convey the result of its deliberations to the Sovereign. This messenger came at last to be known as the Speaker of the House of Commons. The position continued and was at all times one of honor and responsibility, though it had sometimes been more or less unpleasant in regard to personal comfort. One Speaker, for instance, had made a request in the turbulent reign of Henry I., which had been granted, but the penalty he had to pay was a sentence to imprisonment for life. In the succeeding reign he was liberated, however, and was chosen Speaker for life. In a later day, when the Speaker had refused to be what he actually was, and had attempted finally to break up a sitting by leaving the chair, two stalwart British members had determined that he should do his duty, and had held him down in the chair while the work proceeded. (Laughter.) On another occasion a Speaker had refused a demand, made by the King, that he should point out Mr. Pym, whose arrest the Sovereign desired, saying he had neither eyes to see nor mouth to speak, save as ordered by the House, whose servant he was.

At this point the premier's address moved into a discussion of the importance of the position, then into praise for his particular candidate for Speaker. Here we find a narrative within a narrative: “The gentleman whose name he [the premier] desired to propose was one of the stalwart yeomanry of the country, who had commenced life on the farm, progressed through college in a way highly credible, had taken up the study of the law, become a member of the Bar, and performed his duties as such with credit.” The story continues on the topic of the Speaker for another five long paragraphs before the return of the lieutenant governor. After noting that the Mace had been placed on the table and verbatim reproductions of both the Speaker's oath of office and the parliamentary privileges read out by the Provincial Secretary, the story offers one short line: “His Honor then read the speech from the throne, which was as follows: —”; and after

that, the Speech appears in full.

As table 3.4 demonstrates, of the ten Throne Speeches that fall into the textual sample from the first half of the twentieth century, eight of them appeared in full in at least one major Ontario daily.

**Table 3.4**  
**Was the Speech from the Throne reprinted verbatim? (1900-1945)**

Year	<i>Globe</i>	<i>Star</i>	<i>Telegram</i>
1900	Y	Y	Y
1905	Y	Y	Y
1910	Y	Y	Y
1915	Y	N	Y
1920	Y	Y	Y
1925	N	N	N
1930	N	N	Y
1935	Y	Y	N
1940	N	Y	Y
1945	N	N	N
	<b>Y: 6</b> <b>N: 4</b>	<b>Y: 6</b> <b>N: 4</b>	<b>Y: 7</b> <b>N: 3</b>

Introduced in the manner described in the *Globe* piece from 1905, that is, embedded within a longer story about the scene and setting of the legislative opening, the Throne Speech itself was framed as a ritual act more complex than the aggregate of a collection of government policy proposals. To be sure, as discussed later in the chapter, the contents of the Speech were named in specific stories with that intent. The point here is that other stories noted only what Rothenbuhler (1998) would call the Speech's “noninstrumental” qualities (11); they ignored its rational qualities. In other words, in addition to its distinctly legislative character the Speech was also represented as a link in a chain of events that led from the arrival of the crowd before noon, to the chatter and fashion of post-ceremony tea. For example, one *Telegram* story from 1920 neglects to mention the Throne Speech by name when describing the official components within the “CRUSH AT HOUSE OPENING”. The story describes the Speaker's momentary exit “to don his robes of office”, then finishes by remarking that “when he reappeared, the Lieut. Governor reentered the chamber and the ceremonials were concluded [the Throne Speech being lumped

together with the generic “ceremonials”]... and the proceedings as far as the first day of the session were concerned were over” (10 March, 20). In 1935 the *Star's* front-page story concludes (on page 15) at the very moment that the lieutenant governor receives the Speech. The Speaker returns in costume and “It was at this point the lieutenant governor made his reappearance to deliver the speech from the throne, the climax of the opening session. Mr. Nixon handed the typewritten text of the speech to a secretary, who in turn gave it to Dr. Bruce” (20 February 1935). And with the Speech in the hands of the lieutenant governor, the story finishes. Five years earlier the same newspaper described the Speech's delivery by saying that “everyone listened but few tried to understand. Everything that was said was read from prepared and printed forms. The wording was perfectly arranged and had all been read before” (5 February 1930, 2).

With the Speech read, new MPPs introduced, and House administrative responsibilities completed, the legislative proceedings were adjourned—another ritual act that frequently made its way into the newspaper. Bearing in mind the chronological structure of journalistic accounts of the opening, it was logical for a story to wind down by noting that this or that honourable gentleman “finally at 4'o'clock moved the adjournment of the House, the proceedings thus closing” (*Globe* 23 March 1905, 11). However, while this brought an end to official legislative business of the day, the ritual itself was not yet over. As noted in the final paragraph of a *Globe* story from 1910: “An informal reception to the visitors and members with their wives followed in the Speaker's apartments, light refreshments being served” (26 January, 3).

### *Scene three: Ritual tea-party*

The tea-party that commenced at the conclusion of Chamber proceedings was a meaningful part of the whole affair. To this day the Speech from the Throne is followed by a reception, but no longer is this the stuff that makes the news. That said, although it disappeared from hard news stories in the post-World War II climate of professionalization at Queen's Park, the event held a place on the women's page well into the 1960s. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, however, the reception was cast as part of the main attraction. Exemplifying the way in which the ritual was mediated as a moment for friendly social exchange, as opposed to divisive political debate, the reception was a favourite place for newspaper photographers to capture images of

prominent Ontarians posing and smiling with friends and family.

The liminal space (cf. Geertz 2007; Turner 1967) between past and future political battles that was opened up during the opening ceremony is illustrated in the opening paragraphs of a *Globe and Mail* story from 1940. Appearing under the full-page banner headline: “Legislative Assembly Honored by Lieutenant-Governor: Representatives of State, Church, Bench, Bar, The Arts, C.A.S.F., Social and Civic Circles Received in Viceregal Suite at Queen's Park” (11 January, 9), the story begins:

The ponderous machinery of Legislature was stilled last night, when under the most pleasant circumstances all political argument and all differences of outlook were unified in enjoyment at the reception given by his Honor the Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs. Albert Matthews in their suite, Queen's Park. At this delightful event all controversy was abolished, and everything was friendly and as smooth as the proverbial silk hat.

His Honor and Mrs. Matthews received in the Music Room, where a bright fire blazed in the fireplace and brilliant poinsettias and stocks decorated the long table. In each corner were tall palms; and the corridor leading to the room was bordered with palms and flowers. Mrs. Matthews wore a charming gown of white satin, beautifully hand-embroidered in silver and pearls, and fashioned with a V-neckline. With it she wore diamonds. In the supper room the table was done with poinsettias, and looking after the many guests were a group of pretty matrons and girls.

That same year the *Star's* page for women carried the headline “POLITICAL VIEWS FORGOTTEN AT QUEEN'S PARK RECEPTION” (11 January, 24), while a story in the *Telegram* began, “The parliamentary party at the Parliament Buildings last evening was a big success because people seemed happily pleased to see one another again” (11 January, 9).

While it is true that the post-Speech tea-party was a fixture of the legislative opening throughout the era of Social Celebration, both its size and significance appear to have grown between the turn of the century and the 1920s. In 1900 the *Globe's* page for women reported that after the Throne Speech, “Mrs. Geo. W. Ross [the wife of the premier]... entertained a number of people at tea in the Speaker's handsome chambers, where a very pleasant half-hour was enjoyed by all who were there” (15 February, 7). Now compare that vision of civility to the picture painted by a hard-news story in the *Telegram* in 1925:

The crush to get into the chamber was a rather bad ordeal but it was a light thing

compared to the jam that occurred after when the whole throng of those who had succeeded in getting into the chamber was joined by the throng of the unsuccessful in an attempt to get to the Speaker's reception afterwards. There were fifteen police employed to stem the tide that swelled towards the doors of the Speaker's apartment, and they swayed like piles in the midst of a swift stream.

The crush threatened to be fatal at times to the shoulder straps of evening gowns and fair wearers who might be classed as 'a perfect thirty-six' threatened to be reduced to an imperfect thirty-two before they got within reach of the bit of cake and the cup of tea that followed the honor of holding for a moment the extended hand of the First Gentleman of Ontario, Hon. Jos. E. Thompson. (11 February, 24)

In addition to providing the backdrop for the chatter and costumes of people at Queen's Park, the tea-party also served as scenery for newspaper photographs of the ritual's most fashionable participants. “There [were] few better ways of finding out just what's what in fashions than to scan Ontario's feminine officialdom at an opening” of the provincial Legislature (*Telegram* 11 February 1925, 9); and in the years after 1920 it was increasingly common to find photographs of guests posing at tea, or those showing “the many pretty assistants at the large reception” that capped-off the day-long event (*Globe and Mail* 11 January 1940, 8). On 6 February 1930, under the title “THE SPEAKER'S RECEPTION FOLLOWING THE OPENING OF 18<sup>th</sup> LEGISLATURE”, the front-page of the *Globe's* city news section carried four photographs of guests posing for the camera. The caption below confirms that while the cannon blasts and honour guard marked the outward signs of the ritual, “In official and social circles almost equally important was the reception in the Speaker's Chambers following the formal opening ceremonies” (13).

A good way of demonstrating the meaningfulness of the tea-party is to examine newspaper discourse around the opening of 1935—the year that Premier Hepburn banned tea from the opening ceremonies. Even before the Liberal election victory of 1934 and the Opening of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislature the following year, Mitch Hepburn made much of his threat to dismantle the Office of the Lieutenant Governor (Saywell 1991, 126). Eventually Hepburn would successfully close the viceregal mansion at Chorley Park in 1937; but his first legislative opening—with all its royal pomp and circumstance—proved to be an irresistible early target for the premier's attack on political frills in the name of political populism. In spite of Lieutenant

Governor Herbert Bruce's concern that it might not be long before “a Lieut. Governor will be very necessary with this wild man doing what he is”, at the ceremony itself Hepburn conducted himself in accordance with tradition (in Saywell 1991, 194). However, in the days running up to the ceremony, the premier declared the Speaker's customary post-Speech tea extravagant, and ordered it, along with the firing of the legislative cannon, to be struck from the day's proceedings. Recalling the stormy Hepburn years, one of the great newspapermen of the era notes that the lieutenant governor's office is “a Federal one of which the salary is paid by the Federal Government” (Charlesworth 1937, 189), which meant that it was Ottawa's decision to reject Hepburn's minimalist vision, and the guns on the lawn fired as ever. However, even if it wanted to Ottawa could do nothing about the order to stop the ritual tea-party, referred to in the newspapers as Hepburn's “ban on teacup juggling”; and indeed, the official post-Speech tea-party was canceled.

Of the twenty-seven pages in the *Globe*, *Star*, and *Telegram* that carried information about the legislative opening in the evening and day after the ceremony of 1935, fifteen refer to either the canceled tea-party or to parties emerging in its absence. Four headlines note the break in custom, including the *Telegram*'s front-page headline published within hours of the Speech from the Throne. Although it was widely agreed that the tea-ban did not reduce the overall splendour of the ritual—in the words of the *Telegram*'s front-page headline, “Speaker's Tea Party Only Tradition Ignored in Brilliant Pageant at Queen's Park”—all three newspapers gave voice to expressions of disappointment at the loss of the time-honoured forum for social exchange. Perhaps predictably, the *Star*'s regular social column “Over the tea cups” noted that “tea-less... the guests dispersed in groups” and although some people “had tea at the Royal York”, they caused “consternation on the tea floor by appearing in evening dress in the middle of the afternoon” (21 February 1935, 26). The *Telegram* reported hearing “sharp criticism” of Hepburn's radical edict, “as members' wives from out-of-town points and back concessions pointed out that the Speaker's tea would have given them an opportunity of meeting others in a social way and of sharing further in the Opening's glamor” (20 February 1935, 16). A different way of approaching the matter was to focus on the fact that several impromptu tea parties replaced the hole left by the loss of the traditional gathering. All three newspapers noted that tea was served in the private

chambers of several MPPs, and the front-page of the second-section of the *Star* carried a photograph of George S. Henry, the Conservative Leader of the Opposition, holding a teacup and smiling above the caption: “DEFY PREMIER HEPBURN'S ANTI-TEA EDICT”. Viewed positively or negatively, “the cancellation of the Speaker's tea party, where members of all political stripes would have had one hour at least of social intercourse before ‘the battle’” of legislative politics began in earnest the following day, was a point of considerable journalistic interest (*Telegram* 20 February 1935, 1). Moreover, in light of the prevailing conservative culture in interwar Ontario, not to mention that of Ontario's Conservative culture, it is no surprise to see newspapers interpreting Hepburn's cancellation of tea as causing division among participants in the ritual—an attack on the traditional nonpartisan atmosphere of the opening.

Putting to one side the tea-free case of 1935, the close of the post-Speech tea-party marked the conclusion of the installation ritual. The festivities wound down and the crowd dispersed. A different atmosphere would prevail at Queen's Park the following day: citizens would not arrive en masse, politicians would resume their place on the floor, business attire would replace fancy-dress, and partisan rhetoric would choke-off expressions of unity among competing groups. In short, the Legislature would go back to politics-as-usual. But for one day a year the symbolic heart of Ontario politics was home to a joyous celebration.

### **The embodiment of imperial power**

One of the most compelling ways to explain the popularity of the legislative opening begins by acknowledging that the ritual was represented as symbolizing the colonial relationship between Ontario and Great Britain. Today, twenty-five years after the repatriation of the Constitution, although there is no coherent republican movement in Canada (Smith 1999), it is not uncommon to hear calls to cut ties with the British monarchy. At a time when Canada's colonial history, when it is remembered at all, tends to be represented as a shameful system of oppression (see Epp, Iacovetta, and Swyripa 2004; Razack 2002), popular opinion regarding the Office of the Governor General and that of the lieutenant governor can be described as polite indifference at best. Prior to the Second World War, however, prominent members of Ontario society stressed that it was for “the well-being of the community” that the Office of the Lieutenant Governor,

“symbolic of the Monarchy, should have popular support” (Charlesworth 1937, 189). The *Telegram* displayed the Union Jack on its masthead until the 1940s, and during debates about a new flag for Canada, “attacks against the Union Jack were regarded at *The Telegram* as an affront to Christianity, itself” (Poulton 1971, 217).

Notwithstanding the political mood at the start of the twenty-first century, it is difficult to overstate the significance many Ontarians placed on their British identity in the first half of the twentieth century. Immigration literature of the 1920s published by the Ontario government “reinforced the image of Canada as a British country, not a foreign land but an integral part of the British Empire” (Barber 1986, 57). For example, in one pamphlet entitled “*Sunny Ontario for British Girls*”, the government declared that “The people of Ontario are largely of British descent and nowhere in the Empire to-day are British sentiment and British traditions stronger than in Ontario. Anyone going from this country will certainly feel quite at home with the people of Ontario; indeed in such cities as Toronto there are so many Old Country people that you sometimes wonder if you are in Canada at all” (quoted in Barber 1986, 57). It is safe to assume that, like all advertisements, this one exaggerates the qualities of the item being promoted (Leiss, Kline, Jhally 1986; Wernick 1991); moreover, the sentiment would have applied differently in different parts of Ontario and during different moments in the prewar period. But there can be no doubting the pride with which Ontarians viewed their British heritage: “until at least World War II the worship of the monarchy and the British Empire enjoyed almost cult status in Canadian society” (Francis 1997, 53).

During these years the legislative opening was framed as an extension of Empire Day celebrations whose importance “in the first three decades of the twentieth century cannot be overemphasized” (Stamp 1973, 37). Inaugurated in 1899 under the education ministry of George Ross, Empire Day was a moment to celebrate Canada within “the larger idea of a day in which school children could worship at the imperial shrine” (35). With its institutional links to the heritage of British parliamentary democracy, and its reliance upon the body and movements of the representative of the Sovereign, the legislative opening provided an opportunity similar to the one on offer during Empire Day, but one in which participation was open to all British subjects, regardless of age. Through the processes of mass mediation, not only could a local event be

represented as an imperial one, but the local-imperial ritual could be experienced by newsreaders all over the province who were unable to witness the spectacle from the legislative grounds. News narratives granted newsreaders the power of “*seeing*, and of *seeing with*”; they marked legislative place-time for distant “spect-actors” searching for ways to feel connected to the glory of Mother Britain (Lardellier 2005, 70, italics in original).

Using the civic ritual to map the hierarchical colonial relationship, the *Evening Telegram* positions Ontario below its dominion and imperial rulers when noting that the opening in Toronto echoed “Ottawa's gorgeous ceremony, as it in turn echoes old London” (11 February 1925, 9). The acknowledgment of Ontario's lower status makes it surprising to find within the same newspaper the suggestion that Ontario's Sergeant-At-Arms wielded “the Mace with a dignity and grace unrivalled even at Westminster, where the Imperial Parliament, upon the same day, also resumed its labors” (24); however, regardless of the rank conferred upon Ontario by individual stories, what is noteworthy is that the *Telegram* defines the Ontario opening in relation to other branches of the British Empire.<sup>14</sup> Like the photograph of the lieutenant governor's wife wearing a dress “IN WHICH SHE WAS PRESENTED AT COURT OF ST. JAMES” (*Daily Star* 6 February 1930, 21), wartime Throne Speech expressions of “pride in the response that the Dominion and the Province had given to the call of Empire” (*Globe* 17 February 1915, 1) show news of the opening fostering an imagined community which extended beyond provincial borders to encompass the entire British Commonwealth. A caption below a photograph of the 1920 State Opening of Parliament at Westminster illustrates both the meaning attributed to the Imperial Parliament, and the reverential tone used to cover British royalty:

Here is a glimpse of Old London at a historic moment as the King and Queen are approaching Westminster to open Parliament. Through the moist grey atmosphere the ancient buildings loom in hoary dignity. In front are the loyal crowds astir with acclaim (Can't you hear them shouting as the King goes by?) There goes the state coach with its gaily caparisoned horses, the figures of their Majesties seen through the gilded framing of the coach windows. The soldiers stand to attention. The lines of steel flash with the menace of Britain's might like the gleam of a bulldog's teeth. The colors dip to the pavement and rise again to catch the air. Hoofs beat as fine horses canter and caracole. Out blares the music of the band in the National

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<sup>14</sup> In light of the *Telegram*'s pride in Ontario's British connection, it is ironic that the textual sample shows the *Tely* using the American spelling of words such as “labor”, “defense”, and “license”, throughout its twentieth century tenure. Similarly, the *Globe*, *Star*, and *Sun*, only began using Canadian spelling within the past two decades.

Anthem. On sweeps the gilded coach to the gates of Westminster, where the Mother of Parliaments awaits the royal word to begin deliberations of Imperial moment. (*Evening Telegram* 10 March, 16)

The ceremony overseas is portrayed as being significant in Toronto; and the ceremony in Toronto is portrayed as an extension of action overseas.

According to the front-page of the *Globe's* second section of 6 February 1930, the opening ceremonies of the previous day had been graced by a very special British visitor. Located at the bottom right corner of a page that is dominated by four photographs of guests posing at post-Speech tea, the story “Pepys at Queen's Park” is an account of the legislative opening through the eyes of the ghost of Samuel Pepys. During life (1633-1703), Pepys had been a Member of Parliament at Westminster; after death, he became famous for having kept a detailed diary (later published) for close to a decade as a young man (Menand 2007, 107-8). The witness to numerous state openings at the mother of parliaments, Pepys was an ideal person to judge the calibre of imperial pomp and circumstance in the Dominion. The verdict? High praise all around. The story begins:

The shade of Samuel Pepys was early in Queen's Park yesterday afternoon. There was a show to be seen at the Parliament House, and Mr. Pepys has always liked shows. 'Law,' Mr. Pepys said as he settled in his place in the gallery, 'what a press of people! 'Twas scarce greater in our Parliament House the day King Charles First met his Parliament. My wife, poor wretch, did miss that sight. We parted in the press, and she never did get nearer than Whitehall stairs, where I found her when all was past, pretending to weep and reproaching me bitterly for deserting her, which I did not do. She did make me near mad with her scoldings then and since. But now all will be forgotten. I have gotten her a billet for the floor of this House today.'

Over the course of what follows—a story which runs for twenty paragraphs before being cut-off mid-sentence in an apparent printing error—Pepys continually comments on the crush of the crowd and the colours in the Chamber. He marvels at the sight of women on the Assembly floor; summarizes the opinions of those near him regarding changes to ceremonial seating arrangements (all positive assessments); notes that being unable to hear the Speech from the Throne did not prevent him from enjoying “the show”; and commends the precision with which traditional parliamentary rites were executed. In fact, “For stateliness, the Lieutenant-Governor's

entrance, he said, was not bettered in Westminster in his time. Nor could the ritual of the election of the new Speaker have been more solemnly conducted.”

The Pepys story exemplifies the mass of newspaper coverage employing references to Ontario's British heritage in order to define the provincial character and, in turn, legitimize the province as a viable political community. Berger's (1970) thesis—that turn-of-the-century expressions of British imperialism were, in fact, early expressions of Canadian nationalism—is supported by a journalistic frame that relies upon Ontario's colonial status to build a sense of self-worth, a sense of power. In Ontario, the “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm 1983) of London, the “metropole” (Anderson 2006), became the primary material by which new traditions were (re)invented at Toronto, the colonial outpost. Put differently, projecting the civic ritual into the realm of “mediated publicness” (Thompson 1995, 126), newspapers invented an Ontario tradition inextricably bound up in the invented traditions of Great Britain. News on the legislative opening was a representation of a representation—a print-based ancestor of Baudrillard's (1983) simulacra. Organizing cultural cues which depict the opening not merely as related to British politics and society, but as constituting the North American version of them, news coverage simulated *Greater* Britain (cf. Dilke 1899). From this perspective, the media ritual is “no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself” (Baudrillard 1983, 4). Journalists grasped at certain symbols circulating through the ritual, imbued them with memories of Mother Britain, and elevated them to places of prominence. This was at once a demonstration of widespread assumptions about the significance of imperial bonds, a reproduction of those bonds in visual form, and a semiotic narrowing of the meaning of the ritual itself.

In a recent study of public school curricula from the years of Social Celebration, Richardson (2005) argues that the early imagined community of Ontario relied upon public sense-makers to symbolically construct a nostalgic interpretation of its own identity, “even as the lived British and imperial connection grew more distant” (192). News on the legislative opening helped to write this fiction, albeit, usually more subtly than in the Pepys piece. References to the democratic history of British parliamentary institutions and to “stately gowns” at Queen's Park “that had graced the world's greatest court at Buckingham Palace” (*Telegram* 5 February 1930,

8); photographs of Westminster or royalty on the same page as Queen's Park news; keywords such as “tradition”, “historic”, “old”, “king”, “yore”, “time-honoured”—these were less obvious ways of constructing Ontario on British soil, making the ritual as much about closing the borders of empire as opening a new session of official politics. The Pepys piece is unique because it invests the British spirit right into the body of civic Ontario; it sets the gaze of British history upon the organs of provincial politics. Royalty is always at the opening in the form of the lieutenant governor, but his official duties preclude him from offering the unadulterated adulation that Pepys could provide and, indeed, that Ontario appears to have craved. Nevertheless, it was the presence of the lieutenant governor that established the necessary conditions for the ceremony to serve as a moment to reproduce Ontario's British identity.

The body of the lieutenant governor was treated with a reverence reserved exclusively for symbols of the highest order. Narratives organized around his departure from Chorley Park, arrival at the Legislature, inspection of the Honour Guard, entry into the Chamber, delivery of the Throne Speech, exit from the Chamber, and appearance at post-Speech tea, not to mention the frequent photographs showing members of his family posing in formal dress, these recurring features of news coverage portray the lieutenant governor as the centrepiece of the ritual. The lieutenant governor was a celebrity: in the words of the *Globe's* editorial page, the source of the pageant's charge was the fact that “everyone was eager for a glance at the representative of royalty” (23 March 1905, 6). But right away it must be noted that, in this instance, celebrity status did not emerge out of personal characteristics—stories were not about the unique attributes, opinions, or abilities of Mortimer Clark or Henry Cockshutt—rather, the lieutenant governor was a celebrity on account of the fact that he embodied the power of the British monarch; indeed, he was “the King himself” (Charlesworth 1937, 189) and, in turn, symbolized one form of Ontario publicness. In addition to introducing the legislative agenda to citizens across the province, newspapers interpreted the ritual as a forum for the communal experience of what Habermas (1989) calls “representational publicness” (7).

Arguing that “lordship was something publicly represented” prior to the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas explains that representational publicness “pretended to make something invisible visible through the public presence of the person of the lord” (7). Contrasting

with a delegate theory of representation, in which representatives act on behalf of an individual or group, representational publicness operates through the visual demonstration of publicity in corporeal form. “Representation in the sense in which the members of a national assembly represent a nation or a lawyer represents his clients had nothing to do with this publicity of representation inseparable from the lord's concrete existence, that, as an 'aura' surrounded and endowed his authority” (7). Bearing the insignia and performing the role of the British sovereign, the lieutenant governor represented the Crown “not for but 'before' the people” (8). In twentieth century Ontario, everyone understood that the lieutenant governor played no substantive role in composing the Throne Speech, or formulating or implementing public policy. His representational power was different from that of the premier and other legislators. The lieutenant governor did not represent Ontarians in the sense that he was their servant; on the contrary, like the feudal lord, “he displayed himself, presented himself as an embodiment of some sort of 'higher' power” (8). That higher power was, of course, the British Empire; and the publicity being represented was what Habermas calls “courtly-knightly representation” (8).

In feudal times, this type of representation, displayed prominently during “the 'high holy days'” of civic life “was completely unlike a sphere of political communication. Rather, as the aura of feudal authority, it indicated social status” (8). Similarly, in Ontario, the lieutenant governor was depicted as the central figure of the ritual, despite the fact that his actions were not directed toward the sphere of political communication. His representational function was powerful but separate from routine legislative affairs. The lieutenant governor was the public face of the British Empire in Ontario, representing the King not for, but before the crowds at Queen's Park—and before newsreaders across the province. The early twentieth century fixation upon proximity to royalty is illustrated in the invitation from the St. George's Society of Toronto to the visiting Prince Arthur in 1906. Requesting that the Prince join the club for its annual dinner, the head of the group explained that “On an occasion of this kind when Englishmen are gathered together to offer up thanks for the many blessings they enjoy in our fair land of Canada as subjects of His Gracious Majesty King Edward VII, *it would be a matter of the greatest gratification to feel that one of the Royal family... was present with them taking part in that service*” (Harman, italics added). Royalty in corporeal form, by making visible Ontario's British

character, would offer unique satisfaction to faithful British subjects in the Dominion.

At the legislative opening the presence of the lieutenant governor imbued the ritual with a meaning that transcended the calculations and vicissitudes of legislative politics. The nature of the legislative session was ephemeral; by contrast, the embodiment of the British Empire was eternal. The *Globe's* editorial page once argued that it would be preferable if “respect for the law-making machinery... were inspired by the worthy qualities and superior ability displayed by the elected representatives”, as opposed to the visual fireworks of the legislative pageant; however, it concluded that if politicians were unable to capture the attention of the province, “it may be well to inspire a right mental attitude by military and courtly display” (*Globe* 23 March 1905, 6). The dubiousness of the stern voice of the editorial page suggests that not everyone in the province was equally satisfied by the extent to which the ritual relied upon representational publicness. But it also illustrates the general assumption of the time—that the show of royal pomp and ceremony was central to the ritual's meaning, and to the broader political culture of Ontario. Forty years after the publication of that editorial, Margaret Aitken used the *Telegram's* page for women to argue that while “many Americans claim British traditions may be a serious handicap in the post-war world... a little less tradition, even at the risk of a little more convenience, would mean a great deal less color in the British way of life” (16 February, 9). The lieutenant governor, in his Windsor uniform and horse-drawn landau, was an enduring reminder of proud Ontario's British heritage.

For nearly a century after Confederation Toronto was widely considered to be “the most imperialistic city in Canada” (Cooper 1997, 97), so it may come as no surprise to learn that the city's major newspapers depicted the opening of the provincial Legislature as a moment to celebrate the glory of Mother Britain. However, there are two corollaries of the fact that the day was one of royal spectacle, one in which the provincial gaze followed carefully the orbit of symbols surrounding the lieutenant governor. The first is the overall journalistic emphasis on visuality. Because the British Empire was understood to be the source of Ontario's power, making the presence of the embodiment of imperial power (the lieutenant governor) an essential part of the affair, it became necessary to detail not only the spectacle of the royal parade, but also the surrounding scene and setting. Second, both because it was in fact a royal event and because

newspapers framed it as such, the event took on the elevated status of any social function connected to royalty. In other words, the ritual became a showcase for Ontario High Society. The representational power of the lieutenant governor was not only something to see, but it was something around which to be seen.

### **Mapping Ontario's social hierarchy**

Quite aside from describing the vision of Ontario's legislative future, newspaper coverage of the ritual provided a snapshot of the province's reigning social classes. Nowhere was this interpretation stated more clearly than in social columns and on pages for women. A typical such page was marked by a banner headline informing readers that “‘T WAS LADIES' DAY IN QUEEN'S PARK” (*Daily Star* 26 January 1910, 11). Below the banner sat one or more stories beginning with between one and six paragraphs on the general atmosphere of the ceremony. These stories often referred to the weather, for example, “The day was all that could be desired, a brilliant winter's day favoring an equally brilliant ceremony” (*Globe* 6 February 1930, 16); and, as a rule, they eventually turned into long lists of who was at Queen's Park and what they wore to “the annual spring fashion show” (*Evening Telegram* 10 March 1920, 12). Also appearing on the women's page were point-form bits of “CHIT-CHAT” overheard at the ceremony (*Globe* 14 February 1900, 8), and photographs of the “Pretty Assistants” and other guests at the post-Throne Speech tea-party (*Globe and Mail* 11 January 1940, 8).

The lists of who was there and what they wore are especially striking. The first thing to note is their length: most contained scores of names; others ran into the hundreds, spilling across four full newspaper columns. Second, the level of detail given to particular outfits appears to correspond with the perceived social rank of the individual. For example, while the wife of the premier might be “in soft grey satin, with a bodice of grey chiffon, trimmed with cut steel [and wearing] pink roses in her corsage and hair” (*Globe* 15 February 1900, 7), by contrast, women halfway down the list were clad in newsprint-saving “red lace and Parisian jewelry combined with topaz” (*Daily Star* 20 February 1935, 24). Those at the very bottom of the list tended to be identified only by name, not gown.

Instead of dismissing these lists, if not all legislative news on the women's page as

nothing more than gossip, insignificant tea-party talk of people too rich to matter, they should be interpreted as the twentieth century iteration of a type of “informal power in the social realm” which dates back to life in early Upper Canada (McKenna 1990, 181). As revealed in McKenna's (1990) fascinating study of the civic role of upper class women in late eighteenth century York (now Toronto), even in patriarchal social systems politics is not restricted to rational debate among men; on the contrary, the “political importance of elaborate visiting rituals and correct conduct at social events reveals that women indeed had a public role to play” (200). In Simcoe's Upper Canada, the social position of prominent members of the community was performatively constructed and contested through the actions of women at balls, dinners, and routine house visits—places where “one's dress and manners were considered to be of the utmost importance” (182). It goes without saying that conditions in early twentieth century Ontario were drastically different than those of the early colony from which it took shape. But when McKenna describes a political culture in which “who you knew and how successful you were at procuring patronage were often more important than ability” (180), she could have been talking about the era of Social Celebration, in which mediated processes of ritualization made visible the theatrics of “Ontario's feminine officialdom” (*Evening Telegram* 11 February 1925, 9).

In *Women who made the news*, Lang (1999) suggests that in turn-of-the-century Canada, it was “becoming apparent to the socially aspiring citizens of a fluid society that the high society game was often played out in the pages of the newspapers. It was no longer sufficient to be invited to a major social event in order to establish one's acceptance into the elite; if the invitation was to have real currency, it must be widely known that one had been there” (202). The society column may have been “an exclusive quasi-private realm where only women held sway”; however, though “men might snigger at the 'pink tea circuit,'... they valued social prominence and wanted to see their wives' and daughters' names listed 'among those present’” (189). In 1935, one Mel Rossie, a London (ON) ally of Mitch Hepburn, urged the premier to “let the members have their seats on the floor instead of 'being crowded out of them by a lot of Toronto women who are there to get their names and what they wore in the paper.’” But even the populist Hepburn chose not to change the ritual role of women, therefore leaving interested parties somewhat “reassured of the immutability of the monarchical tradition” (in Saywell 1991, 194-5).

With the lists of who was there and what they wore, again we see guest and journalist working in tandem in order to produce a mediated version of the ritual that would not have existed otherwise—one that “required a knowing eye to interpret the complexities of social arrangement for the satisfaction both of those who attended and of those whose only participation was vicarious” (Lang 1999, 191). And although this cooperation would have been especially significant to distant-citizen-spectators—it is what transported them to the capital—of course those present at Queen's Park also encountered a distinct mediated version of the ritual in subsequent newspapers. Here is where they found verbal proof of who wore what; here is where they saw who went through the camera's eye to strike a pose in newspaper pages. Photographs confirmed who were the “prominent feminine members of the provincial family” (*Daily Star* 11 February 1925, 3).

It is ironic that the patriarchal norms of a society that “generally regarded women as intruders whenever they ventured into the public” (Davis and Lorenzkowski 2006, 226) would, in fact, be strengthened on the day that placed women at the centre of the civic sphere. Nevertheless textual analysis demonstrates that newspapers were active participants in the “gendered ideology of protection” (Sangster 2001, 84), which allowed “women of the right class and ethnicity a substantial role, as long as they participated in the construction of women in general as beings who, despite their heroic and largely unaided deeds in maternity, were dependent on male protection” (Valverde 1991, 33). In her Foucaultian analysis of the regulation of female sexuality in Ontario between 1920 and 1960, Sangster (2001) argues that the policing of femininity “extended beyond the state, traversing the social body through the schools, the family, the church, the psychiatric clinic, the court, and the prison” (201). Although mass media are rarely the object of work undertaken in Foucault's name (Hartley 1996), and while news coverage of politics is not analyzed in Sangster's book, practices of mediated ritualization also functioned to legitimize patriarchal values and norms at the same time as they conferred power upon the provincial government.

Butler's (2006) work is famous for showing that gender is not a set of traits inherent to human beings. There is no *a priori* femininity or masculinity that determines the actions of women and men. Gender is socially constructed, meaning that “there is no gender identity behind

the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (34). Gender performativity takes shape through the Althusserian concept of interpellation, in which "ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects" (Althusser 1971, 175-6). The hope of composing a satisfactory review of Butler and Althusser would require a new project. Here it is enough to emphasize that to speak of gender performativity is not meant to imply that gender is disingenuously faked; on the contrary, gender is very much real in its ability to constitute the subject. The key point is that gender comes into being only through the performative work of bodies and discourses. The fact that public sense-makers defined the legislative opening as a day of femininity raises the question: What are the defining characteristics of the femininity constructed through the media ritual at Queen's Park?

First, femininity at the opening was weak of mind, physically passive, and inextricably linked to the female body. Contrasting the cannon-fire on the lawn of Queen's Park with the exchange of pleasantries inside the legislative Chamber, in 1910 the *Globe's* editorial page concluded that the Legislature "was masculine without and feminine within" (26 January, 6). This story is exemplary of the construction of femininity throughout the period because it expresses both disdain for the fact that "politics has become a lady's game", and the belief that "all [spectators] who had a choice" in their vantage point "preferred the inside of the Chamber." Leaving to the psychoanalyst the libidinal implications of such passion for the Chamber's insides, the article makes it clear that "Man has been the fighter" throughout history, "and in opening the Legislature he demonstrates his dominance". Conversely, to the feminine mind, the place for brain-work at the legislative opening—the administrative procedures around the Speech from the Throne—was off-limits. Femininity at the legislative opening was like the 1920s agricultural advertising in which women could be seen operating heavy equipment despite the fact that they "were not likely to make decisions about purchasing" machines (Derry 1998, 39): a central part of the promotional material, but ultimately excluded from executive decisions.

While men could be quick to challenge a controversial Throne Speech pledge, "to the feminine mind there seemed something amusing to the celerity of male deliberations" (*Daily Star* 11 February 1925, 7). In other words, the feminine was slow; it was unable to keep up with political debate. The *Evening Telegram* explains that the "annual joke" at the opening occurred as

the premier invited new members to take their seats (16 February 1915, 4; also *Globe* 15 February 1900, 6). Unable to do so, given that the floor was filled with women, “everyone joined in the laugh” at the sight of the feminine-slave symbolically obstructing the masculine-master from His natural place of authority. In Hegel's (1977) familiar terms, the Master's consciousness is dependent upon that of the slave as slave (111-9), and, in true master form, the annual joke's punchline is contingent upon capping the feminine capacity for thought. The feminine was Debord's (1994) spectacle, appearing “at once as society itself, as a part of society, and as *a means of unification*” (12, italics added). Its function was to see and be seen—to unify the provincial gaze at the heart of politics—though the feminine itself was prohibited from stepping onto the political stage and speaking.

Second, the feminine was white and heterosexual, and possessed distinctly materialistic desires and bourgeois social sensibilities. Nowhere in the newspaper did the intersections of gender, class, and race run more visibly through opening coverage than on the “women's” page. Here the feminine became a subjectivity for whom the fact that the “Parisian openings are just over” meant something important (*Daily Star* 5 February 1930, 28). The feminine adorned herself with tasteful jewelry, “one term in a set of links that goes from the body to clothes, to the accessory and includes the circumstances for which the whole outfit is worn” (Barthes 2006, 63). In marking herself with gems, she made the ritual glamorous; putting treasure on parade at the opening she recast the line separating high from low. She—it was always she—grew irritated when the plebes failed to perform properly. In 1900, the woman's page expressed annoyance that “many of the seats which are supposed to be reserved for those who take the trouble to wear full dress in honor of the occasion were filled by ladies in sombre outdoor costumes, bonnets and all” (*Globe* 15 February 1900, 7). In 1920, the *Daily Star* used its front page to share the news that the wives of the new Farmer MPPs had “spent the morning mostly shopping” (9 March). Although the opening meant “serious business”, the newspaper concluded that the wives, being “women, with all the love of dress” were thinking fashion—“and if they did fuss up a little for the occasion, who could blame them?” In 1945 the *Daily Star* used page one to ask the two women MPPs their opinion on wearing hats in the House (15 February); the job of the feminine, after all, was to look good and to enforce the social rules.

Modeling itself on the appearance of “the wives of parliamentarians”, the feminine complied with the heteronormative pressure to enroll in state-sanctioned conjugal bonds. Femininity supported the “marriage-minded girl” (Cavanaugh 1998, 66). As demonstrated in photograph captions that identify women's bodies in relation to the name and rank of their husbands, at the opening, the feminine was a happy wife, or at least a happy wife-in-training. To go on: although the “PARIS VOGUE... REFLECTED” in the opening left a “mass of color” on the floor, with “gowns of every hue included in the brilliant spectacle” (*Daily Star* 5 February 1930, 27), one colour remained conspicuously absent—namely, White. It is remarkable that a ritual represented largely in terms of appearance neglects to mention the skin colour of any and all participants, but photographs suggest that all the women at Queen's Park were Caucasian. In a clear example of whiteness as the unmarked referent, the feminine was defined by the colour of her dress, the flowers in her hair, the location of her body, the reverberations of her voice, indeed, the emptiness of her head, yet the feminine was without race—it was pure. The feminine was White.

Third, as alluded to previously, femininity was defined in opposition to a masculinity which was simultaneously superior to and reliant upon its feminine underling. Remarking that “if the Farmers... rule with the good taste which governed them when they chose their helpmates, we should be well ruled indeed” (10 March 1920, 10), the *Daily Star* addresses questions about “how to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor”, and thereby transforms the feminine into the signifier of masculine governmentality (Foucault 1991, 87). That same year, the *Evening Telegram* praised the Farmers for their “gallantry” (10 March, 12). Whereas in previous years the wives of cabinet ministers entered the Chamber alone, “this year Premier Drury escorted Mrs. Drury to her seat amidst applause and his example was followed in turn by each Cabinet Minister.” The masculine is both sanctified and invigorated through performing a duet of feminine helplessness. Part of why heterosexual prostitution was seen as “*the* social evil” of urban life of the era was that it turned the feminine into “a different kind of woman”—one that “sells the service” to the “man who buys it” (Valverde 1991, 78, italics in original). This inversion of the relationship between master and slave, producer and consumer, needed to be

overturned. Playing some modest part in the attempt reassert moral balance was the feminine who blushed at being delivered to her seat (cf. Strange 1995).

Remarking that “‘The world and his wife are here at the opening’... ‘mere man’” understood that his traditional authority had been displaced for the day; but though “his women folk held the entire centre of the stage”, they remained always *his* women folk (*Evening Telegram* 11 February 1925, 24). They would rule only momentarily and at *his* leisure. Finally, returning to the *Globe's* metaphor depicting masculinity through military imagery, the feminine was dispensable, especially in times of war. This does not mean that femininity would be removed from the ritual altogether; however, coverage during both world wars shows the traditional feminine flair being taken off centre-stage and confined to the women's page. Never was this shift more visible than in 1945, when a flurry of press comment was triggered by the sight of male soldiers marching onto the Chamber floor and being hailed as heroes in the space which had once belonged exclusively to women (*Daily Star* 16 Feb 1945, 19; *Evening Telegram* 16 Feb 1945, 9, *Globe and Mail* 16 Feb 1945, 15).

Regardless of the degree to which news coverage operated in the service of male-dominant ideologies, it would be reductionist to argue that it functioned exclusively as an instrument of oppression. At one level this observation could be called redundant and dismissed on the grounds that any text is open to multiple readings—why would the textual traces of this media ritual be any different? Yet on a different level, the distinctive link between gender and official politics constructed through news on the legislative opening makes the potential of reader resistance in this case worth pursuing for a moment.

First, the most obvious point: In direct contrast to the dominant ideology of the time, newspaper representations of the Opening of the Legislature placed women at the *centre* of the “central symbol of Ontario democracy” (White 1997, 71). Putting to one side for the time being the countless contradictions that go along with this observation, in itself this is a radical political injunction. True, there was no alteration to legislative authority during the one-day women's coup at Queen's Park; but an essential part of the media ritual was the inspection and circulation of images which demonstrated that it was, at the very least, physically possible for women's bodies to occupy the chairs of provincial parliamentarians. In *The human condition* Arendt (1998)

argues that once word and deed have been placed within the political public space, there is no determining precisely how they will be interpreted or used, nor any way of removing the original contribution. On one hand, this is to be celebrated: creativity is often born of the unexpected coming together, breaking apart, glancing, rebounding, integration, and reaction of a plurality of actions and ideas. On the other, this is to be feared: the introduction to Marcuse's (1966) *One dimensional man* is but one especially chilling articulation of the undeniable reality that nuclear weapons are now a permanent part of life on earth. There is no "taking back" the atom bomb. As soon as a statement becomes "sayable" within a particular discursive system, it is impossible to guarantee that it will not be said again, or combined with some other statement to say something slightly different (Foucault 1972, 1977, 1990). Using similar logic, Nord's (1990) study of newspapers in seventeenth century New England suggests that stories about public executions of heretics may have had the reverse effect of the one desired by religious authorities; that is, Nord gives reason to believe that rather than scare villagers into pious conformity, news of "evil" deeds may have spread new blasphemous ideas!

Is it unreasonable to ask whether a similar phenomenon might have occurred in the era of Social Celebration? In a review of Strange's (1995) *Toronto's girl problem: The perils and pleasures of the city, 1880-1930*, Black (1995) begins: "I always feel uneasy when I come across a piece of advertising or other piece of popular culture from the turn of the century. The way in which girls and women are spoken of, the emotions and desires they are presumed to have, make me wonder whether they were really flesh-and-blood women like me" (414). There is no way of knowing with certainty the lives of people from a different era, although surely the condition of feeling and thinking "like me" is too onerous to be helpful. However, the historical literature is full of examples of early twentieth century Ontario women resisting patriarchal authority in the city (Davis and Lorenzkowski 2006; Sangster 2001); on the farm (Derry 1998; Halpern 2001); at work (Acton, Goldsmith, and Shepard 1974; Parr 1990); and at home (Dubinsky 1993; Arnup 2002). Even problematic Victorian performances of the wild "Girl of the Period," challenged gender stereotypes at the same time as it reinforced them (Cooper 1997, 35). It would be cynical to argue that the image of a woman standing at the centre of official politics could not have been empowering in some way for at least some feminist newsreaders. The words of one social

columnist writing in the *Evening Telegram* point toward the possibility of a counter-hegemonic reading:

As they stood in line before the magic door that opened to such a lovely feast of color today, feminine guests had a thrilling wall of Ontario's Legislative Building to gaze upon. For on the right was Queen's Park's portrait of Wolfe, on the other, Brock, and between them the brass tablet to the [women] war nurses.

Some discontented folk again whispered to-day that in this year of 1930 no woman sits in Ontario's Legislature except those on the first day who came as their grandmothers did in their finery to adorn it. But what woman could not but be thrilled with that reminder at the very door of the House that in a twentieth century women had given lives for their country[?] (5 February 1930, 8)

More evidence of the complexity surrounding the representation of femininity: the critical anti-feminist voices in the news attempting to invoke semiotic closure around the meaning of the ritual. It was no secret that “the suffragettes annoyed [*Telegram* publisher] John Ross Robertson much more than any of the other inequities of the age” (Poulton 1971, 130), and the misogyny of one of Ontario's most powerful newspapermen was anything but rare. By making it clear that women were welcome on the floor only momentarily, newspapers lent weight to the possibility that the symbol of woman-at-the-centre was interpreted as a sign of woman power.

It is difficult to know with certainty the interpretation women made of their role in the ritual. What is certain, however, is that the location of women in the House was the source of much legislative laughter. On one hand it provoked giddy laughter on the part of social columnists bursting with pride at the sight of Ontario's fashionable elites; on the other, it produced condescending laughter, snickering, from people who found it difficult to process the sight of women in a place of authority. The fact that the ritual's “annual joke” turned on the feigned shock of finding women where men ought to be is an instructive example of how humour was used as a way of expressing preference for traditional values and ceremonial practices. Year after year the newsreader is told that, after being invited to take their seats, new members stood helplessly in front of a sea of seated women—and everyone laughed. But who was the butt of this joke? Yes, on one level people were laughing at the new members of the Legislature, the men being initiated into the legislative club by being barred from their proper place on the floor. But on a different level, the joke was funny because it played on an absurd idea: namely, that women

had a legitimate place at the centre. Laughter served as a way to defuse the potentially explosive suggestion that women should sit on the floor of the House more often. Traditional patriarchal politics would seem all the more natural as long as the sight of women at the centre remained funny.

Anyone familiar with academic theories of humour will agree with Darnton (1985) that “there is no better way to ruin a joke than to analyze it or overload it with social comment” (99); however humour at the legislative opening calls out for examination not only because it is a recurring theme, but also because the rational world of legislative politics can be an odd place to find people laughing. There is a tension between the routine business of political administration and the ritual laughter at the legislative opening. What makes this tension more complex yet is that laughter at Queen's Park was represented in the newspaper as further evidence of provincial unity. Similar to contradictions arising from the way in which stories emphasizing the importance of women at the opening supported oppressive images of Ontario femininity, mediated legislative laughter was all part of the serious work of social integration.

The argument that a tension exists between images of ceremonial silliness and the deeper conservative elements of the ritual stems from the fact that laughter is often depicted as a way of resisting the dominant social order. Following Bakhtin's (1984) influential work on folk-laughter in the novels of Rabelais, a goodly number of cultural critics have interpreted humour as an act of political resistance (ex. Anchor 1985; Apte 1985; Darnton 1985; Gardiner 1992; Halfrin 2006; Meskill 2007; Wingo 2006; Zandberg 2006). According to Bakhtin, the folk-laughter heard everywhere in the medieval carnival “presents an element of victory not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts” (92). On this view, laughter is liberating, a powerful weapon by which to strike at “the formalities of hierarchy and the inherited differences between different social classes, ages and castes” (Gardiner 1992, 30). Indeed, the laughter of the printers in Darnton's (1985) study is “Rabelaisian laughter... in which the riotously funny could turn to riot, a carnival culture of sexuality and sedition in which the revolutionary element might be contained within symbols and metaphors or might explode in a general uprising” (99). Halfin (2006) argues that before Stalin's takeover of the Bolshevik regime,

laughter was one way for lower Party members to challenge the course set down by their leaders. Analyzing Israeli sketch comedy, Zandberg (2006) demonstrates that third generation Israelis use humour as a way to criticize orthodox views of the Holocaust for crowding every corner of the country's collective conscience. In each of these cases, laughter is seditious: it challenges established values and practices, and threatens the dominance of powerful members of society.

Conversely, the legislative laughter that was part of the mediated ritualization of Social Celebration operated in the service of the dominant social order. Putting to one side jokes about women at the centre, take, for example, jokes about the overcrowded Chamber. These often appeared in the “NOTES AND COMMENTS” section, a small collection of humorous observations about current affairs, which appeared on the editorial page of both the *Globe* and the *Star* throughout the first decades of the twentieth century. The textual sample includes more than fifty notes and comments about the opening; however, it is worth noting that the journalistic form itself was gone within a decade of the end of the Second World War. At different points between 1900 and 1945, one-line quips running down the middle of the editorial page suggested that the crowded Chamber should be equipped with streetcar-like handles, and that the Mayor of Toronto sat contentedly as the room filled far beyond what the fire code allowed. The wink-and-nod tone with which such statements were offered is exemplified in this line from the *Globe*: “Beauty and fashion obscured the representatives of the sovereign people at the Legislature, but no one seemed especially sorry on that account” (22 March 1905, 6).

The *Telegram* once used its lead editorial to joke about how difficult it was to hear the Speech from the Throne due to noisy police officers struggling to keep the crowd in check. The punchline of the piece is a fictional transcript of the lieutenant governor's Speech from the Throne (the words in parentheses are attributed to Toronto police): “Mr. Speaker and gentlemen (stop that crowdin') of the Legislative Assembly (I'll club the head aff yuze), it affords me great pleasure (none av yer back talk or I'll run ye in) to welcome you to the performance (Oh lady, can't ye see there's no room) of your duties (Keep yer hands aff that dure) at this the first session of the eleventh Legislature of this province (Stan' back there an make room, a lady's fainted)” (23 March 1905, 9). In 1915, a one-liner on the *Globe*'s editorial page posited: “If the owners of things in Ontario were as eager to study politics as to celebrate political events we would have

ideal conditions in the management of public affairs” (17 February, 6). But bearing in mind the pride that newspapers placed on the size of the crowd and the spectacle of the ceremony, humorous accounts of socialites jockeying for position among the masses should be read not as genuine complaints, but as ways of reiterating the popularity of the civic celebration and, in turn, the burgeoning power of Ontario. Recall that the *Daily Star* interpreted “the scene inside the chamber” not simply as confirmation of the social elite's ability to throw a good party, but as “indisputable proof... that Ontario is a prosperous and progressive Province” (23 March 1905, 7). The *Globe's* editorial of 1900 saw “omens” indicating “a successful session of the new Ministry” in the “clear, cold, bright day [that] brought out one of the largest and most brilliant gatherings” ever to grace the Legislature (15 February, 6). The legislative laughter accompanying ceremonial opulence at the Legislature was not only a result of prosperity—it was evidence that the provincial mission was being realized.

Combining event-based humour (jokes made by people during the ceremony and reproduced in news stories), and reflective humour (jokes made by journalists in the aftermath of the opening), newspapers drew upon the generic form of comedy in order to make the ritual meaningful for newsreaders across the province. The fact that jokes appeared on the same page as the editorial suggests that even those most interested in the rational analysis of political affairs were interested in reading one-liners about the scene and setting at Queen's Park. This assumption rests not only on the basis of practicability—after all, editorial readers could already see the jokes in their peripheral vision—but on the relatively sophisticated knowledge of provincial politics required to find some jokes funny. For example, in order to “get” the *Star's* 1905 quip, “Give Ontario a chance and she'll push a railway to Hudson's Bay... and start a ferry to England!”, one would need to be familiar with that year's Throne Speech promise to secure for Ontario disputed lands to the northwest. Similarly, when the *Globe* proclaimed that “the brilliancy of the [1905] opening ceremony drowned all memories of the calf with the cough, the Humber pig, the ram Dan, and the silver medal bull (the old one)”, its search for a laugh relied upon knowledge unique to newsreaders of the time. Being “in” on the jokes was one more way for newsreaders to participate in the ritual, and to foster a sense of collective identity among people from rival political camps.

### Coverage of the Speech from the Throne in the era of Social Celebration

The fact that the ritual was represented as a day of festivities at Queen's Park does not mean that journalists completely ignored the government's proposed legislative agenda. As illustrated in table 3.1, roughly 30 percent of the 235 news items in the 1900-1945 sample are primarily focused on the Speech from the Throne. To restate one of the main arguments of this chapter: newspaper coverage of the first half of the century framed the ritual as one that accomplished multiple, often contradictory, functions. Therefore, while it is true that concerns about action unfolding in legislative place-time determined both the narrative and analytical angle of well over half the stories examined, other stories set aside questions of visibility and reported specifically on the contents of the Throne Speech. It bears repeating that the delivery of the Speech itself was interpreted as the climax of the opening ceremonies; but newspapers also included a separate analytical sphere in which to describe and assess the Speech in the context of legislative politics. Many of the journalistic practices used to report on the Speech continue to this day, for example, the provision of a general overview of Throne Speech promises, as well as an attempt to identify the single most significant government proposal. However, despite these enduring themes, Throne Speech coverage in the era of Social Celebration was unique in significant ways.

Two defining characteristics of hard-news coverage of the Throne Speech distinguish it from coverage appearing later in the century. First, coverage tended to consist of one or two large stories dealing with the Speech as a whole, as opposed to numerous smaller stories examining specific policy proposals. Table 3.5 shows the number of headlines exclusively on the Speech from the Throne.

**Table 3.5**  
**Headlines referring exclusively to the Speech from the Throne, 1900-1945**

	1900	1905	1910	1915	1920	1925 <sup>15</sup>	1930	1935	1940	1945
<i>Globe</i>	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	4	1	2
<i>Star</i>	1	2	2	1	0	16	1	2	0	1

<sup>15</sup> In depth analysis of the exceptional results in this column is found in this chapter's penultimate section, "The special case of 1925."

<i>Telegram</i>	0	1	1	0	2	5	1	0	1	0
	2	4	4	2	3	24	4	6	2	3

What is immediately striking about these numbers is the simple fact of how few Throne Speech articles appeared. For example, in the twenty editions of the *Telegram* reviewed over ten openings, only eleven items are specifically Throne Speech stories. By comparison, by the closing decades of the century, it would be common to find well over eleven Throne Speech stories in a single issue of the newspaper. This development cannot be explained by the simple fact that newspapers themselves had grown larger; rather, as explained in chapter 4, it must be understood within the context of the emergence and proliferation of single-issue based coverage. Excluding the outlier of 1925, the largest number of Throne Speech stories published in a single year was four; and in 1900, 1915, and 1940 there were but two such stories among all three papers. How, in only one or two stories per year, were newspapers able to parse the contents of the Speech, assess their potential impact on different social groups, and summarize reaction from government supporters and opponents? The answer, alluded to already, is that coverage simply did not accomplish these tasks; it was rare to see journalists undertaking this type of work. Analysis of policy and partisan strategy had not yet become standard elements of the media ritual.

Second, though hard-news stories dealt with the Throne Speech as a whole, their focus was relatively narrow: they examined the government's agenda as laid out in the Speech and did not engage in critical views articulated by opposition MPPs or other political observers. Controlling for 1925, of the twenty-three front-page stories in the sample, a total of nine people are quoted (*Globe*: 2; *Star*: 7; *Telegram*: 0). Both quotations in the *Globe* are humorous one-liners: in 1920, referring to the UFO-Labour administration's decision to hand the role of speaker to a Liberal MPP, the leader of the Liberal party is found punning in the House: “The Premier has given you a Cabinet, but the Liberal party gives you a whole Parliament”; the play is on the Liberal MPP's name, Nelson Parliament (10 March 1920, 1). In 1935, an anonymous doorman is quoted: “Tickets please” (21 February). Two of the *Star* quotations are from women asked for their opinion about wearing hats in the House. This is hardly hard-hitting commentary on the government and its legislative agenda. By contrast, on 20 November 1990, the day before the

Throne Speech of that year, the *Globe's* front-page alone carried quotations from four individuals. Prior to the 1950s hard-news included virtually no discursive space either for the government to elaborate on its legislative plan, or for critical voices to express dissatisfaction. The fact that opinion columns on the Throne Speech did not emerge until the 1960s means that in addition to lacking the annual clash among distinctly partisan interests, the era of Social Celebration also lacked one of the modern ritual's most prominent participants.

While hard-news on the ritual brimmed with assessments of fashion and action at Queen's Park, as a rule it articulated a descriptive, as opposed to critical, perspective on the contents of the legislative agenda. Similar to the situation surrounding the State of the Union message one hundred years earlier, commentary on the Throne Speech “was confined entirely to the editorial column” (Schudson's 1982, 100). Generally, hard-news was restricted to listing ideas expected to be included in an upcoming Throne Speech, or pointing out “the most important paragraph” delivered by the lieutenant governor (*Daily Star* 25 January 1910, 1). As exemplified in coverage of the Throne Speech of 1945, a typical Throne Speech story in the era of Social Celebration reproduced excerpts from the document preceded or followed by the phrase “The Speech said”, as opposed to situating policy proposals in larger political contexts or subjecting them to criticism by politically engaged observers (see 16 February 1945, 2).

The editorial page offered a different perspective. The sample's twenty-nine editorials provided background on specific legislative proposals and, fulfilling their time-honoured public role, issued judgments on the value of the Speech.

**Table 3.6**  
**Comparing editorials about the legislative opening, 1900-1945**

	Number of editorials	Main focus is scene and setting	Main focus is politicking and policy analysis
<i>Globe</i>	16	5	11
<i>Star</i>	9	1	8
<i>Telegram</i>	4	2	2
	<b>29</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>

For example, in 1905 the *Globe* used an editorial to remind the new premier of various charges he made against the government while in opposition and to implore him to navigate Ontario's

ship of state with the same vigilance that defined his earlier critical perspective. In 1930 the *Globe* wrote that the Throne Speech of the Ferguson administration “was typical of too many such declarations” (6 February, 4). Accusing the Speech of offering vague statements about a wealth of issues, the paper argued that “yesterday's speech may foreshadow much in the way of useful legislation, or it may foreshadow little.” The editorial refers to five different policy areas mentioned in the Speech, and actually praises Ferguson's initiative with respect to amending the province's electoral procedures. Overall, the story is similar to modern editorials: serious in tone, disappointed in the lack of legislative details, but hopeful for a productive legislative session.

In light of the traditional partisan leanings of all three newspapers, it is perhaps surprising to learn that the many of the twenty-nine editorials are decidedly optimistic in tone. Although it was not until after J.E. Atkinson's death in 1948 that the *Star* first described itself as a “frankly Liberal party paper” (Harkness 1963, 364), in light of what is known about political affiliations of the time, it could have been expected that in the opening decades of the twentieth century both the *Star* and the *Globe* would praise the policy plans of Liberal administrations; however, it is worth pointing out that neither criticized Conservative Speeches in editorials of 1910 or 1915. Indeed, the *Star* went as far as to argue in favour of offering a clean slate for Whitney in 1905.

An even more intriguing observation is the fact that the arch-Conservative *Evening Telegram* published so few editorials about the Throne Speech. From this it is reasonable to conclude either that the editorial board did not support numerous Conservative Speeches and yet chose not to publicly criticize them, or that despite its support for the government's plan, the paper chose not to express praise on the editorial page. Lending weight to the latter interpretation is the fact that not once in the days around the openings of 1900, 1935, or 1940 did the *Telegram* use an editorial to criticize the policies of the Liberal administration—a government composed of the newspaper's longstanding opponent. If successive editors of the *Tely* loathed anything more than the Liberal party, it was J.E. Atkinson, his “radical liberalism”, and his liberal *Star* (Harkness 1963, 333; see also Fetherling 1990; Poulton 1971). An editorial attack on a Liberal Throne Speech would have amounted to a swing at both party and press enemies. Yet, despite the fact that the *Telegram* carried just as much news about the opening as other major dailies, the official voice of the newspaper was silent on the vision of its partisan opponent—at least in the

context of this civic ritual. In conclusion, although the Throne Speech editorial can be seen playing a supporting role within the Social Celebration frame, stepping in to interrogate the cerebral elements of the affair from time to time, the data suggests that it was by no means the perennial centrepiece of newspaper coverage.

Reflecting upon Schudson's (1992) argument that the concept of the public sphere is best used as a way of asking questions about the extent to which news media “encourage or discourage public participation in politics and public involvement in rational-critical” political discourse (147), it is clear that even with respect to the explicit policy aspects of the legislative opening, the public sphere in which the ceremony was brought to life offered few opportunities for a robust exchange of policy ideas. By contrast, during the same era, coverage of regular House proceedings was home to much more vigorous forms of mediated public discourse, including competing quotations from politicians and other people across the province (see Harkness 1963; Kesterton 1967). But as a rule, within the context of the legislative opening, routine analytical practices were suspended, and attention was trained on what Schudson (1982) refers to as “the 'spectacle' of the opening” ceremony (100). To be sure, the dominant mediated practices of ritualization included an account of the government's proposed legislative plan, but Throne Speech coverage was just that: an account, a record, a notice. Only later in the century did journalists assume for themselves the role of critical policy analyst within the “demarcated space” of civic ritual (Becker 1995, 636).

### **The special case of 1925**

On account of the ways in which it departs from the general trends of the era, coverage of the 1925 opening deserves closer analysis. Although occupying only one small paragraph near the end of the Throne Speech itself, Premier Howard Ferguson's surprise plan to amend the Ontario Temperance Act, effectively raising the legal limit on alcoholic beverages, dominated newspaper coverage of that year's legislative opening. Although Ferguson “was not a man who would recklessly challenge the beliefs of the electorate” (Oliver 1975, 121), his Speech was assailed in the press as “the most astounding thing in the history of Canadian politics” (Raney quoted in *Daily Star* 10 February 1925, 1). Furious at Ferguson's reversal of his promise to abide by a

plebiscite going against the legalization of stronger beer, prohibitionists were quoted on the front page of the *Daily Star* calling the proposal an injustice to “the people of Ontario” (10 February). The day after the Throne Speech, the *Globe's* editorial page depicted the announcement as a declaration of war (4). Even the pro-Tory *Evening Telegram* allowed that the proposal “detracted somewhat from the customary interest in the formal ceremonies attending the opening” (10 February 1925, 17).

Journalistic routines in the *Star* were abandoned altogether. Not including 1925, the average number of annual *Star* items in the 1900-1945 sample is 5.2; by contrast, in 1925 the *Star* carried 24 items referring to the legislative opening. On the day after the Throne Speech, page three alone was home to four OTA-related headlines: “O.T.A. AMENDMENT MAY RESULT IN LICENSES COSTING MORE: Hotel Keepers Elated Over Prospect of Increase in Their Revenue—Progressive Accuses of 'Brazen Violation of Pledges'”; “IS STILL CONSIDERED IN THE DRY COLUMN: Importation of Liquor Not Affected by Amendment, Say Federal Authorities”; “DECLARES FERGUSON HAS BROKEN PROMISE: Hamilton West Said to Regard O.T.A. Change as 'Sop to the Wets'”; and “Press Comment on Stronger Beer”. This last column includes reactions to the Throne Speech from seven different Ontario newspapers. Three pages later, all three editorials of the day discuss the OTA amendment; and of the nine jokes in the “Notes and Comment” section running alongside the editorials, more than half relate to Ferguson's surprise policy proposal. One one-liner suggests that “one effect of doubling the strength of beer will be to double the efforts of the drinking public to buy spirits.” A different quip draws attention to the partisan cloud that appears to have blinded a competing newspaper: “The *Mail and Empire* editorially discusses the speech from the throne in the legislature, but evidently didn't notice anything in it about beer.” In terms of both quantity and quality, no other Speech in the first half of the century attracted anything like coverage of the Speech of 1925.

Outrage over the OTA amendment notwithstanding, two points about the persistence of the Social Celebration perspective deserve elaboration. The first is the fact that even in their state of moral panic, newspapers attended to all parts of the variety-show with which they were familiar: focus on policy did not eclipse the celebratory storyline. In Hallin's (1986) terms,

coverage of the opening was able to accommodate “legitimate controversy” over the regulation of alcohol, yet the view of the opening as a multidimensional affair was so strongly rooted in the “sphere of consensus” that the organs of public sense-making did not restrict focus to the policy announcement, despite acknowledgment on all sides that changes to the OTA carried enormous consequences (116-7). Headlines on page one of the *Globe* reveal the Throne Speech surprise depicted visually as a distinctive subheading *beneath* the familiar banner message: “LEGISLATURE OPENS WITH MARTIAL POMP AND SOCIAL DISPLAY” (11 February 1925). The lead paragraph attends to the traditional elements of the ceremony and moves to the OTA debate at the end of the second paragraph, only after acknowledging that “beauty, charm, pleasantries and laughter held sway for an afternoon”. A separate story on the same page dealt exclusively with the liquor issue, but clearly *Globe* editors interpreted the meaning of the celebration at Queen's Park as being such that even an unprecedented policy surprise such as Ferguson's needed to be embedded in the traditional storyline.

Second, an outlier such as 1925 demonstrates that alternative journalistic approaches were at least technically achievable in the first half of the twentieth century. Again, the case of the *Star* is instructive. Over the course of two days the front page of that newspaper carried quotations from seventeen different individuals: eight were members of the Legislature (five government, three opposition); nine were non-politicians (four representatives of prohibitionist groups, three newspaper editors, one police commissioner, and one *Star* reporter). Compare that number to the seven instances in which individuals were quoted in front-page coverage of all nine other openings examined—or to the situation five years later, in which no front-page quotations were published. Clearly the *Star* possessed the generic understanding, intellectual sophistication, and the technical capacity to produce single-issue critical stories full of quotations from a range of sources. But of the ten years examined in this chapter, only 1925 adopted this journalistic approach. Only in the wake of a policy proposal touching on an issue as deeply divisive as the regulation of liquor were the contents of the Throne Speech given such special treatment.

The fact that quotations, critiques, and narrow policy analysis appeared so rarely before 1950—that is, what makes 1925 coverage stand out—is a testament to the strength of the cultural

consensus that the legislative opening was rightfully what Etzioni (2004) calls “a tension management holiday” (11), not one based around conflict, partisan or otherwise. This was a break from the animosity essential to Westminster-style parliamentary politics; here was a relaxed atmosphere in which unity trumped factionalism. Mediated processes of ritualization were flexible enough to include competing arguments and performances, but rational-critical debate was but a part of the event. In general, the ritual was defined by the diversity of its constituent parts, and the unity of its meta-narrative—the whole thing being in the service of order and consensus.

The case of the 1920 legislative opening develops this argument further. Here we see newspapers invoking consistency in ritual form as a way of reassuring themselves and the people of Ontario that the new Farmer-Labour Government posed no threat to Ontario's traditional political order. A protest party formed gradually over the course of the First World War and positioning itself as an alternative to Ontario's two original parties, the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO) formed a coalition government with members of the Independent Labour Party after the 1919 provincial election (Griezic 1977). According to Morton's (1950) classic account, UFO support came from three sources: “the first was discontented rural Liberals disillusioned by the weakness of the provincial Liberals and suspicious of French and clerical influence in the federal party. The second was frustrated rural Conservatives, weary of voting Conservative to no purpose in traditionally Liberal seats. The third was doctrinaire agrarians, who had repudiated the party system and were working for direct representation by farmers of agrarian interests” (83). Farmers concerned about rural depopulation and furious about past governments' inability to do anything about it “became convinced that only one of their own economic group could represent their interests” at Queen's Park (Griezic 1977, 54). Combining antagonism toward Ontario's urban population with an evangelical brand of moral righteousness, the new government gave good reason to expect a quick end to established political practices (Baskerville 2005). Newspaper coverage of the UFO Government's first legislative opening put these fears to rest and offered a collective sigh of relief that the traditional order had been preserved.

Within hours of the 1920 Throne Speech the *Daily Star's* front page used the banner headline “OLD-TIME OPENING OF PROVINCIAL HOUSE” to introduce a story which

explained that people “who expected that the advent of a Farmers’ Government would mean the abolition of all the old ceremonies that accompanied the opening were disappointed” (9 March). On the Farmer's request, women did refrain from wearing evening gowns, yet women's pages were quick to declare that “AFTERNOON DRESS DID NOT DIM OPENING” (*Evening Telegram* 9 March, 12). In fact, fashionistas were gleeful to learn that the change in official garb opened up a new world of ritual headgear: the new dress-code allowed women to wear hats. The Farmers were praised for shaving their beards. True, the lieutenant governor was the only man under a silk hat; however “the ceremony did not lack dignity. It was simple and democratic and in keeping with a real people’s Legislature” (*Daily Star* 10 March, 6). The front-page of the *Globe* concurred: “The finery was all there. Those who expected anything different because of the change of Government could not find it. The traditional ceremony remains, and it will probably develop that the newer parties are as enthusiastic for it as were their predecessors” (10 March, 1). On the morning of the ritual, before the Throne Speech had even been delivered, the *Globe* promised readers that it would contain “nothing of a radical character” (9 March, 5). After witnessing the event it joined the chorus of newspaper praise and sang that the Farmers had conducted the ritual “with all the glory of spectacle which has been witnessed in previous openings” (10 March, 1).

Bearing in mind the myriad changes that did surround the UFO's march to power, the decision to highlight the trope of tradition is not at all self-evident. News coverage selected and made salient familiar patterns from a world of unfamiliar developments. The fact that all three newspapers employed the same strategies is remarkable. Although by 1920 each mainstream daily attempted to appeal to a broad audience, by no means were they without distinct ideological leanings (Fetherling 1990). Two years after the death of J.R. Robertson, the *Telegram* was under the directorship of “Black Jack” Robinson, the late founder's longtime friend and political ally, who continued to espouse the paper's original conservative vision (Poulton 1971). Robinson and his fellow Orangemen were not ones to pull punches when it came to confronting political opponents: they were at least partially responsible for the defeat of the UFO in 1923 (Pennefather 1977). “When *The Star* commented favourably on the Farmer-Labour government [in a different context]... the *Telegram* accused it of socialism” (Harkness 1963, 142). But whatever differences

of opinion might have existed among newspapers, they were not apparent in coverage of the UFO's legislative inauguration. On the contrary, the newspapers marched in lockstep, each one emphasizing the Farmers' adherence to tradition. Perhaps social repair was more urgent than usual during the “severe discontent and social unrest” which followed the First World War (White 1973, 417). However, examining the experience of the UFO in the light of other openings represented through the Social Celebration frame, a better explanation suggests that the consensus of 1920 was not unique.

Symbols of provincial unity ran through the whole half-century: the legislative opening was depicted as a moment free from partisan squabbles. The dominant frame portrayed the ritual as a “tension management holiday”—a moment in which the pressure of adhering to rigid partisan scripts was relaxed in order to enable general participation in a spectacular celebration of “the British way of life” (*Evening Telegram* 16 February 1945, 9). Certainly it was acknowledged that “political opponents will be flying at one another's throats” as soon as opening-day had passed, but in the liminal phase that celebrated Ontario politics and culture, even hardened enemies were “as sweet to each other as honey” (*Daily Star* 21 February 1935, 1). Giving prominence to photographs of posing spectators, as well as political arch-rivals acting friendly at tea; praising the Clerk and the Sergeant-At-Arms for their dignified work; emphasizing the satisfaction of guests in the galleries—news placed the opening “betwixt and between” (Turner 1967) the rhetorical bloodsport that is politics-as-usual.

## **Conclusion**

Drawing on the language of vaudevillian show-business to explain the popularity of the civic ritual, in 1905 the *Evening Telegram* opined that “The opening of a Legislature is a combination of a society parade, a military pageant and a political demonstration. A promoter who could enroll all these interests on behalf of his scheme would not need to write home for money” (23 March, 9). Although made partly in jest, the observation neatly summarizes the way in which newspapers in the first half of the twentieth century framed the legislative opening. Certainly policy promises and political parties were understood to be central parts of the affair, but in general, journalists used the event to put on display numerous features of Ontario life.

Newspapers portrayed the ritual's multiple (at times contradictory, and far from exclusively legislative) meanings to be its defining quality. This argument is supported by the following five facts emerging from analysis of mediated ritualization in the era of Social Celebration:

1. The meaning of the ritual operated on two levels. On one level it was interpreted as the introduction of a new session of official politics. On a different level, however, it was interpreted as a festival of democracy in Ontario. Although the festival was organized around the delivery of the government's legislative plan, news coverage rooted the event not in the sphere of rational-critical policy debate, but in social interaction at the Legislature.
2. The ritual was evaluated by two different standards. The first, largely limited to episodic pronouncements on editorial pages, assessed the opening by analyzing policies proposed by the government. On this view, the ritual was good when it included a clear, efficient, expansionist, and practical legislative plan. By contrast, the second and much more prevalent approach assessed the opening by analyzing the size of the crowd at Queen's Park, the fashions of guests in the Chamber, the solemnity of traditional parliamentary practices, and the successful evocation of communal excitement and good-humoured fun. On this view, the ritual was good when it drew a large and fashionable crowd which delighted in witnessing the brilliant spectacle of British parliamentary symbolism in action.
3. The linear flow of news narratives and elaborate descriptions of the spectacle at Queen's Park offered newsreaders the chance to join the celebrations in the capital.
4. The participation of citizens was essential to the ritual's success; but proper citizen participation was visual, as opposed to rational, in nature. The job of the citizen was to see and be seen—to gaze upon the principal players and to demonstrate support for the symbolic centre of politics. The collective gaze of people at the Legislature, coupled with the “seeing with” of newsreaders across the province, made the image of a unified Ontario especially apparent in coverage of the ritual.
5. In addition to the overarching tension between the rational and aesthetic nature of the entire affair, the opening also housed tension between public performances of masculine and feminine identities; political friends and allies; Ontario's colonial and quasi-national status; humour and seriousness; populism and elitism; hope and cynicism; and inclusive and exclusive concepts of political community.

The multiple meanings constituting popular understandings of the event meant that despite the adversarial arrangement of Westminster party politics, the ritual opened up a space in

which traditional political allies muzzled their partisan weapons. Of course no self-respecting partisan would make a point of praising an opponent's proposed policy platform. However, it was rare to find MPPs and other key civic players leveling partisan attacks. Except in cases involving an extreme threat to the province's socio-cultural values, the contents of the Throne Speech were not up for partisan discussion. The government and its supporters made no effort (and were given no opportunity) to elaborate on the legislative agenda, and the opposition and its supporters made no attempt (and were given no opportunity) to criticize the government's plan. No matter how politically savvy it might have been for politicians and other partisans to postpone their quotidian political jabs and act friendly, the informal rules governing the festive elements of the affair restricted the possibility for divisive political commentary. The centrality of the lieutenant governor and the orbit of British symbols surrounding his very person; the fact that the ceremony was a great moment for High Society; the laughter bubbling up from the sight of women on the floor of the legislative Assembly; the popular understanding that a successful opening was a good omen for provincial politics in general—all of this encouraged expressions of social cohesion and limited both the appetite and the opportunity for political conflict.

## Chapter 4: The era of Politics as Usual, 1950s-2007

### Introduction

The direction in which this story is moving is no secret. By itself the title of the dissertation suggests the fact that over the course of the twentieth century changes in mediated processes of ritualization helped to change Ontario's key constitutive ritual from a popular social affair to a more professional forum for rational-critical debate. There is no question that newspaper coverage of the 1910 legislative opening differs drastically from newspaper coverage of the opening of 1990. What is more difficult to explain, however, is precisely when the ritual stopped being one thing and started being something different. At what precise moment did the frame of Social Celebration cease to be the standard journalistic storyline? When were the festive features overtaken by policy debate? When exactly does the modern period begin? Clear answers to these questions would be as satisfying as they are unlikely. Research examining shifts in dominant patterns of social knowledge, work on *mentalités* in France, for example, Taylor's (2004) "social imaginary" (see esp. chap. 2), or what Darnton calls "history in the ethnographic grain" (1985, 3), is a testament to the difficulty of identifying with precision moments of mass mental rupture (ex. Anderson 2006; Foucault 1977; Geertz 1973, 2000; Hampton 2004; McGerr 1986; Williams 1978, 1982). Yet, in spite of the inevitably complex and typically gradual evolution of culture, there is solace in stating the obvious: change does occur.

The following chapter begins by demonstrating that in the years following World War II newspaper coverage began to depict a more professional, partisan, and pluralist civic ritual. Between 1950 and 1970 coverage remained spotted with the residue of earlier decades, but no longer did it represent events in the same ways that it had even fifteen years earlier. The fact that during the postwar period the signature elements of Social Celebration were decoupled and marginalized, that the Speech from the Throne came to dominate the front page of the newspaper, that editorials on politics and policy analysis became more consistent and more critical, and that partisan conflict became increasingly apparent—all of this demonstrates the growing professionalization and rationalization that would come to define the ritual in the final decades of the twentieth century. After noting the major developments of the postwar years, the chapter discusses news coverage in the era of High Politics as Usual: the post-1975 period, in which

traditional newspaper narratives had virtually disappeared under the ever-expanding web of politicking and policy analysis. Charting the rise to dominance of confrontational journalistic approaches and the concomitant increase and diversification of critical reaction to the legislative agenda, the chapter concludes that, through the lens of the newspaper, the legislative opening has come to signify the ideal of rational-critical debate in a properly functioning liberal-pluralist democracy.

### **Early Politics as Usual, 1950s-1970s**

In light of the massive social, political, and cultural changes that touched all corners of postwar life in Ontario, it may not come as a total shock to learn that mass mediated representations of the province's key civic ritual also changed during the same period. In Baskerville's (2005) words: "War left little the same" (208). At the risk of reducing to a single word the complex inner-workings of Ontario society over the course of more than two decades, there is general consensus that the years between 1950 and 1970 were ones of rapid modernization. Not only did Ontario's population double between 1941 and 1971, it also became much more diverse (Rae 1985). What had been "a largely Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and still noticeably rural society became urban, polyglot, and multiracial" (Speirs 1986, xxi). The economy boomed as never before. Farming was rapidly mechanized; the primary resources sector expanded; the industrial sector thrived on the growth of automobile manufacturing; the labour force was beefed-up not only by new immigrants, but also by the number of women that chose not to leave their wartime workplace (Schull 1978). For many people consumerism became a way of life in a community where real income tripled in the span of just three decades (Baskerville 2005). True, poverty persisted, especially in the north and in pockets of the major urban centres, but in general the economy roared. In Rae's (1985) view, even after taking into consideration the environmental externalities and social disruption resulting from what he refers to as an economic revolution, "the overall performance of the Ontario economy during the thirty-five years following the Depression must be judged a success, the gains by any reasonable calculus far outweighing the losses. It was a period of great prosperity for a rapidly growing population, and it is difficult to avoid saying that some kind of economic 'progress' had been made" (248).

Both in response to and adding to Ontario's burgeoning industrial economy, the provincial government extended its reach into social and economic affairs. Beginning with Premier George Drew and his famous Twenty-Two Point Plan, unveiled in the Throne Speech of 1943, the men at the head of the forty-two-year Conservative dynasty were known for their businesslike approach to provincial politics (Manthorpe 1974). The Frost, Robarts, and Davis regimes that followed Drew's "were 'progressive' but cautiously pragmatic. 'Government is business', Frost liked to say—the people's business.' Robarts proclaimed himself a 'management man', a chief executive officer whose shareholders were the voters. These premiers 'managed' economic and financial policies with a view to making Ontario attractive for private investment. Although dedicated to free market capitalism, they did not hesitate to intervene with major public initiatives wherever they saw an opportunity" (Baskerville 2005, 212). While serving as treasurer under Drew's Government, Frost had already begun to believe that the provincial budget ought to do more than note expected costs and revenues; instead, he argued, it "should express the broad objectives of government over a longer term, especially the encouragement of economic growth" (Graham 1990, 98). Under Robarts the traditional perspective on the limited tasks of the finance department was replaced by "a remarkably bold policy which entailed using the provincial budget as a major instrument by which the provincial government would seek to manipulate the short-run performance of the provincial economy" (Rae 1985, 227). Perhaps more than any previous premier, Robarts strove to turn the Ontario government into an active player in the social and economic sphere (McDougall 1985). In fact, so interventionist was Robarts' style that, in 1975, looking back over the previous twenty years, one observer declared that government in Ontario had become "dominated by technocrats, so that an allegedly private enterprise conservative government has moved significantly to statist, socialist and directive economic, social and political systems" (Pearson 1975, 191-2).

Without arguing that changes in mass mediated representations of the legislative opening should be interpreted as the direct effect of the postwar forces of modernization, there is no question that throughout the 1950s and 1960s newspaper coverage became increasingly focused on policy issues surrounding the Speech from the Throne and political strategy within Ontario's fledgling three-party system. Whereas politicking and policy analysis was the primary theme of

only 30 percent of the 235 items sampled between 1900 and 1945, of the 128 items sampled between 1950 and 1970, more than half (56 percent) focused primarily on issues relating to the legislative agenda, as opposed to information about the scene and setting at the Legislature. At the same time as these numbers illustrate trends that would continue throughout the second half of the twentieth century, they also hint at the enduring strength of the Social Celebration perspective. It should be pointed out that as late as 1960, social columnists continued to boast about their part in the “Largest Reception on Record” (*Globe and Mail* 27 January, 12); the tea-party still made the news. However, although it is true that elements of Social Celebration continued to thrive in certain parts of the newspaper, by contrast, front-page coverage reveals a drastic shift in journalistic conceptions about the primary meaning of the legislative opening. As table 4.1 shows, the pattern of reporting from earlier in the century was turned on its head. After 1950 the goings-on at Queen's Park rarely qualified as front-page news. *The story* of the legislative opening concerned the government's Speech from the Throne and its relation to partisan politics.

**Table 4.1**  
**Comparing themes in front-page coverage of the legislative opening, 1900-1970**

	Total number of front-page items	Primary theme is scene and setting	Primary theme is Throne Speech / partisan politics
1900-1945	43	29 (67%)	14 (33%)
1950-1970	25	8 (32%)	17 (68%)

Moreover, of the handful of scene and setting items that did appear on postwar front-pages, not one exhibits the formal qualities or includes the substantive focus of the pre-1945 narrative tradition. For example, in 1970, two front-page stories in the *Telegram* and one in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Star* began by describing the actions of a protester who had disrupted opening proceedings on the floor of the Legislative Assembly (24 and 25 February). Certainly these stories focus on events unfolding in legislative place-time, not policy proposals; yet it must be acknowledged that their perspective is markedly different from that of stories from earlier in the century, which habitually began by noting the size and mood of cheery crowds in the Chamber galleries.

Over the same period, the Speech from the Throne became a fixture on the editorial page. Coverage of the five openings sampled between 1950 and 1970 included a total of eighteen editorials: six in the *Globe*, five in the *Star*, and seven in the *Telegram*. All but three of these editorials focused on politicking and policy analysis, and only one, the *Telegram*'s piece of 1950, discussed the symbolic meaning of the ceremony. But even that *Tely* editorial reflected a shift in popular understandings about the ritual. Rather than interpreting the opening as a fashion-show or a display of British splendour, the *Telegram* wrote that in the assembling of provincial representatives “there can be seen the democratic will in action—government of the people by the people and for the people. The tradition has become so deeply imbedded in the western world that this annual assembly of the people’s representatives may seem commonplace. It is well to remind ourselves that these parliaments and legislatures are the foundation of the freedom and individual liberty which we enjoy” (16 February 1950, 6). This earnest emphasis on the representation of the popular will is a far cry from the *Tely*'s 1905 editorial, which included fictional (and humorous) voices of angry police in the Chamber.

The voice of the editorial board became a perennial feature of the legislative opening, passing judgment on whether the Speech was sufficiently ambitious and clear, and evaluating the main points of the government's proposed policy programme. Assessments ranged from unequivocal praise, “As a panoramic view of the provincial outlook, the Speech is an optimistic forecast of healthy growth based on practical ideals. No expenditure is indicated which is not justified either by the prospect of material returns or the provision of necessary services. It is a picture of a house in good order and on good terms with all members of its community” (*Globe and Mail* 17 February 1950, 6), to criticism for the tendency to wander “leisurely over past, present and future, on a path strewn with platitudes” (*Star* 27 January 1960, 6). In contrast to the descriptive and surprisingly nonpartisan editorials from earlier in the century, postwar editorials tended to be critical, as well as coloured by the newspaper's traditional partisan sympathies. Nowhere are partisan divisions clearer than in the contrast between the tone of the *Telegram*'s 1965 editorial “Facing Up”, a piece that lauds the Robarts Government for not shying away “from any issue that is of concern to the people of this province” (21 January, 8), and that of the *Star*'s editorial of the same year, a piece entitled, “Queen's Park menu—dull fare” (21 January

1965, 6). In fact, every one of the period's seven *Telegram* editorials praises a different iteration of the Conservative plan. On the whole, editorial boards established for themselves a new and active role as expert commentator on the province's legislative prospectus.

Departing from earlier journalistic patterns, when viewed through the front-page and editorial page of Ontario's mainstream dailies, the postwar opening had become more about issues relating to routine legislative proceedings than about the unique happenings at Queen's Park. Interest in the provincial vision and legislative agenda of Ontario's fledgling activist state superseded traditional concerns about the ritual's aesthetic qualities. One way to understand this shift is to consider the magnitude of the new policies being introduced. To name but a few: the Frost administration overhauled the municipal system and created Metropolitan Toronto in 1953; the TransCanada pipeline reached Toronto in 1958; the St. Lawrence Seaway opened in 1959 (thanks in large part to years of work by the Government of Ontario, see Schull 1978, 339-40); and Robarts headed a first-minister's conference on constitutional renewal in 1967 (Bryden 2005). The Tories were bold while riding “a golden tide of economic prosperity from the end of the Second World War until the mid-1970s” (Speirs 1986, xv). It is no surprise that in 1955, with the Frost administration building roads at a frantic pace, the *Globe and Mail* applied a soon-to-be central symbol of the modern ritual and placed a dollar sign in its front-page headline: “Biggest Roads Program Will Cost \$200,000,000” (8 February). Focusing on a different part of the same Conservative agenda, the *Telegram's* front-page announced: “Spend \$608 Million To Aid Unemployment” (8 February). The lead of the latter piece reflects the mood of the postwar boom: “The Frost administration plans to outstrip last year's \$175,000,000 spending in highways and public works.... Forecasts of the largest public investment program in Ontario's history... were contained in the Throne Speech.”

From a different perspective, however, it is worth noting that new approaches to policymaking and governance were becoming mainstays of the front-page at a time in which traditional expressions of Britishness were declining across the province (Baskerville 2005; Buzzelli 2001; Igartua 2006). “The percentage of Ontario residents claiming English or French as their mother tongue had fallen from almost 89 per cent at the [beginning of the Second World War] to less than 60 per cent by 1975. [...] Toronto and other major cities were socially and

culturally transformed in the process, their earlier Upper Canadian Protestantism quite altered by the influence of hundreds of thousands of migrants, some from the United Kingdom, but most from Southern Europe and the Mediterranean countries” (Rae 1985, 239). Although Britishness remained a central part of Ontario culture throughout the 1950s, the colonial spirit declined quickly during the 1960s. As late as 1958 Diefenbaker won a landslide in a general election in which he “castigated the Liberals for being pro-American and anti-British, and promised to take measures to strengthen the British connection” (Buckner 2005, 68); but just one year later his government’s attempt to present the Queen of England as the Queen of Canada proved to be a total flop. During the Queen’s last great royal tour through Canada even traditionally loyal Ontario failed to display the level of excitement that would have attended a similar event earlier in the century (Buckner 2005). In the wake of the 1947 *Citizenship Act*, the legislative embodiment of the shift from a colony of British subjects to a nation of Canadian citizens, it was widely believed that Canada should have its own unique flag and national anthem; the *Star* argued as much in an editorial published on the same day as the Ontario Throne Speech of 1955 (9 February, 6). The symbols of British royalty no longer inspired the same sense of national pride among Canadians. Within the span of two decades there was a fundamental break in what Taylor (2004) calls the “social imaginary” (see chap. 2). “English Canada shed its definition of itself as British and adopted a new stance as a civic nation” (Igartua 2006, 1).

Karen Whitney, the protagonist in Phyllis Brett Young’s bestselling 1960 novel *The Torontonians*, is struck by this cultural sea-change all at once (see Young 2007, 60). While in the UK, visiting an old friend and fellow Torontonian, Karen exclaims: “I’ve just realized something! [...] I’ve just realized... that we don’t listen to the BBC newscast as often as we used to.” Her friend, Jim, appears stunned: “You don’t mean you get your news from NBC?”, he responds. “No,” says Karen, “I’ve just realized that we get it, more often than not, from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.” After reassuring Jim that this is nothing to be upset about, in fact, the development is “very satisfactory”, Karen realizes (in the narrator’s words) “that there was no point in getting annoyed with Jim... for not understanding something that she had not, herself, fully understood until now.” Karen’s moment of self- and national-discovery (still in the voice of the narrator) concludes as follows: “That Toronto should now look to the CBC for world

news coverage was so significant, and in so many ways, that [Karen] needed time to consider that significance. Jim, when he left home, had left an English stronghold. He would return to something very different.”

In a province where fewer and fewer people viewed the Queen of England as the Queen of Canada (Buckner 2005), the role of the Queen's representative at the legislative opening was no longer a pivotal part of news narratives. The lieutenant governor himself remained visible in opening coverage, as prominent in photographs of the 1950s and 1960s as in those from earlier decades. But his movements were no longer described in chronological order; the verbal fanfare following his entry into the Chamber disappeared. The lieutenant governor came to stand for a time gone by, rather than the strength of the present moment; and as a result, he became peripheral to the central message of the day.

In the face of growing emphasis on policy debate, the tokenization of the lieutenant governor was experienced by all aspects of the older ritual—namely, they were being decoupled from the main frame, and dispersed throughout the newspaper. The defining features of Social Celebration—the guests, the crowding, the fashions, the good-humour—these continued to appear in the newspaper; but as a different group of themes came together to set the tone of the overall ritual, traditional symbols were isolated from one another and placed on the margins of what was depicted as more serious legislative news. For example, the role of women and women's fashion continued to be discussed, but only on the women's page—never in hard-news stories. A single photograph might depict the premier shaking hands with the leader of the opposition, but in the absence of an underlying theme of tension management, indeed, surrounded by stories documenting opposition criticisms of the Throne Speech, it no longer served as the visual representation of a break from everyday partisan fighting. Like the *Globe and Mail's* “House Opening Attended by Five Former Premiers” (17 February 1950, 15), an individual story might note prominent guests in the crowd, but by the 1960s this only ever occurred in an individual story intended to note prominent guests in the crowd. This sort of story was an add-on to Throne Speech news, not the main stage upon which the whole event was to be interpreted. What had once been mutually reinforcing elements within a narrative that described how Ontario High Society presided over a popular festival at Queen's Park were now individual

decorations on an overarching story about the quotidian considerations of legislative politics.

### **High Politics as Usual, 1970s-2007**

#### *A day of a document*

By 1970 the legislative opening was no longer framed as a multidimensional ceremony unfolding in legislative place-time. The event had been transformed into a day of document—namely, the Speech from the Throne. During the past thirty years the Speech has not been depicted as one of several elements in a good-humoured civic variety-show; on the contrary, it has become synonymous with the ritual itself. In today's store of assumed journalistic knowledge, the relative dominance of the Speech from the Throne has become such that even reporters in the Queen's Park press gallery are unlikely to refer to the opening as anything other than “Throne Speech day” (Walkom 2007). Like the ritualistic show of royal pomp and ceremony—the visual residue of an era gone by—even the term “legislative opening” has become anachronistic. Taken as evidence of conceptual shifts transpiring over the course of the twentieth century, this lexical revision suggests that the ritual has changed not in degree but in kind.

Bearing in mind the fact that the “setting” established by a narrator is one of the formative elements of a story (Bell 1991; Franzosi 1998; Todorov 1977), it is noteworthy that since the 1970s the vast majority of items about the legislative opening focus on policy ideas and partisan conflict as opposed to bodies and action in ceremonial place-time. Of the 297 items sampled within the 1975-2007 period, only 81 (27 percent) focus on the ritual's scene and setting; the other 216 (73 percent) address policy and partisan issues. Virtually the same ratio is found in front-page items: 26 percent (10 of 39) attend to the scene and setting; 74 percent (29 of 39) focus on policy and politicking. From the perspective of narrative theory, journalists now set the story of the legislative opening within the intangible realm of rational debate, not the tangible legislative grounds.

A typical example of this new narrative approach, one that appears on the front-page, is found in *Globe and Mail* reporter Richard Mackie's lead the day after the New Democratic Party's 1990 Speech from the Throne. The story begins: “Ontario's first socialist government has promised a quick fight against the recession, an indefinite moratorium on building nuclear

generating plants, public auto insurance, and extensive changes to the provincial tax system” (21 November). Although the slate of policies proposed by Mike Harris' Throne Speech of 2001 differs significantly from the Speeches of Bob Rae's NDP, from a narrative perspective, the *Star's* Caroline Mallan's page-one lead is technically no different than Mackie's from eleven years earlier. Mallan begins: “The Ontario government says it has a 21-step plan to bring prosperity to the province that includes a grab bag of tax cuts, a sale of public assets and a move to clamp down on health-care costs” (20 April). In 1975, despite the *Globe and Mail's* banner headline accusing the Throne Speech of containing “Few specific policy recommendations”, the story that follows still opens with a description of the Davis Government's key promise to establish a provincial ombudsman (Williamson 12 March, 1). Regardless of the perceived complexity or quality of the Speech from the Throne, it is the content of the Speech itself that attracts comment. As though by default, the Throne Speech is the story.

What narrative theory suggests about the way in which page-one leads depict the ritual is supported by the privileged position of Throne Speech highlights boxes. Fulfilling the public demand for “indexers and abstracters... interpreters, reporters, editors” of political information (Schudson 1995, 2), news breaks the totality of worldly events into more manageable, ostensibly significant, informational segments. One of the key elements of what Barnhurst and Nerone (2001) call the “High Modern Phase” of front-page news (208-9), the highlights box embodies the central concerns of the professional journalistic ethic. Marking itself as “neutral and unbiased” (McChesney 2004, 64), the box provides just-the-facts in an easily readable, condensed textual form. In light of the premium on newspaper space—that most-coveted commodity sold by publishers to advertisers, the cash-crop of capitalist media—it would be naive to assume that a document such as Davis' “90-point program for Ontario” would be printed in full. Wielding the power of “summarization” (van Dijk 1988a, 116-7), it has become standard newspaper practice to select between ten and twenty key Throne Speech policy pledges and arrange them in a point-form list.

Placed prominently on page-one, the typical highlights box runs adjacent to the newspaper's general review of the Speech from the Throne. For example, the Mackie piece referred to above is accompanied by a nine-point highlights box. The day after the ill-fated Tory

Throne Speech of 1985, the front-page of the *Toronto Star* used a highlights box to compare thirteen policy areas discussed in Premier Miller's proposal to alternative plans laid out in the newly-minted Liberal-NDP accord (5 June). Variations on the highlights theme are found inside the newspaper, sometimes consisting of miniature two-or-three-sentence “stories”, as opposed to just bulleted items (ex. *Star* 12 March 1980, A16). In the *Toronto Sun*, which publishes a front-page consisting exclusively of a headline and a full-page photo, the highlights box is always tucked inside, along with other Throne Speech news. Having said that, it is not uncommon to see the *Sun* use its front page to alert potential readers to the exact pages in which the Speech is covered. In 1995, for example, an index at the bottom of the *Sun's* cover read: “Full coverage of the Throne Speech: Pages 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 46-47” (28 September).

In addition to mapping the path leading to the annual highlights box, there is a second way in which the *Sun's* front-page *ad hoc* index illustrates the emergent journalistic tendency to view the legislative opening as a day of a document: namely, it hints at the fact that the past three decades have included substantially more Throne Speech news than earlier years, both in terms of the number of items published, and angles from which the Speech is examined. A crude, albeit somewhat useful indicator of the proliferation of Throne Speech news appears below in table 4.2. The measure does not account for the number of first-session openings in a given period, events which can be expected to receive special attention, nor does it factor in the growth of newspapers in general. Nevertheless, even with these caveats in mind, the chart leaves little doubt that coverage of the event has expanded.

**Table 4.2**  
**Proliferation of policy coverage, 1900-2007<sup>16</sup>**

	1900-1945	1950-1970	1975-2007
Average number of annual items	23.5 (235 / 10)	25.6 (128 / 5)	42.4 (297 / 7)

Two contradictory trends are occurring simultaneously: on one hand, the interpretive lens through which the legislative opening is examined has narrowed; yet on the other, the number of

<sup>16</sup> Numbers in brackets indicate the number of newspaper items analyzed divided by the number of legislative openings within each period. For example, the 1900-1945 period includes 235 items spread over 10 openings, for an average of 23.5 items per year.

stories about the event has increased. There are now more stories than ever, but they attend to fewer components of the ritual. If the opening is now simply a day of a document, what type of information supplies the proliferation of Throne Speech news? In addition to general Throne Speech reviews and accompanying highlights boxes, what other journalistic forms are called upon to support, or indeed may have added to, increasing levels of news coverage? The answer is found in three key journalistic changes: the mass media-wide adoption of what Capella and Jamieson (1997) call the “strategy frame” in political reporting; the specialization of Throne Speech policy analysis; and the rise of the political columnist. Although these changes overlap, strategic coverage is examined in detail in the following section. The latter two developments are discussed here.

A defining feature of the Politics as Usual frame is the standardization of a clearly delimited region of the newspaper dedicated exclusively to the Speech from the Throne. Like special-feature pages on federal budgets and elections, major disasters, and other highly significant events, as a rule, these “Throne Speech pages” (or page) reside somewhere within a newspaper's first section. Although it carries multiple items on the legislative opening, this journalistic form is distinguished by a banner running across the top of the page that unifies disparate stories and images under a central theme of, for example, “Bill's boring blueprint” (*Sun* 12 March 1980, 3, 62-63); “THE TORY SPEECH FROM THE THRONE” (*Star* 5 June 1985, A16, A17); “ONTARIO THRONE SPEECH” (*Globe and Mail* 21 November 1990, A8); or simply “THRONE SPEECH” (*Star* 30 November 2007, A19). In addition to housing the conclusion of the general review that began on page one, Throne Speech pages serve as discursive spaces in which to analyze in detail specific policy pledges named in the Speech. In contrast to page-one stories and highlights boxes, whose purpose it is to paint the legislative agenda in broad strokes, specialized policy reports home in on a single policy area or government initiative. For example, the *Star*'s pages devoted exclusively to covering the NDP's Throne Speech of 1990 included headlines such as: “Province's auto-plan due in spring” (Ferguson 21 Nov 1990, A8); “*Minimum wage to rise in bid to 'protect workers'*” (Papp 21 Nov 1990, A8); “‘Be patient’ on transit issues, province says” (Howell 21 Nov 1990, A8); “Specifics of spending boost absent from initial agenda” [on education policy] (Ainsworth 21 Nov 1990, A9); “Store

hours to be curbed” (Star 21 Nov 1990, p. A9); “Caution marks approach to health care” (Star 21 Nov 1990, A9); “Rae pledges \$700 million for ‘critically needed jobs’” (Maychak 21 Nov 1990, A9); “NDP freezes construction of Hydro nuclear plants” (Gorrie 21 Nov 1990, A10); and “Child-care workers to gain pay increases” (Todd 21 Nov 1990, A10). Each story selects from the Throne Speech information concerning discrete policy concerns. The story on Sunday shopping does not refer to the Government's auto-plan, and neither article discusses the health care system. Rather, the Throne Speech is interpreted as a preview of concrete legislative action, allowing journalists to situate statements in the Speech within ongoing provincial policy debates.

The causes and consequences of specialized Throne Speech coverage are open to a range of interpretations. The advocate of public journalism might discover a promising sign of policy news that citizens can actually use (see Glasser 1999). Others might point to this type of coverage as an example of the debilitating “specialisation that occurs around all functions including politics”, adding to increasing levels of “political disenchantment” (Stoker 2006, 184). The Marxist might sense bias toward business interests in so many uncritical accounts of efforts to improve Ontario's market economy (ex. Knight 1998; Hackett and Gruneau 2000). Doubtless Beck (1992) would find a heightened sense of “risk” growing out of this increasingly complex network of policy news. All would agree on one thing, however: Throne Speech coverage is proliferating. True, the postwar period has seen the Throne Speech itself become longer and more complex (cf. Sharp 1989); but increasing news coverage is not simply the effect of a bulkier legislative agenda. As will be discussed in detail later in the chapter, the proliferation of coverage is largely due to the fact that Throne Speech analysis has added to its ranks reaction from opposition politicians, and commentary from interest groups and other members of civic society.

The routinization of comprehensive Throne Speech analysis brings with it an unexpected consequence: namely, greater interest in items absent from the Speech. Just as full stories are now dedicated to a single policy pledge, others centre upon issues that never made it into the Speech in the first place. The news conference is the typical place where such absences are noted (see Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989, 227-8). From at least the early 1970s, Ontario politicians have participated in “open line radio shows and television talk shows and... newspaper interviews” in an effort to disseminate party messages throughout the province (Fletcher 1975,

262). Today, nearly all government statements are “carefully planned in an attempt to control media coverage”, and opposition parties work ceaselessly “to seize the agenda by raising issues the media cannot ignore” (Fletcher and Sottile 1997, 255-7). But regardless of thirty years of progress in news gathering norms and technologies, news conferences themselves—mini-tutorials delivered by spokespeople to journalists, permitting leaders to transmit messages for the price of facing challenging questions—have remained primary points of contact between politicians and reporters (Nesbitt-Larking 2007, 144).

It is to be expected that in an era when news conferences occur on a daily basis, a special occasion such as the Opening of the Legislature would include a news conference. However it is worth reflecting upon the discursive possibilities enabled by such an event, as well as recalling that these same possibilities did not obtain prior to the emergence of this journalistic for(u)m. For one thing, the news conference forces the premier to account for the Speech from the Throne in a way not demanded by parliamentary procedure. The Speaker adjourns the Chamber immediately after post-Throne Speech housekeeping is complete; House debate on the Throne Speech does not commence on the day of the legislative opening (see Ontario Standing Orders 1999). By contrast, the news conference offers no such safe haven. Prominent members of the government face questions the moment that they leave the legislative Chamber and step under the glare of media lights. And recall that in Ontario, “the rise of adversarial journalism in the United States and Ottawa” has been mimicked by the provincial press corps ever since Davis' 1971 electoral landslide (Fletcher and Sottile 1997, 241).

Second, the news conference provides further space for criticism by giving a platform to opposition leaders, legitimizing their voices on the same day as the delivery of the government's Throne Speech. Putting aside questions about the democratic implications of this development, it ought to be noted that opening-day response from the opposition has no precedent in parliamentary history: in the House the opposition is afforded no official opportunity to respond to the government's plan until later. Thus the news conference provides what the House does not—namely, a platform from which to air opposition criticism. That said, it is not all bad news for the party in power; for at the same time as the government is attacked at opposition news conferences, and attacked by journalists at its own, the news conference furnishes the premier

with a chance to defend against accusations of deficiency, and to address policy areas and constituencies left out of the official legislative plan. Taken together, these and other consequences of news conferences create a public forum for dialogue that easily strays from the specific contents of the Speech from the Throne. The ritual remains a day of a document—the news conference exists on the assumption that it helps to clarify the context of provincial policy proposals—but the newly-established extra-Chamber relations between politicians and journalists carry the consequence, intended or not, of the legislative opening incorporating discussion about political affairs that preexist and will outlive the pivotal pledges of the day. As the role of media in facilitating political debate is cemented, the Assembly as a place has lost some of its centrality and authority.

There are several reasons why this is a logical place to say a few words about the growing influence of television news in the postwar era, not least because “the rise of broadcast journalism has increased the frequency of news conferences” (Fletcher 1981, 61). By the mid-1940s journalists were already predicting that “television... will one day revolutionize culture, the arts, education, communication and industry”, and within a decade it was widely agreed that the revolution had begun (Chamberlain quoted in Rutherford 1990, 19). TV was still a novelty at the end of the decade but in the years that followed “the new medium spread extremely rapidly” (Vipond 2000, 45). In 1953, only about 10 percent of Canadian households had a television set; ten years later, however, “90 percent of Canadian households had television, and by the 1980s virtually every household in Canada had a TV set” (Hall 2001, 22). In a study that examines changes in newspaper coverage of the Legislature, more significant than the simple spread of television news is the assumption among many media critics that “television has helped to create a more cynical, confrontational style of journalism, which has spilled over into newspapers” (Fletcher 1981, 109; see also Cumming 1977; Franklin 1996, 2004; Nesbitt-Larking 2007). Remarking upon the “deeply adversarial” relationship growing up between journalists and politicians, Taras (1990) has called “the rise of critical journalism... the most dramatic development in the profession since the Second World War” (65). According to Rutherford (1990), this was a period in which “the news media, print as well as television journalists, were bent on establishing their own brand of authority over political life” (403).

Required by regulators to maintain a certain balance among competing opinions, television news stories tend to have “a point-counterpoint format” built right into the narrative structure: “As one CBC document has instructed, 'CBC programs dealing with matters of public interest in which differing views are held must supplement the exposition of one point of view with an equitable treatment of other relevant points of view’” (Taras 1990, 102; cf. Fletcher 1981, 12). Confrontation has become a cardinal news value (Hartley 1982). Critical scholars have long noted problems arising from the fact that television news presents the conflicts it depicts as exhausting the range of public opinion (Williams 1975, 53), but few would disagree that the decades in which television emerged as a leader among news media were ones in which journalism of all sorts became more aggressive and more confrontational:

Put it down to an influx of young reporters, a new professionalism, or just the times, the journalist as party loyalist... was fast becoming old-fashioned. Reporters and editors now seemed ready to put substance into that age-old conceit depicting the journalist as the public's watch-dog. [...] Along with that came a greater sense of professional significance. 'To work, gentlemen,' was the sarcastic comment of Val Sears, a *Toronto Daily Star* correspondent to the Diefenbaker campaign plane of 1962. 'We have a government to overthrow.' The journalist was the chosen instrument (note self-chosen) of that mainstay of democracy, 'the public's right to know.' This could amount to a licence to disclose the misdoings of the powerful, most especially of the government. The underlying assumption was that the politicians were always motivated by a personal or partisan self-interest, at odds with the public interest.... (Rutherford 1990, 403)

At the same time as the success of TV news encouraged newspaper journalists to adopt a more critical and entertaining approach to political reporting, it also altered the behaviour of politicians and political parties: “Television has changed the character of political leadership everywhere” (Nesbitt-Larking 2001, 158). Responding to changes in news production processes, political agents in the 1960s and 1970s became more strategic about when to announce both good and bad information; and distributing press-releases became a common way of doing journalists' work for them, in the hopes of having specific messages delivered through news reports with minimal critical editing (Basen 2007; Black 1982). Politicians learned to formulate public statements in short pithy soundbites, in order “to suit the '30- and 90-second news windows' of a television newscast” (Rutherford 1990, 404). More and more attention was

devoted to staging press conferences in such a way as “to maximize the positive spin on the leader and the party” (Nesbitt-Larking 2001, 157). Indeed, a whole new species of political actor emerged: the so-called “spin-doctor”, charged with the responsibility of controlling “as much as possible, the flow, even the style, of information used by journalists”, and the message being transmitted from party members to the press (Hartley 2002, 213). Therefore, while it is true that the “sheer speed of the modern process” of television-age political journalism has left “many politicians... feel[ing] that they have lost control over their own communication processes” (Osler 1993, 128), it would be inaccurate to suggest that journalists enjoy total control over the sphere of politics. “Both media and politicians have learned how to play the game and to manipulate coverage. Moreover, they have learned how to demonstrate the manipulative tactics of the other side, while keeping their own hidden” (Nesbitt-Larking 2001, 158). The increasing conflict among journalists and politicians “is tempered by a symbiotic relationship that sustains both groups” (Taras 1990, 62; Black 1982).

In light of changes within Ontario's new television-saturated media-politics relationship (cf. Street 2005), consider again the case of the Throne Speech news conference and the ways in which journalistic practices worked to shift the representation of ritual. It was because of a legislative opening news-conference, an object of the age of television, that a *Globe and Mail* reporter was able to note that although “Ontario’s Throne Speech devoted only one sentence to housing problems yesterday”, the Premier “emphasized the high priority of housing *later* by criticizing the federal Government, reluctant municipalities and high mortgage rates” (12 Mar 1975, 33, italics added). In 1980, Premier Davis “told a news conference” that the Darlington nuclear plant “will go ahead as planned” (*Sun* 12 March, 63). Ten years later, Premier Rae used a news conference to admit that his own Throne Speech had not been the political “Whammo” that many NDP supporters desired, and promised more detailed plans presently (Walkom 21 November 1990, 1). In 1985, a morose Premier Miller engaged in dialogue with a reporter at a news conference. Responding to a question about why the Tory Throne Speech dispensed with so much of the party's election platform, Miller asked rhetorically: “What else would you have me do? You can't suddenly throw in the towel!” (Christie 5 June, 1)—a throw-in-the-towel response if there ever was one. In all of these cases the news conference clashes between politicians and

journalists add a level of reflexivity to the ritual that would not have existed in their absence. The negotiation of meaning enabled by the news conference ensures that the Speech from the Throne is assessed in the context of its textual origins and in relation to other non-Throne Speech concerns.

This same reflexive project is picked up and carried to new heights in the words of the newspaper columnist. Opinion columns on the Speech from the Throne began appearing in the mid-1960s; however, it would be another decade before they became essential components of the media ritual. Not one opinion column relating to the legislative opening is found in any of the sixty newspapers sampled between 1900 and 1945. The thirty newspapers sampled between 1950 and 1970 include two opinion columns. By contrast, the forty-two newspapers sampled between 1975 and 2007 include thirty-five columns.

Today, in *High Politics as Usual*, the political columnist is the public sensemaker par excellence. Like editorials, columns serve “to partition off the 'opinion' component of the paper, implicitly supporting the claim that other sections, by contrast, are pure 'fact' or 'report'” (Fowler 1991, 208). Enjoying interpretive latitude not available to the common newspaper reporter, the columnist is free to suggest that “the Throne Speech, the traditional statement of a government's legislative intentions, is becoming anachronistic” (Valpy 21 November 1990, A11). The authority assumed by the political columnist is such that in the face of dispute over policy proposals, he or she is known to take the voice of “the rest of Ontario” (Blizzard 28 September 1995, 6). The columnist is a political pedagogue—a “priestly pundit, representing elites to themselves and to the populace” (Nimmo and Combs 1992, 32); yet the object of writer is not merely to teach, “but to ridicule and entertain, sometimes cruelly, at the expense of others” (Tataryn 1985, 147). In the world of news punditry, then, authority is secured by mastering not simply the machinations of some segment of the social sphere, but also “the discursive rituals appropriate to the specific public forum provided by a specific medium” (Nimmo and Combs 1992, 12). Thus the stories columnists tell are as much functions of the culture of columns—the insight, angle, language, and tone offered by pundits and familiar to publics—as they are determined by political events.

Like a sonnet, the column has an expected and ritually drawn structure (oftentimes, statement of the problem, discussion of legitimate alternatives, argumentative defense of one choice and attack of others, conclusion, and

recommendation). To the degree that readers of columns have come to expect columns to adhere to standardized formats and rituals, whether one is persuaded by a columnist's point of view may well depend not on what was written, but how. In this sense the column is a triumph of sophistic technique and style over what a Socrates might have deemed substance and reason. (Nimmo and Combs 1992, 13)

A newspaper column is an opinion, written in the first-person, by a political storyteller known by name—Rosemary Speirs, Thomas Walkom, Christina Blizzard, Michael Valpy. As a rule this name has a face: a small, square photograph of the clever head that composed the piece. Numerous times per week, the face passes comment on political life in Ontario, and the fact that the familiar face chooses to speak about the opening invests the ritual with a quotidian quality. Yesterday, the closure of a nickel mine near Timmins; today, the legislative opening; tomorrow, new fast-food on Toronto streets. Every newspaper columnist cultivates his or her own unique style. What virtually all share, however, is an argumentative disposition. “These are the writers with the luxury of calling it as they see it; the journalists with the double 'O' licence authorizing them to sabotage any public figure they wish to target for verbal exocets” (Tataryn 1985, 6).

As noted by Nimmo and Combs, the “statement of the problem” appears early in the column, setting the mood for remaining remarks. Typically the column opens on a disconcerting note, its tone ranging from concern to incredulity. For example, the *Globe and Mail's* Norman Webster begins his review of the 1975 legislative opening by calling the Speech from the Throne “not only the shortest anyone can remember” but also “the most barren. The six heavily-padded pages contained back-patting, bromide philosophy and non-specific promises of action in equal portions” (12 March, 7). In 1985, the *Star's* Rosemary Speirs announced: “This is the Throne Speech that Frank Miller should have presented—but wouldn't—before the May 2 election” (5 June, A18). In 1990, Bob MacDonald wrote in the *Sun*: “Trust Ontario to make even wild-eyed socialism come across as dull, dull, dull” (21 November, 14). Christina Blizzard, one of the most ruthless columnists ever to write on Ontario politics, wraps disdain in humour the day after the 2001 opening: “Now you come to mention it, I guess the week after Easter is a little late for MP[P]s to be getting back from the Christmas holidays” (*Sun* 19 April, 15). The lead is jarring. It establishes conflict as the organizing principle and prepares the rest of the piece to explore the problem. Thus it is that political columnists create problems out of legislative openings.

The columnist assumes the role of a civics teacher. S/he deciphers the meaning of political activity. Divining partisan strategies from the Speech from the Throne, the columnist announces: “Well, now we know what [Tory strategist] Hugh Segal does for his \$50,000 a year” (Winsor 12 March 1980, 7). He assures people not to worry, for “this 'Christmas in June' grab-bag of giveaways is the stuff of pure political fantasy” (Goldstein 5 June 1985, 16). His political senses are refined and his memory is sharp: he knows that “it has been a long time since Ontario's people were this excited about Throne Speech day” (Valpy 20 November 1990, 11). She takes sides: “What a difference from our tax revolts, when we stormed Queen’s Park to picket against Bob Rae’s NDP record tax grabs and reckless spending which sent our net debt to an obscene \$150 billion. There were no bloody faces, riot gear, clubs or pepper spray. Just the odd anti-poverty creep who would scream threats to end my life” (Leatherdale 28 September 1995, 58). For people who do not share columnists' opinions, statements like this one can be infuriating. Had it not occurred to Linda Leatherdale, writing from the safe perch of the *Sun's* “Money” section, that business interests need not rely exclusively upon certain kinds of protest outside Queen's Park for the very reason that they enjoy special places everywhere inside the legislative precinct (cf. Knight 1998)? When Davis' 1975 Speech is accused of lacking clarity, why does the columnist feign surprise? A political pundit calling the Throne Speech “vague” is as clichéd as the clichés Hugh Winsor finds in Davis' Speech of 1980. The column is a lesson—a neat package of information meant to uncover and simplify broader political implications surrounding the Speech from the Throne—but it strives neither to achieve journalistic distance nor a balance of opinion. The column is a political provocation; it succeeds when it elicits emotion through rational insight.

Mediated processes of ritualization came to include opinion columns at a time when “newspaper reporters and editors were intent on finding anecdote, colour, conflict, to make print news as entertaining as television news. [...] Television had found 'a better way of packaging information,' according to the veteran journalist Val Sears ('It was more exciting, more compelling, easier to absorb')” (Rutherford 1990, 490). The audiovisual world announced the arrival of a type of journalism that was quicker, flashier, some would say *sexier* than traditional newspaper reporting (see Corner 1999a; Hartley and Fiske 1978; Nesbitt-Larking 2007).

Rutherford (1990) contends that newspapers, in fear of being forgotten in the shadow of TV news, expressed “renewed interest in publishing opinion, and finding appealing columnists, thus taking over some of the attributes of the magazine” (473). Taras (1990) agrees, arguing that one of the ways in which newspapers responded to the threat posed by television was to accentuate “some things that television couldn't such as provide greater detail and much more opinion and commentary. The columnist became a more important feature in newspapers. Today, newspapers are laced with columns and columnists often give newspapers their character and flavour” (58).

Examining the legislative opening opinion column in terms of Fowler's (1991, 210) “three discourse participants: the *source*, the *addressee*, and the *referent(s)*: the 'I', 'you' and 'he/she/it/they’”, three propositions can be made. First, the news source—the relatively recent 'I' that is the newspaper columnist—sustains his or her authority by striking a delicate balance between personal and professional modes of discourse. On one hand, the informal voice of the columnist adds an element of “everyday knowledge” (Gardiner 2006) to debate on government policy; on the other, the columnist is a political expert, privy to certain information and fluent in a manner of expression that separates him or her from the ordinary newsreader. Second, their expertise notwithstanding, columnists interpellate newsreaders as concerned citizens. They construct “addressees” both interested in and capable of understanding the course of Ontario's legislative agenda. Finally, the column is further evidence that the legislative opening is a day of a document. The referent of the column—the “it” of the day—is clearly the Speech from the Throne. The proliferation of columnists, growing in number and spreading across all parts of the newspaper, fuels the dominance of the Throne Speech. Columnists do not make a habit out of analyzing the ritual's performative aspects. Rather, they too probe the mind of the government, and those viewed as other major political players, in search of new clues about the old political landscape.

Because of the way it exemplifies modern interpretations of the social elements of the ceremony, *Star* columnist Joey Slinger's opinion column from 12 March 1980 deserves a closer look (A3). In *High Politics as Usual*, a column focused on the fairytale features of the day is an outlier; however, more important than the need to note that such rarities exist, is the picture painted in the story. The headline above Slinger's piece, “Throne Speech fans bow their heads in

tribute”, is deliberately ironic. Under a barrage of sarcasm, newsreaders learn that guests bowing their heads were not paying respect but nodding off to sleep. Slinger admits that he, too, “dozed off about the three-minute mark”, and therefore cannot be expected to describe what happened after that. He did manage to catch “the strange ceremony in front of the Legislature [which] had more of wistfulness than pomp about it: a wine decanted decades later that is worth tasting not for its flavor so much as for the evocation of some time-was—even alien—tradition of tall men in scarlet tunics and tall black busbies presenting arms with bayonets fixed.” Like the hero's “postmodernist' elements” described by Hall (1996), the ritual “doesn't come from anywhere; there is no whole story about [it] to tell” (134). Slinger mocks the ceremonial; he calls it a farce and drains it of dignity. And though his tone is especially sour, Slinger is not alone in this opinion, nor does he represent the opinion of columnists only. Expressing similar dissatisfaction five years earlier, the editorial page of the *Globe and Mail* declared that “most Throne Speeches can be categorized as blah, blaher, and blahest” (12 March 1975, 6). The reverential reporter of Social Celebration, the “priestly” tone given to Dayan and Katz's (1992) “media events”, has been replaced by professional cynics.

Coverage on women's and society pages, which had been shrinking since the 1960s, had disappeared by 1980. With these pages went the longstanding platform for discussing the fashions and chatter of people at Queen's Park. People have not stopped wearing clothes to the ceremony. Guests may don less formal attire than in earlier parts of the century; however, in itself, the lack of evening wear does not disqualify remarks on dress. Rather, viewed as a cultural form enabling a specific type of knowledge about provincial affairs, through the exit of the women's page have also gone the “conditions of possibility” required for certain types of public commentary about people on the legislative grounds (Foucault 1972, 1990, 1991). Considering the “bitter, politically charged atmosphere that has come to characterize house proceedings” (White 1997, 80), the loss of the legislative tea-party, in both its metaphorical and literal senses, might have been unavoidable. In any case, newspaper space in which to explore the social side of events at Queen's Park has narrowed.

Photographs of the legislative opening also contradict traditional themes, albeit, in a manner more subtle than the blunt blows delivered by Slinger and others. Unlike the posed

compositions of Social Celebration, of dignified guests lined up in front of the camera, contemporary news photographs take readers behind the scenes of the ceremony. Figuratively speaking, they expose the strings that suspend the ritual. For example, two adjacent images show the horse and landau traveling up University Avenue: the first depicts the morning test-run, the second shows the actual parade—the caption reads, “From romp to pomp” (*Star* 12 March 1980, A12). The majesty of the run is thrown into question. Here a familiar radio personality sitting in the Chamber gallery is shown yawning; here he checks his watch—the caption reads, “They do seem to... be going on a bit” (*Sun* 12 March 1980, 3). The *Sun* catches two members of the lieutenant governor's honour guard horsing around, pulling the helmet off a colleague's head—the caption reads, “NO POMP TODAY” (27 September 1995, 1). Photographers from the *Globe and Mail* and the *Star* pull back the frame around lieutenant governor Pauline McGibbon's arrival at Queen's Park in order to reveal the stray dog sniffing at her leg (*Globe and Mail* 12 March 1975, 1; *Star* 12 March 1975, 6). The *Sun* runs an image of the dog by itself (12 March 1975). These photographs are “Gotcha!” journalism in a different guise (see Bain 1994). They aim to unmask, expose, discredit. A different kind of photographic indignity done to the legislative opening: 20 April 2001, the day after the ceremony, the front pages of all three newspapers eschew images from Queen's Park in favour of those of protesters at the FTAA summit in Quebec City (in the *Globe* and the *Star*), and a woman rubbing the head of her two-times-lottery-lucky husband (in the *Sun*).

In a 1975 news report about Lieutenant Governor Pauline McGibbon's use of professional acting techniques to overcome her fear of reading the Throne Speech, reporter Janice Dineen quotes a passerby at the legislative opening: “I'm disappointed that people aren't taking an interest in this,' said Julia Drake of Lawton Blvd. 'They should take time out to appreciate this. I like to see some pageantry now and then’” (12 March, A6). Perhaps this is a noble thought; but it stands in direct contrast to today's mediated processes of ritualization. The Social Celebration script is no longer accessible. Asked to describe how much attention opinion columnists pay to the aesthetics of the day, Walkom (2007) replies: “They don't”. In the words of one researcher at Queen's Park, “Today, most people find all that pomp and ceremony ridiculous” (Bogart 2007).

*The legislative opening as a partisan battleground*

What is taken seriously in the era of Politics as Usual? Clearly the Speech from the Throne is examined in detail, a trend which suggests that at least the Speech is treated with respect. However, beyond assessments of the government's legislative proposals, what other objects, events, people, and processes are legitimized through newspaper coverage? It has already been suggested that the status of opposition parties has been elevated as a result of heightened interest in the Speech from the Throne. A more satisfactory assessment is this: the Politics as Usual frame has effectively established the legislative opening as an arena for partisan conflict.

Observers have long known that “Canadian politics is party politics” (Malcolmson and Myers 2005, 187); however, in the context of this study, regardless of the strength of the party system in earlier times, the important thing to understand is that partisan conflict did not come to constitute a central part of the legislative opening until the second half of the twentieth century. In contrast to the image of unity among parties that emerged through the narrative of Social Celebration, the era of Politics as Usual ignores whatever goodwill and cooperation might exist among political parties, highlighting, instead, the details of ongoing partisan strategies and accusations leveled by each party against the others.

Writing in 1988, Taras notes that among their most demanding tasks, prime ministers in Canada “must survive in the 'battleground' of media relations” (36). In a media climate where controversy is a cardinal news value (Hartley 1982), and where “adversarial journalism” has been on the rise since the 1960s (Fletcher and Sottile 1997), “politicians have come to fear not only the media's criticisms, but their need for drama and conflict” (Taras 1988, 38). Surely this is true of recent Ontario premiers on the day of the legislative opening. According to one senior civil servant responsible for drafting Throne Speeches in the early 1990s, the preoccupation of the government is to avoid saying anything that might expose it to a hit from opposition and media critics (Evans 2007). The media ritual is now one in which partisan attacks, plots, threats—partisan battles—are essential components of the entire affair.

Nowhere is this trend more evident than in the proliferation of quotations from opposition MPPs. Prior to the 1960s it was extremely rare for coverage of the Speech from the Throne to include commentary from opposition politicians. The era of Social Celebration, in which

opposition criticism of the Throne Speech was virtually unheard of, left no discursive precedent on which opposition reaction could be incorporated into the ritual. But in the wake of growing emphasis on the Speech from the Throne and the concomitant decline of the festival atmosphere, opposition criticism burst onto the scene: the sample includes no opposition quotations in coverage of either 1950 or 1955, yet in 1960 the *Star* quotes CCF leader Donald MacDonald, and both the *Globe and Mail* and the *Telegram* quote MacDonald as well as Liberal leader J.G. Wintermeyer. In each year sampled after 1960, all three newspapers included at least one opposition voice in their coverage of the Throne Speech. On four different occasions opposition quotations appeared in six stories in a single year—in the *Globe* in 1975, in the *Sun* in 1985, and in the *Star* in 2001. In 2007 all three newspapers carried at least two stories including opposition quotations. In fact, in the era of Politics as Usual, it is not uncommon to find a greater number of direct quotations from opposition MPPs than from members of the governing party.

**Table 4.3**  
**Opposition quotations in Throne Speech stories, 1960-2007**

	Number of stories including quotations from opposition MPPs	Number of individual MPPs quoted <sup>17</sup>
<i>Globe</i>	24	37
<i>Star</i>	26	44
<i>Telegram / Sun</i>	19	29
	<b>69</b>	<b>110</b>

In media studies, quotations are interpreted as markers of journalistic objectivity for two reasons: first, because they are useful in defining the main claims of opposing sides of a debate (Hartley 1982); and second, because they help journalists weave a mediated “web of facticity” (Tuchman 1978, chap. 4) by investing a realness, or an aura of objectivity to journalistic description (Bennett 2007, chap. 6; Chalaby 1998; Schudson 1995). The journalistic predilection for quotations works on the same logic as the old theatre-school dictum: “Don't tell people; show them!” Thus, in the case of the legislative opening, the growing presence of opposition reaction not only enhances the journalists' attempt to project the image of a rational, unbiased report on

<sup>17</sup> This column includes the aggregate number of individual MPPs quoted in individual stories and does not account for multiple quotations from one MPP within the same story. For example, even if Donald MacDonald was quoted five different times in a single story, this contribution would be registered as a single mark within this column; but if MacDonald was quoted again in an adjacent story, that quotation would also count as one.

political debate, but also adds rhetorical colour. For example, more powerful than paraphrasing NDP leader Stephen Lewis' criticism of the Speech from the Throne is the reproduction of Lewis' critical view. Says Lewis in a story from 1975: "Like other Throne Speeches it's filled with generalities and good intentions. Unlike others, it's filled with self-justification in an effort to curry favor with the public that has rejected the Government" (*Globe and Mail* 12 March, 33).

If this journalistic form is now a familiar part of legislative opening news, equally as predictable are its contents. The paramount aim of the opposition being "to make the government look bad and the opposition look good" (Docherty 2005, 16), it is logical to expect quotations from opposition MPPs to show less than enthusiastic support for the government's proposed legislative agenda. Nevertheless, analyzing newspaper stories over a thirty-year period reveals a pattern of opposition criticism so rigid that even a person expecting to find continuity in the discourse might be surprised by the lack of original opposition insight. The nature of the opposition's annual lament is as predictable as the government's sunny disposition. Generally speaking, prominent quotations from opposition leaders fault the government for committing one of four Throne Speech sins.

First, the Speech is accused of containing no new ideas. This accusation is known to take the form of an outright declaration that the government is "bankrupt when it comes to the leadership that is obviously needed" to run the province (Smith in *Star* 12 March 1975, A6), as well as the more nuanced claim that the government, itself devoid of fresh policy plans, has simply stolen the best of the opposition's platform (ex. Szende 12 March 1975, A6; Collins and Oved 5 June 1985, 5). Second, and closely related to the first, the ideas in the Speech are criticized for being too vague. Developed in editorial pages earlier in the century, this attack is now a favourite among opposition MPPs. It provides them with an opportunity to argue that the minds responsible for the Speech are incapable of identifying "a clear direction that would set this government apart from all the others" (Nixon in Mackie 21 November 1990, 1). Opposition MPPs might acknowledge the existence of one or another policy proposal, yet they "still don't see a plan whereby [it] is going to happen" (Hampton in Blizzard 30 November 2007, 21).

Third, the Speech is attacked for being heartless. It is common to find opposition MPPs expressing sympathy for troubled policy areas and needy people neglected by the Speech. In

1995, for example, the year of Mike Harris' first Speech from the Throne, the leader of the NDP called the government's budget plans “mean-spirited”, while the Liberal leader declared that the Tories had resorted to “slash-and-burn” tactics to deal with problems which could have been addressed more humanely (in *Globe and Mail* 28 September 1995, A22). Fourth, and surely favourite among those who thrive on irony, the Speech is accused of playing politics. Even to the critic familiar with partisan battle, the sight of one politician accusing another of “playing politics” can seem odd. Is politics not the game that everyone has agreed to play? Yet even after reformulating the rebuke into narrower distaste for legislative agendas that appear to be little more than thinly veiled appeals to the hearts and minds of the voting public, the question remains: Are not all parties constantly vying for popularity? In a representative democracy such as Canada's, political power is contingent upon popular support (Ellis and MacIvor 2008). Under this system, the Speech from the Throne that offends a broad constituency deserves criticism for lacking the political acumen necessary for the maintenance of power; by contrast, the Speech that panders to public opinion does what it must do to keep its authors in a position of authority. And yet, as exemplified in the Lewis quotation above, opposition leaders routinely accuse the government of using the Speech “to curry favor with the public”. If the appeal of the Speech is not faulted for being too broad, no doubt it is intended to help “the government's friends who stand to profit” from specific policy pledges (McGuinty in Mallan 20 April 2001, A13).

A final point about quotations from opposition MPPs is that they tend to be characterized by a tone of incredulity, a sense of utter exasperation that relies upon the appeal of dry, if not dark, humour. For example, after Premier Miller's Throne Speech of 1985, the leader of the Liberal party, David Peterson, explained that the Conservatives' “deathbed repentance [was] their way of saying they're sorry” (in Stephens 5 June 1985, 1). That same year, mocking the moribundity of the Tory Throne Speech, NDP leader Bob Rae drew a line from an old *Monty Python* sketch and announced: “This is the end... This parrot is no more” (in McMonagle 4 June 1985, 8). In 2001, on the same day that the Liberal leader chided the government for subjecting the people of Ontario “to some kind of a painfully slow striptease” (McGuinty in Artuso 20 April, 4), the leader of the NDP offered this one-liner: “A Conservative throne speech calling for public accountability is like the Hells Angels promoting a drug-free lifestyle” (Hampton in Mallan,

A13). In the wake of the Throne Speech of 2007, opposition leader John Tory used hockey imagery to launch his witty attack: “Ontario's economy is just like the Toronto Maple Leafs. The players are out there doing their best but the management at Queen's Park just can't get it right” (in Benzie, Ferguson, and Gillespie 30 November, A19).

It is not difficult to imagine a team of party communications experts debating which line packs the cleverest punch—the one most likely to land in the newspaper. At a time when the news cycle is both expanding, in the sense that news is played around the clock, and shrinking, in the sense that less time is given to each story, the ability to speak in soundbites is imperative (Basen 2007). If politicians want their comments to appear in the news, their remarks must be pithy (Franklin 2004). In a culture permeated by cynicism about politics and politicians, “the harder the statement, the better the news story” (Westell in Taras 1988, 37). In the words of one of the characters in DeLillo's *White noise*, the National Book Award winning novel of 1985, in the hyper-consumerist culture of late capitalism, “Only a catastrophe gets our attention. We want them, we need them, we depend on them” (66). In an effort to capture the attention of the Queen's Park press gallery, quotations from opposition MPPs struggle to make the Throne Speech appear catastrophic.

In addition to including quotations from opposition MPPs, newspapers now publish whole stories devoted to opposition reaction to the Speech from the Throne. For example, the story from which the Lewis quotation is taken is entitled: “Lewis caustic about Speech”. The lead reads: “New Democratic Party Leader Stephen Lewis was caustic in his dismissal of the Throne Speech, delivered yesterday in the Ontario Legislature”. This message is the beginning and the end of article: the leader of the third party hated the Throne Speech. The story appears on the cover of the *Globe and Mail's* “Third Section”, and although there is no banner marking this as the Throne Speech page, nine of the eleven items surrounding the piece about Lewis address the legislative opening. Adjacent to the three-paragraph story on Lewis' reaction is a different story entitled: “Criticism expected for type of speech”. Here the first quotation goes to the Liberal leader, who, in the words of the *Globe* reporter, attacks the Conservatives for “their tactic of substituting philosophy for pages of promises in the Ontario Throne Speech.” Both stories exemplify the institutionalization of interest in the opposition's reaction to the Speech. Table 4.4

lists the forty-nine items in the postwar sample whose titles refer exclusively to struggle among parties.

**Table 4.4**  
**Items with titles that refer to the partisan battlefield, 1950-2007**

1960	<p>Liberal Claims Frost Lifted Party Program (<i>Globe</i> 27 January, 15)</p> <p>Car Insurance Eight-Point Platform For Liberals (<i>Globe</i> 27 January, 15)</p> <p>No Cures in Throne Speech—CCF (<i>Star</i> 27 January, 32)</p> <p>Liberals Ask Aid for Subway (<i>Telegram</i> 26 January 1960, 2)</p> <p>Liberals' Subway-Aid Move Axed (<i>Telegram</i> 27 January, 3)</p> <p>CCF to Move For Portable Pensions (<i>Telegram</i> 27 January, 3)</p>
1965	<p>'Patchwork of Platitudes': Thompson, NDP Chief Attack Throne Speech (<i>Globe</i> 21 January, 4)</p> <p>NDP says Tory-care '2nd rate' (<i>Star</i> 20 January, 43)</p> <p>Rowe 'being used,' NDP critical (<i>Star</i> 21 January, 23)</p> <p>Robarts, Thompson trade soft punches (<i>Star</i> 21 January, 23)</p> <p>Legislature Being Sidestepped By Robarts, Says NDP (<i>Telegram</i> 21 January, 9)</p>
1970	<p>Opposition parties combine to brand Throne Speech as weakest ever (<i>Globe</i> 25 February, 29)</p> <p>If I were King... (<i>Star</i> 24 February, 6, cartoon)</p> <p>Liberals, NDP find Throne Speech 'thin' (<i>Star</i> 25 February, 3)</p> <p>It's vacuous, claims opposition (<i>Telegram</i> 25 February, 3)</p>
1975	<p>Criticism for type of speech (<i>Globe</i> 12 March 1975, 33)</p> <p>Lewis caustic about speech (<i>Globe</i> 12 March, 33)</p> <p>Liberal advocate delighted with ombudsman plan (<i>Star</i> 12 March A6)</p> <p>Throne Speech said bankrupt of new ideas (<i>Star</i> 12 March A6)</p>
1980	<p>Smith scorns PC plan for 80s, hints at non-confidence vote (<i>Globe</i> 12 March, 9)</p> <p>You impatient power hungry @*#:*!! (<i>Star</i> 11 March, A8, cartoon)</p> <p>Liberals eye quick vote while NDP play it cool (<i>Star</i> 12 March A16)</p> <p>'Do nothing' Throne Speech not worth election, says NDP (<i>Sun</i> 12 March, 1)</p> <p>Stormy legislature expected (<i>Sun</i> 11 March, 3)</p> <p>No fighting words in this Throne Speech (<i>Sun</i> 12 March, 3)</p> <p>Nothing to fight election on: NDP (<i>Sun</i> 12 March, 3)</p>
1985	<p>Rae mocks the Tories as defeat approaches (<i>Globe</i> 4 June, 8)</p> <p>Rae criticizes Premier for overspending: Throne Speech ridiculed by Liberals, NDP (<i>Globe</i> 5 June, 4)</p> <p>Tories' last-gasp pledges ridiculed by opposition (<i>Star</i> 5 June, 1)</p> <p>Two-week countdown likely to end Tory rule (<i>Star</i> 5 June, 1)</p> <p>Comparing the promises: Liberal -NDP accord vs. The Throne Speech (<i>Star</i> 5 June, 1)</p> <p>Different perspectives (<i>Star</i> 5 June, 1)</p> <p>Imminence of defeat puts pall on lake-side party for Tories (<i>Star</i> 5 June, A16)</p> <p>Confused voters (<i>Star</i> 5 June, A17)</p> <p>Peterson, Rae will dump 'untrustworthy' Tories (<i>Star</i> 5 June, A16)</p> <p>Throne Speech is a bid to rejoin the mainstream (<i>Star</i> 4 June, A18)</p> <p>2 for 1 SUIT SALE (<i>Sun</i> 4 June, 10, cartoon)</p> <p>MILLER MAKES HIS BEST PITCH... but the opposition laughs at throne speech (<i>Sun</i> 5 June, 1)</p> <p>GRITS JUST SMILE AT THRONE SPEECH (<i>Sun</i> 5 June, 5)</p> <p>No cheer on the Tory benches (<i>Sun</i> 5 June, 5)</p>
1990	<p>It isn't 'whammo' – it's just the usual political posturing (<i>Star</i> 21 November, 1)</p> <p>Nixon finds speech lacks 'direction' (<i>Star</i> 21 September, A9)</p> <p>Lounging Liberals (<i>Star</i> 21 November, A9)</p> <p>NDP PLAYS WAIT 'N' SEE (<i>Sun</i> 21 November, 5)</p>

1995	Liberals, NDP not surprised by confrontation: 'There is a strange mood around here today,' Opposition leader says ( <i>Globe</i> 28 September, A6) Pepper spray won't stop the Tories ( <i>Globe</i> 28 September, A23) Rising and falling stars in Harris team ( <i>Star</i> 27 September, A21) State of siege sign of things to come with Harris Tories ( <i>Star</i> 28 September, A15) Ontario's poor unfairly attacked, opponents say ( <i>Star</i> 28 September, A15)
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The days surrounding Mike Harris' first Speech from the Throne saw a white-hot partisan battle (see Cameron and White 2000; Noel 1997; Woolstencroft 1997). By the end of their first term in office, “after four years of sweeping and often highly contested economic, social, and administrative reforms, the Conservatives confronted a deeply polarized electorate” (Tanguay 2002, 145). Although it ought to be pointed out that “strategic voting” in Ontario is as old as the three-party system, Tanguay argues that by the 1999 provincial election, opposition to the so-called Common Sense Revolution had become so pervasive and intense that large groups of Ontarians devised and (unsuccessfully) implemented an unprecedentedly systematic method of strategic voting, in an attempt to rid Ontario of Conservative rule. In 1995, attacks on the Tories were coming fast, even before the Government's first Speech from the Throne. The massive demonstration at the Conservatives' first legislative opening garnished the event with an unprecedented layer of cynicism. Not surprisingly, opposition party reaction to the Speech was also intense; in the words of one Toronto *Star* reporter, it was “swift and damning” (Girard 28 September, A15). The Liberal leader accused the government of “declar[ing] war on a lot of groups of people in this province”, while the NDP leader said that the Tories lacked “even the grace to acknowledge the pain that they're causing” (McLeod; Rae in *ibid*).

Anyone with a recollection of the Harris years will remember the acute tensions running among Ontario's political parties. Numerous commentators have remarked on the PC's choice to “forgo brokerage politics” (Baskerville 2005, 232), and that Harris himself never assumed the conciliatory posture of a leader like former PC premier, Bill Davis (Ibbitson 2001; Kranjc 2000). It is said that on account of their ideologically-driven lack of interest in certain issues and groups, the Tories provoked a special kind of grief in their opponents (see Basu 2004; Ralph, Archibald, and St-Amand 1997). This may well be true; but the relevant point in this study is that the general journalistic approach to the legislative opening of 1995 differs little from the one used to cover other openings in the era of Politics as Usual. The ire of the opposition, well documented

in 1995, was, by then, an essential element of the ritual. Stories about the opposition's reaction were nothing new. In 1995 the *Globe and Mail* published a story entitled: “Liberals, NDP not surprised by confrontation” (Rusk, 28 September, A6). But imagine if the story had been otherwise.... Barthes' (1967) commutation test, that is, interrogating the text by rearranging its contents, is helpful here. A story entitled “Liberals, NDP *surprised* by confrontation” would have been virtually unthinkable; but it would have been unthinkable not only, not even primarily, because Harris' Tories were so despised. Rather, it would have seemed absurd within the culture of partisan conflict that surrounds press coverage of the modern ritual—a culture which prevailed long before the legislative opening of 1995.

Newspaper photographs also contribute to the ritual's antagonistic atmosphere. Depicting easily recognizable facial expressions of high-ranking politicians, the news photograph tells the story of the political battle by “*personifying* events” at the legislature (Hall 1973, 183, italics in original). The best example of the emotive work of images appears on the front page of the *Toronto Star*, the day after the ill-fated Tory Speech of 1985 (5 June). Just above the fold, on the left-hand side of the page, there sit two photographs. Following the title “Different perspectives”, the caption below the photographs reads: “A serious-looking Premier Frank Miller, left, listens as Lieutenant-Governor John Aird reads the Speech from the Throne yesterday. Liberal leader David Peterson, who may replace Miller as premier soon, smiles as he listens”. A different appraisal might have defined Miller's expression as “near tears”, whereas Peterson, arms crossed in a pose of self-satisfaction, appears smug. Clearly the two men did at some point during the day form these particular expressions. However, these visages were not made of stone; they were not the only ones available for print. They must be read as part of the news framing process, used to enhance “the unity of the story” (Manoff 1986, 198). Photographs of facial expressions underwrite the partisan battle that largely defines the Politics as Usual frame, “hold[ing] together and giv[ing] coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols” (Gamson et al. 1992, 384). This is true of a front-page photograph of a contented-looking Ernie Eves, the Tory Minister of Finance, reclining in his chair beside the premier in 1995 (*Sun* 27 September, 1). This is true of photographs of a gleeful-looking Bob Rae in 1990 (*Star* 21 November 1990, 1), and a grim-looking Bob Rae in 1995 (*Star* 28 September, A15). Photographs are used to update newsreaders

on the landscape of Ontario's partisan battleground.

The legislative opening is now part of the partisan war that ravages Ontario politics every day. Such was not always the case. Like the famous World War I truces that allowed enemy soldiers to exchange gifts and play soccer on Christmas Day, the legislative opening was once a break from daily battle. Media and cultural theory offers reasons for interpreting this development as a sign of democratic decline, as well as hope for democratic renewal. Scholars such as Capella and Jamieson (1997) argue that a journalistic culture based on conflict creates a “spiral of cynicism”, wherein citizens become disenchanted with politicians, journalists, and the notion of politics altogether (on women's negative perceptions of adversarial politics, see Gidengil et al. 2004, 174). Acknowledging that stories about political strategy are unavoidable in the sizzling pan of partisan politics, Capella and Jamieson argue that “the problem occurs when this perspective becomes the dominant one, crowding out the substantive engagement and discussion that helps the public understand the relative merits and practical consequences of political decisions” (236). In the words of Ansolabehere and Iyengar's (1995) work on negative election advertising, the prevalence of cynical political discourse transforms politics into an “entertaining spectator sport” (145). The problem, they argue, is that “a healthy democracy... requires more than citizen spectators. We need citizen participants.” A large group of scholars thinks that bias toward adversarial journalism has left citizens feeling disenchanted and has contributed to the present endemic of political passivity (see Lewis, Wahl-Jorgensen, and Inthorn 2004; Nadeau and Giasson 2003; Stoker 2006). By contrast, other scholars offer reason to believe that the emphasis on conflict might actually help citizens engage the political process (Richardson 2001; Scammell and Langer 2006). Still others argue that the claim that adversarial news feeds democratic malaise is not borne out by the data (Norris 2000). These debates will be elaborated upon in the following chapter. As the concluding section of this chapter explains, however, regardless of whether the expansion of the partisan battleground should be interpreted as a good or a bad development, it is certainly the case that contemporary newspaper coverage represents the Ontario citizenry as an active player in the ritual dispute.

*The citizenization of the legislative opening*

In contrast to the Social Celebration frame, which did not discuss popular reactions to the Throne Speech, the era of Politics as Usual depicts the ritual as a forum for debate among a multiplicity of political interests. The spectrum of people assessing the contents of the Throne Speech has widened dramatically over the past three decades; and, as might be expected, the variety of subject positions assumed by members of this new group of political commentators has also increased. Since the 1970s the Opening of the Legislature as viewed through mainstream media has included not only commentary from government and opposition MPPs, but also a new type of engagement on the part of the Ontario citizenry. Newspaper coverage has helped to facilitate the citizenization of the legislative opening.

The fact that policy debate within Ontario's key civic ritual is no longer the exclusive domain of state officials, but increasingly includes individual citizens and interest groups needs to be understood within the context of two powerful, albeit opposing, socio-political trends. Specifically, the increasingly active role taken up by extra-parliamentary subjects in the policy and politicking parts of the legislative opening, the process referred to here as the “citizenization” of the opening ritual, has occurred within a cultural milieu that has also seen the dramatic rise of, on the one hand, “neoliberalism”, and on the other, the “politics of identity”.

The neoliberal ideology of the New Right grew out of a “legitimation crisis of the state” during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Held 2006, 192; cf. Evans, McBride, and Shields 2000). Although not all Ontario governments have embraced the neoliberal vision in precisely the same ways, there is no question that neoliberalism has constituted one of the West's dominant political discourses of the past three decades (Brodie 2002, 2003; Fairclough 1995; Jenson 1997). Published in the wake of the global recession brought on by the 1973 OPEC oil-crisis, political theory of scholars such as Nozick (1974) and Hayek (1978) sketched “the contours for a free-market society and a 'minimal state'”, the likes of which have since been implemented in varying degrees in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and other parts of the Western world (Held 2006, 205). Chief among the propositions of neoliberalism is the idea that society is but a word to describe the aggregate of atomistic human beings; in reality, “there are only individual people with their own individual lives” (Nozick 1974, 33). On the assumption that the primary

political actor is the rational self-maximizing individual, neoliberals advocate establishing a social order in which free market competition becomes the dominant principle by which interaction of all kinds is determined and maintained (Shields and McBride 1997). Although it is true that Keynesian-style citizen entitlements are rejected in the neoliberal vision, the assumption that politics rightly consists of discrete rational choices made by individuals uninhibited by state regulation means that neoliberal forms of government have come “to rest, in new ways, upon the activation of the powers of the citizen” (Rose 1999, 166).

Despite contrasting sharply with neoliberal ideology, theoretical work under the label “the politics of identity” has also contributed to greater focus on individualized experiences, as opposed to those of an undifferentiated political community. In short, the term “identity politics” is used here to refer to legitimacy claims grounded not in terms of state-based liberal citizenship, but in the authority derived from membership within a particular group of people sharing unique social, cultural, ethnic, sexual, or other characteristics (Hekman 2004; Phelan 1989; Young 1990). Sharing the anti-statist attitude of the neoliberal vision, “the state's role here is primarily negative: it should not force minority groups to conform to the dominant culture, nor should it erect artificial barriers that make it harder for minority cultures to thrive” (Miller 2000, 63). Rooted in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, a politics of identity has been asserted by numerous groups who feel as though their particular experiences and interests are not regarded highly enough or articulated clearly enough by organizations claiming to speak on their behalf. For example, in the 1970s, some women broke away from traditional Marxist organizations and founded their own left-feminist groups, explaining that their identity as women-Marxists was unique and required representation different from that offered by people not sharing this identity (Sears forthcoming). Similarly, many aboriginal Canadians claim that their identity as first peoples guarantees certain rights and privileges exclusive to those within their political community (see Alfred 2005; Cairns 2000; Kymlicka 1998, 2006). The defining feature of the legitimacy claim is an anti-liberal rejection of the idea that the relationship among citizens and the state must be exactly the same for every person. The politics of identity emphasizes the differences which exist among people as a result of differing subject positions, and argues that these differences ought to be translated into non-uniform ways of living together

in a political community (Hekman 2004).

Although advocates of identity politics view their project as essentially social, or group-oriented in nature (ex. Taylor 1994; Young 1990), their attack on universal subjectivity and concomitant authorization of particularized experiences brings them into an unexpected and unintended alliance with the individual ethic espoused by neoliberal ideology. Identity politics has been criticized by liberals for devaluing “the language and possibility of collectivity, common action, and shared purpose” (Hekman 2004, 82), and by poststructuralists, such as Butler (2007), for reifying what are always socially negotiated subject positions. Neither neoliberals nor theorists of identity politics are likely to see the other group as political allies and, in many ways, they are not. However, broadly speaking, both rest on the assumption that differences among citizens need to be affirmed and legitimized in new ways. Both challenge the preeminence of the state in the realm of politics. Both encourage people to make political claims based on non-state-based identities, either on the grounds of an individual rational actor, or as part of a particular group. Although they push from different angles, these two influential perspectives both illustrate and contribute to the personalization, or citizenization of political discourse—a trend examined by numerous scholars in the increasingly rights-based political culture of post-*Charter* Canada (see Brodie 2003; Brodie and Nevitte 1993; Cairns 1993; Mandel 1994; Smith 2007).

Prior to World War II it was extremely rare for newspapers to carry reactions to the Speech from the Throne from individual citizens or extra-parliamentary associations. As noted in the previous chapter, the Throne Speech tended to be interpreted strictly as the agenda for legislative business, not as a mission statement for the people of Ontario—certainly not as a set of policies subject to comment and critique from the population at large. Coverage of the 1925 event is a noteworthy exception to the dominant pattern; however, as a rule, the Throne Speech did not serve as the basis for a larger discussion among Ontario's citizenry. Recall that after putting to one side reaction to the 1925 OTA amendments, none of the 235 items sampled between 1900 and 1945 bear traces of citizen response to the government's agenda. This changed in the second half of the century. As early as 1960, the *Telegram* carried a story entitled, “Labor Sighs Relief At Throne Speech”, but it would be two more decades before the perspective of non-

politicians became an established part of the ritualization process. The post-1970 sample, that is, coverage from the era of High Politics as Usual, includes a range of items that refer specifically to citizen reaction to the Speech. Exemplifying the trend is the *Star's* coverage of Premier Miller's doomed Throne Speech of 1985: side-by-side on a single page sit headlines expressing criticism from a prominent labour leader, "Reforms in Throne Speech 'a little late,' Pilkey says", and from business groups, "Throne Speech 'fantasy land' Ontario business leader says" (4).

Also reflective of the citizenization of Throne Speech coverage is the growing number of items which include quotations from citizens and interest group spokespeople. A news form that was virtually never practiced prior to the 1950s, reaction to the Throne Speech from non-MPPs is found in sixty-nine items from the postwar sample, the majority of which appear after 1975. Within this collection of items are reactions from 163 non-MPPs, all but a handful of which are delivered in the form of direct quotation. For example, in the *Globe and Mail's* page-one story on the Throne Speech of 1990, in addition to quoting or paraphrasing the Speech from the Throne, the premier, and the treasurer, the article also gave voice to: the head of Toronto's Daily-Bread Food Bank, the chairman of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the president of the Canadian Auto Workers Union, and the head of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (Mackie 21 November). One sentence in the story reads: "While spokesmen for business groups and labor unions were mostly happy with the speech, representatives of social activist groups generally were outraged." The story legitimizes citizen reaction to what is formally a legislative document. On that same day in 1990, the *Toronto Star* published a photograph of CAW leader Bob White flashing the victory sign in front of a crowd of supporters—a visual representation of extra-parliamentary power (A8). In 1985, the Anglican archbishop of Toronto gave a lesson in democracy in the pages of the *Toronto Sun* (in Goldstein 5 June 1985, 48). Of the Speech from the Throne, Lewis Garnsworthy declared: "It's not good democracy and I don't think it will improve things at all [...] Why are they doing it this way? Why don't we provide a means to sit down and talk it out?" In 1995, Metro Toronto councillor Jack Layton championed the cause of people living below the poverty line; he argued that the Throne Speech was "the clearest signal yet that the Tories intend to transfer money to the rich in the form of a tax break, on the backs of the needy" (Swainson 28 September, A14).

It is tempting to summarize this general trend with the argument that the active-citizen has replaced the citizen-spectator as one of the ritual's main participants. And in a sense, this is indeed what has occurred. It cannot be denied that the ritual is more inclusive of popular opinion today than it was prior to the 1970s. Theorists of citizenship note that the postwar period saw a dramatic rise in expectations about citizen rights (see Etzioni 1993; Janowitz 1980; Janoski 1998); and there is good reason to view the citizenization of civic ritual in Ontario as part of a shift in cultural assumptions about the role of the citizen in society. But while citizen-involvement has become an established part of the ritual process, it is important to clarify that there is more than one type of citizen-involvement. Moreover, bearing in mind that the most visible and common expression of the political will of Ontarians appears in the form of reactions from senior representatives of prominent interest groups, there are serious questions about whether it is *the active citizen*, or some different political creature, that has assumed a central role in the ceremony. Before addressing this larger theoretical question in the final two chapters, it will be helpful to distinguish between three types of citizen-involvement in the era of Politics as Usual: that of the rational-reader; the visible-citizen; and the interest-group.

#### The rational-reader

The work of the rational-reader is the most common but least visible type of civic participation. Assumptions about rational-readerly activity permeate every part of the ritualization process, to the point where it is difficult to overstate this character's role in the whole affair. It is the rational-reader to whom news stories are addressed and, in turn, whose expectations, strengths, weaknesses, capabilities, and limitations effectively shape the contours of news narratives. But was it not always thus? Did assumptions about newsreaders not also guide journalists in earlier parts of the century? Or is the image of the rational-reader more successful at pressuring modern journalists to write stories a certain way? “No” is the simple answer to this last question—the process is more complicated than that. It would be misleading to say that writing to an imagined reader is a distinctly postwar phenomenon; however, news stories from the second half of the twentieth century suggest that a significant change in the nature of the imagined reader has occurred.

In light of (1) the growing prominence and proliferation of Throne Speech news, (2) more

contextual information about proposed (and not-proposed) provincial policies, (3) the growing emphasis on partisan struggles surrounding legislative activity, and (4) the growing number of people included in journalistic analysis of the event, it is clear that the Opening of the Legislature is now viewed as a moment in which to inform intelligent and engaged newsreaders about the state of policy and politicking in Ontario. With respect to the legislative calendar, this is a highpoint of journalistic expertise on display. From this perspective, ritualization takes the form of a pedagogical relationship between newspaper writer and rational-reader. Yes, the Social Celebration frame also “taught” readers something about provincial politics, but in the era of Politics as Usual the lessons are much more explicitly linked to the experience of governing and being governed. Columnists, whose expert knowledge and unique access to powerful people symbolize one side of the new pedagogical relationship, write stories intended to imbue the rational-reader with some degree of specialist knowledge. Columnists bring rational-readers to the centre of political life, but not by bringing them to Queen's Park through descriptions of the legislative grounds; rather, readers are brought into the political sphere through so many revelations about *real* intentions, *real* power struggles, and *real* problems. Columnists teach what could not be known in their absence.

The other side of the relationship—the thirst for knowledge of the intelligent, eager, rational-reader—is symbolized by the banner atop the special Throne Speech page, the signifier of the desire for comprehensive policy analysis. Even if not every story is read by every citizen, the emergence of the demarcated space itself is what calls into being the rational-reader. In publishing a wealth of information about the legislative agenda and furnishing it with critical commentary about the practice of official politics, newspapers produce a body of knowledge capable of forming the basis of citizen action on numerous political issues. Rational-readers are neither seen nor heard but they are everywhere to be found. Coverage in the era of Politics as Usual interpellates, hails, or calls into being, this discursive subject.

The authority upon which this form of participation is based is best understood through a liberal-pluralist approach to media and democracy (cf. Keane 1991; Nesbitt-Larking 2007; Schudson 1991). The fact that ritualization consists largely of an effort to provide comprehensive analysis of provincial politics and policy is illustrative of the general assumption that an

informed citizenry is the cornerstone of social life in Ontario. Putting to one side the question of whether newspapers provide a sufficiently broad perspective on politics and society, there can be little doubt that coverage offers the image of a comprehensive view of the state of provincial politics. Thus the rational-reader, the subject position constructed through the performance of comprehensiveness, is best conceived as something approaching Habermas' ideal-citizen: a capable, serious, engaged individual, consuming a rich diet of fact and opinion in order to prepare for civic debate in the public sphere.

### The visible citizen

Visible citizens are the least common among the three groups of active-citizens; however, where they do exist they are easy to see. In contrast to intangible rational-readers, visible citizens are embodied subjects: they have names and voices. But unlike interest group spokespeople, visible citizens do not claim to function as official representatives of some segment of the larger population. Whether supporting or defending proposed political activity, visible citizens assume for themselves a position of authority by contributing their own unique experience to a conversation about provincial politics. Taken together the following four examples of the visible citizen in action demonstrate that even within this group there are multiple forms of participation.

First: the protester. Photographs of picketers, or verbal reference to the political agendas of protesters at Queen's Park, appear in 1970, 1975, 1985, 1995, and 2001. Whether a protest of one person, such as the one in 1970, in which Allan Baldwin threw himself onto the floor of the legislative Chamber in order to draw attention to the lack of government support for injured workers, or a protest of five thousand people, such as the massive demonstration against the incoming Harris Government in 1995, the protest symbolizes the belief that legislative politics can be influenced by the public performance of citizen involvement. Ritualized in terms of rational debate, that is, no longer the sacred terrain of social elites in popular fashions, the opening is now a lightning rod for displays of citizen discontent. *Globe* coverage of the 1995 protest notes that one young couple from Kitchener-Waterloo, "Scott Piakowski and Margaret Johnston, said they drove in for the event because they wanted to feel they were doing something to express their dismay over social-spending cuts," despite the fact that "they did not expect it to make any difference" to the course of Harris' Common Sense Revolution (28 September, A8).

The symbolic act of protesting the government's legislative vision was thought to be efficacious in some respects, even if it was unable to produce material change.

Second: the person-on-the-street. This character could hardly be considered a standard part of the ritual; however the two “vox-pops” included in the sample, both of which appear in the *Sun* (Cosway 11 March 1980, 33 and Natrick 28 September 1995, 47), are significant because they constitute yet another manifestation of the citizenization of discourse around the legislative opening. In 1980, the *Sun* used the looming Throne Speech confidence vote as a springboard to ask five people whether they agreed with Liberal leader Stuart Smith's desire to bring down Davis' minority government. Appearing in small photographic headshots and using roughly fifty words to respond to the question were: Sylvia White (bank clerk), Don Givelos (consultant), Trudy Prior (insurance super), Brian Endacott (field engineer), Sue McCowan (student). In 1995 the *Sun* carried seven reactions to the question: “Can Mike Harris' legislative plan restore prosperity?”. As in 1980, the names and professions of respondents were listed below their photographs: Russ Rowland, maintenance worker... Lisa Roberts, businesswomen... Steve Goetze, freelance props builder... and so on. Both items appear under the heading: “YOU SAID IT”.

Third: the stakeholder. Invested with credibility on the basis of his or her unique political experiences, as opposed to authority gained from the performance of the provincial every-person, the stakeholder addresses a specific aspect of the Speech from the Throne. For example, a *Globe and Mail* article quotes “N.J. (Sam) MacGregor... a former Ontario Hydro employee” who had been “lobbying quietly for support from both the Ontario Government and Ontario Hydro for his idea” to reshape the province's power system (Claridge 12 March 1980, 9). MacGregor's contribution to debate appears in his words: “The effective power gain through combined power use... is equal to two-thirds the current production of synthetic crude from the Syncrude project in Alberta.” A 1990 front-page story in the same newspaper begins: “If Vyrn Peterson has his way, Ontario's newest nuclear power plant will be built just down the road from this cluttered welding shop and home on the Trans-Canada Highway in Blind River” (Mittelstaedt, 20 November). The story is written in anticipation of that day's Speech from the Throne, and the decision on whether to expand nuclear power generation in Ontario. But who is Vyrn Peterson? He is not a politician;

rather he is a concerned citizen. In the same story, newsreaders also hear from Ed Burt, “a beef and pig farmer”, who thinks that the idea of nuclear power in Blind River is “just plain stupid”. One *Star* story includes “Whitby Grade 11 student Steve Murray”’s thoughts on the effects of the dispute between government and teachers—a topic receiving only one sentence in the April 2001 Speech from the Throne (Mallan 20 April, A13).

Fourth: the model citizen. The day after Premier Harris used the Throne Speech to name five specific people as models of citizenship in Ontario, *Sun* columnist Christie Blatchford praised the government for making 1995 “the first time ordinary citizens have been mentioned on such an occasion”, and ridiculed protesters outside who “listened to shrill speeches, chanted, waved placards and, I suspect, relived the glory of the '60s”. The headline over Blatchford's column, “If you work hard... it is all there to gain”, was borrowed from Pat Haghgoo, an Ontario man honoured at the legislative opening for his personal ambition and commitment to hard work. A guest of the government, Haghgoo had persisted in running a corner-store in Scarborough, despite seeing it robbed multiple times. Here was an example of what the Conservatives valued most: the self-sufficient citizen who served as a sign of individual prosperity in the face of adversity—Brodie's (2002) “entrepreneurial citizen” who thrived without a government handout.<sup>18</sup> When a newspaper editorial makes a statement such as, “Ontario voters want a progressive, innovative government” (*Star* 5 June 1985, A18), or when columnists imagine how the Throne Speech might affect “an Oshawa factory worker... [or] a York subway construction worker or a New Liskeard civil servant” (Walkom 28 September 1995, A15), the model citizen becomes the *invisible* visible-citizen: a mentally-constructed image of the corporeal provincial subject. Finally, Christina Blizzard's condemnation of “all the lefties” railing against neoliberal reforms might be viewed as an example of the anti-model citizen (28 September 1995, 6).

To anticipate a point made in chapter 6, the visible citizen has emerged as a player within the Opening of the Legislature during decades in which it is increasingly common to encounter not only a “new... concern for accountability” in the political sphere (Smith 2007, 14), but also neoliberal assumptions about the need to shift responsibility for the “critical outcomes” of

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<sup>18</sup> In 2006, *Globe and Mail* columnist Jane Taber observed that for its first Throne Speech, the Harper Government in Ottawa “chose to emulate the way Americans deliver their State of the Union addresses by inviting Canadian heroes rather than filling the chamber with old politicians” (5 April, A6).

politics from the state “to the market and to the individual” (Brodie 2002, 390). The “audit culture” described by Rose (1999, chap. 4) thrives in the world of representative politics, where legislatures are increasingly subject to oversight from non-elected external officers and commissions in the name of a vigilant citizenry (Smith 2007). The surge in citizenship studies in political science and philosophy departments in Canada is illustrative of the growing interest in the relationship between citizens and the state (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). Quoting constitutional lawyer Jillian Welch, Brodie (2001) notes that “in the Charter era... judicial review no longer engages 'only the interests of two levels of government... but also the interests of a somewhat mysterious third entity, that of the “individual”” (360). Although this particular observation applies to a narrow part of civic life, it is widely agreed that post-Charter politics in Canada have “encouraged a view of a people's constitution” and, subsequently, the belief that the citizen ought to (and ought to be able to) play a more active role in the sphere of legislative politics (Smith 2007, 16). Developments in the conception of citizenship and of the representation of the citizen in news coverage of the legislative opening are explored further in the final two chapters.

### Interest groups

The most prevalent form of participation is that which is exercised by high-ranking representatives of interest groups who offer expert policy analysis on the contents of the Speech from the Throne. Presidents, vice-presidents, communication officers, and a host of other interest group spokespeople now enjoy quasi-official status in mediated representations of the legislative opening. But regardless of the height of their public profile, and in the case of, for example, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Auto Workers Union, and various teachers' federations, the nature of the profile is very high indeed, the role of interest groups can only ever be *quasi*-official, as the ceremony's official function is to confer legal authority upon a new legislative session. Regardless of how one defines the type of power wielded by interest groups of any shape and size, these organizations possess no constitutional authority. Having said that, immediate reaction from groups most affected by (or those perceived to be most affected by) items in the Throne Speech has become one of the hallmark features of the late twentieth century civic ritual.

Often placed in contrast with interpretations of competing organizations, quotations from multiple interest groups are further evidence of the expanding sphere of legitimate controversy within which the legislative opening is ritualized, a point that will be expanded upon in the next chapter. In the face of government assurances about its agenda for financial success, business groups are there to claim that the plan “sure isn't going to encourage economic recovery' in the short term” (Carnegie in Sutton 5 June 1985, A4). Reflecting on the Throne Speech of 2001, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association explained that “every year the Ontario government asks hospitals to absorb all the costs associated with population growth, population aging and inflation and every year the hospitals obviously can't do that and they run deficits” (MacKinnon in Boyle 20 April, A12). In 1990, the *Star* reported that while “Ian Kirby, chairman of the Canadian Bar Association... no-fault insurance committee, said he was disappointed the government didn't commit itself to restoring the right to sue [...], Dick Berday, president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, said consumers like the the current no-fault system” (Ferguson 21 November, A8). Depicting a common cause among “economists and industry members”, in 2007 the *Globe and Mail* quoted the head of the CAW, an economist from the TD-Bank, and the owner of a “small company” in Hamilton, explaining trouble in the manufacturing sector, and demanding that the government act (29 November, A11). Mirroring the quotidian conflict that is thought to be the lifeblood of a properly functioning pluralist society (cf. Held 2006, 158-83), contests and alliances among senior officials of powerful interest groups both constitute and reinforce the boundaries of acceptable statements within the liminal space opened up during the ceremonial opening of the House.

At mid-century, interest groups were relatively insignificant players in Canadian politics; but over the past four decades they have “proliferated and their influence has swollen” (Pross 1992, 3). Moreover, beginning in the 1970s, many groups changed their tactics, adding to quiet backroom lobbying an array of public relations tactics, as politics became more public (cf. Nevitte 1996, 9). In their contribution to the Canadian Democratic Audit, Young and Everitt (2004) write that “advocacy groups represent important links between citizens and governments and, as such, they perform a crucial function in Canadian democracy” (143). Regardless of how much they might have helped to facilitate democracy in Ontario prior to the Second World War,

the groups and associations operating in the era of Social Celebration did not figure into newspaper interpretations of the Speech from the Throne. By contrast, table 4.5 demonstrates that the list of organizations performing ritual activity today is long and diverse. It should be noted that this list includes not only interest groups proper, but the whole range of public policy stakeholders.

**Table 4.5**  
**Interest groups named in coverage of the Throne Speech, 1960-2007**

<i>Globe and Mail</i>	<i>Toronto Star</i>	<i>Toronto Telegram and Sun</i>
Ontario Federation of Agriculture	Metropolitan Toronto	Canadian Association for Health Physical Education and Recreation
Canadian Nuclear Association	Toronto Board of Education	Sports College
Anglican Church	Ontario Hospital Association	Ontario Medical Association
Foodshare	Ontario Federation of Labor	Ontario Federation of Labor
Ontario Chamber of Commerce	Canadian Auto Workers	The Just Society
Canadian Auto Workers	United Auto Workers	Metropolitan Toronto
Draper, Dobie and Co. Ltd	Ontario Public Service Employees Union	No-Nuclear Network
Ontario Public Service Employees Union	Ontario Chamber of Commerce	Anglican Church
Ontario Federation of Labor	Anglican Church	Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues
National Action Committee on the Status of Women	Ontario Separate Schools Trustees Association	Canadian Organization of Small Business
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care	Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation	Energy Probe
Ontario Coalition of Abortion Clinics	Canadian Bar Association	Industry Taskforce on Electricity
Energy Probe	Toronto Transit Commission	Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Canadian Environmental Law Association	Canadian Manufacturers Association	No Fault Insurance Committee
Canadian Federation of Independent Business	Bank of Nova Scotia	Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native People	Canadian Federation of Independent Business	Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
Transportation Action Now	Toronto Board of Trade	Pollution Probe
Friends of Canadian Broadcasting	Insurance Bureau of Canada	Alo Canada Inc.
Ontario Film Development Corp.	Toronto Dominion Bank	Toronto Transit Commission
Canadian Film and Television Production Association	Toronto Homebuilders' Association	The Daily Bread Foodbank
Ontario Hospital Association	Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario	Ontario Teachers' Federation
Ontario Nurses Association	Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation	Committee to Save Wheel-Trans	Ontario Taxpayer's Federation
Edson Packaging Machinery Ltd.	Canadian Union of Public Employees	Retail Council of Canada
Toronto-Dominion Bank	Registered Nurses Association	Ontario Public School Boards Association
	Ontario Coalition Against Poverty	Ontario Hospitals Association
	Labor Council of Metro and York Region	
	Embarrass Harris Campaign	
	Transportation Action Now	
	Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation	
	Municipality of Cochrane	

Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee United Way 7 <sup>th</sup> Generation Image Makers The Toronto <i>Star</i>
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Defined as a formal organization that “devotes some or all of its resources to influencing public policy” (Ellis and MacIvor 2008, 363), an interest group's activities are usually analyzed in terms of a group's lobbying techniques, its ability “to exert its own interest” in public affairs, and its overall presence in the policymaking arena (Malcolmson and Myers 2005, 190). Although the temporal structure of Throne Speech coverage means that interest group spokespeople are more often found reacting to, as opposed to proposing, plans for provincial policy, the insights of interest group representatives are frequently used by journalists to make sense of the Speech from the Throne. Interest group reaction is powerful not only because of its implicit claim to represent the opinion of some larger group of citizens, but also because it enhances the journalist's attempt to provide credible, objective accounts of the crucial aspects of political debate. Relying upon expert voices to describe the significance of the legislative ritual, mainstream media legitimizes the authority of interest group politics. At the same time, riding the wave of expert testimony, the truth-telling work of journalists is also legitimized. To go on, depicting their organization as the unifying agent of a diverse range of citizens, interest group spokespeople “legitimize both the demands they make and the agencies that respond to them” (Pross 1992, 44). Thus even when a particular group is quoted in the newspaper criticizing a particular policy proposal, it is important to realize that this discursive act helps to symbolically authorize the group as a legitimate voice in the larger conversation about the practice of good politics and, in turn, makes manifest latent assumptions about the nature of legitimate political activity within a system of parliamentary democracy. In light of the way in which the modern ritual is depicted as a forum for the interplay of a plurality of interests and opinions, the image of Ontario democracy emerging out of the ritualization of today's legislative opening borders on corporatism—a model in which competing interests within civil society engage with one another while working in tandem with the state in order to set the conditions for social and economic prosperity (cf. Held 2006, 179-83). The reigning professional journalistic ethic fuels the ongoing legitimation of established interests

through its provision of “an effaced, deferential narration of the views of legitimate authorities from formal political society” (Kaplan 2002, 194; see also Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989, esp. chap. 4; and Herman and Chomsky 1988, esp. chap. 1).

*Sun* columnist Bob MacDonald's routine remark from 1995 that the Legislature would open soon, giving Premier Harris the chance to announce “his plans for this province's 10 million people” is more significant than may appear at first glance (28 September, 14). The “original purpose” of the Speech from the Throne was “to open the new session and to give Parliament an indication of the legislation the government intends to place before it” (Sharp 1989, 16). In Sharp's estimation, only in the past three decades has the Speech become “pure politics... long and argumentative”, a statement to the people of Ontario, about the people of Ontario. This much is suggested by the fact that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the lieutenant governor introduced the Throne Speech by saying, “Members of the Legislative Assembly, *citizens of Ontario*”; in 2007 the final clause was changed again, this time to the even more inclusive, “people of Ontario” (see Ontario 1867-2007, italics added). By contrast, as late as the mid-1980s, the Speech began without mentioning non-politicians: “Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly”. The latter statement has more in common with the introduction to the first Ontario Throne Speech, “Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly”, than with the populist greeting of today.

### *The performance of political rationality*

The Throne Speech has become the channel through which citizens and groups are brought into the ritual and, subsequently, give life to a relatively recent image of pluralist democracy in action. Despite differences among the rational-reader, the visible-citizen, and the interest-group, all three share several noteworthy traits: for example, knowledge about political affairs and interest in policy debate, the ability to press for particular policy outcomes, and an overarching demand to be taken seriously as participants in the rational sphere of Ontario politics. On the one hand, the emergence of citizen-involvement suggests that the ritual is now more cerebral than it had been earlier in the century: the event now marks a moment in which the rational calculations of a range of Ontarians are collected and filtered through the everyday discourse of legislative affairs.

On the other hand, though, the elevation of rational debate—the triumph of the intellectual over the aesthetic—is itself a symbol of the evolution of the meaning of the legislative opening. Putting to one side the contents of any particular claim advanced by politicians, citizens, or groups, the fact is that *the performance of political rationality* has come to serve as the exclusive form of legitimate ritual participation. The term describes both the behaviour of political subjects, as well as the narratives through which newspapers represent disparate activity in ways that emphasize the political calculations of competing interests. (In the context of the larger story at hand, this discursive trend contrasts with the pre-1950s representation of disparate activity in ways that emphasized the common enjoyment of the physical and social environment.) Critical-rational debate has formed the symbolic arena in which the modern ritual plays out. Legislative power is authorized against the backdrop of diverse performances of rational politics, brought to life through the mass mediated “point/counterpoint format of the 'strategic ritual of objectivity'” (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989, 248).

Recent scholarship in anthropology, media studies, and other cognate disciplines, has argued that although there may be something self-evident about the symbol-laden, public performances widely understood to be rituals—even Handelman's (1998) critique of the concept of ritual acknowledges that “public events exist as grounded phenomena in their own right, and that they can be accorded this status both by participants and by observers” (15)—different rituals operate in different ways and perform different social functions (for an especially heated exchange regarding the best way to theorize these differences, see Cottle 2006; the response from Couldry and Rothenbuhler 2007; and the rebuttal from Cottle 2008). In the wake of functionalism's explanatory shortcomings (cf. Couldry 2003, 2005), an emerging conception holds that there is no standard set of mechanisms to be found in every ritual, nor a single, predictable result that follows every public event. Indeed, “no concept of ritual... is capable of providing the precision or completeness that could pre-empt the need for empirical engagement and elaboration across different instances and cases, or the necessity for continuing conceptual revision” (Cottle 2008, 137). As discussed in chapter 2, what interests scholars working from this perspective is “ritual as *form of action*” (Cottle 2008, 138, italics in original) or, the process of ritualization: the organizational design, participatory methods, material practices, and collective

assumptions, that are brought together in specific ways and have the effect of creating a unique physical and mental space that participants and observers experience as ritual (Bell 1997).

Although research on ritualization is depicted as a recent development, it should be mentioned that Handelman's (1998) critique of Geertz's "narrative approach" focuses exclusively on the famous Balinese cockfighting essay and neglects to consider Geertz's analysis of three different performances that help to maintain the "master fiction of politics", that is, the idea of there being a centre to society. Drawing on Shils, Geertz (2000) explains that "such centers, which have 'nothing to do with geometry and little with geography,' are essentially concentrated loci of serious acts; they consist in the point or points in a society where its leading ideas come together with its leading institutions to create an arena in which the events that most vitally affect its members' lives take place" (122-3). Geertz's analysis of performances of sovereign power in Elizabeth I's England, Wurak's Java, and Hasan's Morocco, is precisely the sort of empirical research that proponents of ritualization claim to desire, with the possible exception that it is done with a clarity of thought and writing that few others are able to replicate. In any case, it is now well established that rituals can be driven by a variety of assumptions and are enacted through a variety of symbolic practices.

The reason for this brief departure from Ontario's legislative opening back into the realm of ritual theory is that it helps to confront the tension arising from the fact that the main conclusion of this chapter sits in tension with the popular belief that ritual is, by nature, arational activity. As Rothenbuhler (1998) points out, "many authors address instrumentality, rationality, or the nature of means-ends relations in their definitions of ritual by classifying ritual as noninstrumental, arational, or irrational action" (11). On this view, mundane political affairs proceed according to the Weberian conception of rational action, in which clearly defined goals are pursued by the most efficient means, as determined through comprehensive analysis of available options, and conversely, ritual is rendered into a special occasion through symbolic activity that is said to be arational (see Levi-Stauss 1963; Parsons 1968). Due to this firmly-held assumption about ritual activity, it may take a moment to comprehend the fact that news coverage of the legislative opening suggests that rational action itself can be ritualized.

Though it may be momentarily puzzling, by no means is this argument totally original (cf.

Chwe 2001). Cultural analysis of the legal system, for instance, and one wing of organizational theory are but two of the best examples of research on the ritualization of rational action (see Arnold 1935; Balkan 1996; Baas 1979; Geertz 2000, chap. 8; Lerner 1937; Pfeffer 1981; Rothenbuhler 1998, 99; Sarat and Simon 2003). What the preceding empirical analysis of Ontario newspapers adds to this perspective is in line with Edelman's (1964) view that rational debate is part and parcel of “the multifaceted symbolism of political acts and institutions” (16). Textual analysis has demonstrated that the primary symbol of today's legislative opening is the performance of rationality. This is not the same as saying that everything that happens at the Opening of the Legislature is rational—indeed, the impassioned political style of many ritual participants diverges from Weber's idealized notion of rational action. Moreover, it would not be difficult to find instances in the newspaper in which specific people advance arguments that run counter to what most would agree is a more objective, reasoned perspective. The crucial point to understand is this: the event itself is ritualized through the symbolic display of cold, calculated, reason.

Consider the following examples of ritualization common in the contemporary era: front-page headlines, leads, and highlights boxes, all of which focus on policy and politicking and ignore the ceremony's aesthetic elements; editorials that summarize, criticize, and offer alternatives to the plan laid out in the Speech from the Throne; opinion columnists who make it their duty to educate newsreaders about hidden intentions and consequences of political activity; opposition parties that fault the government for introducing a vague, unreasonable, platitudinous, or just plain stupid plan for Ontario; citizens and interest groups that add their opinion to debate; and the intangible yet ubiquitous rational-reader for whom all of this coverage is intended in the first place. The main narrative features of the dominant news frame are rooted in the performance of rationality. The principal characters, keywords, events, presumed audience, temporal and causal relations, and methods of evaluation, work together to produce an image of robust and widespread public debate.

The pause in legislative news is disrupted, for official affairs have resumed at the provincial House. This is important; it is front-page news. The authors of the Throne Speech claim to have produced a plan that is innovative, responsible, fair, cost-effective. Thanks to clear

vision, expert analysis, and careful planning, the government promises improvement in life in Ontario. But on this same front-page the opposition pronounces the promise bunk. The government is being irrational and, in fact, the opposition parties are the ones equipped with clear vision; opposition MPPs can see that the Throne Speech is full of false hope and faulty analysis. The opposition provides a different interpretation on the state of life in Ontario, albeit one that also rests upon the authority of rational analysis. Interest groups use statistics, anecdotes, and their claim to represent Ontarians, in advancing still different learned positions. Opinion columnists and editorial writers adjudicate the host of competing claims. And the whole provincial conversation is packaged up and delivered in the daily newspaper—that portable court of public opinion and trustworthy stenographer of political debate. The legislative opening is depicted as meaningful because it serves as a wide-ranging, rational debate among the province's central political players. And unlike earlier parts of the century, debates about the direction of the province have been joined by people outside the Legislature.

## **Conclusion**

The Opening of the Legislature continues to be represented as a special event, but its defining features are now utterly ordinary. The event is an exceptional part of the legislative calendar and attracts exceptional media attention: talk of long-term policy plans is prominent throughout newspaper coverage and an assortment of Ontarians ride the two-day wave of interest in the legislative agenda in order to add their voices to the pan-provincial conversation. An exchange of ideas is occurring, no doubt; but mediated processes of ritualization have also produced a crystallized version of a properly functioning liberal-pluralist democracy—citizens, interest groups, and representatives of the state working together, devising the most efficient means to achieve specific economic and social ends. As one might have predicted in an age when deference to traditional forms of authority is on the decline (Nevitte 1996, 288), the higher power being celebrated is not the glory of the past or a spiritual presence, but what Handleman (1998) calls *bureaucratic logic*: the “furious invention of taxonomies...the creation and elaboration of aesthetic forms that reflect and magnify the precision, exactness, and systematic control of taxonomic division and combination” that governs life in the bureaucratic state (see xxix-xlii).

Earlier in the century the ritual was a break from political rationality. The defining symbols of Social Celebration—the majesty of British royalty, the glamour of Toronto's High Society, the excitement of people on the legislative grounds, the tongue-in-cheek fun had by all—these symbols stood in stark contrast to daily legislative business. Conversely, reflecting and reinforcing the decades-long professionalization of Ontario politics, the ceremonial Opening of the Legislature has been transformed into the subjunctive form of liberal democracy, “what could be, might be, or ought to be” (Rothenbuhler 1998, 15), the fantasy of universal rational-critical debate. Through the ritualization of the performance of rationality a special occasion is forged out of the mundane practice of politics.

## **Chapter 5: Changing forms of ritual consensus, controversy, and deviance**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and discuss changes in the representation of political legitimacy in twentieth century newspaper coverage of the legislative opening in Ontario. Whereas chapter 3 mapped the signature characteristics of the Social Celebration frame, and chapter 4 did the same for the Politics as Usual frame, this chapter places the century's two dominant journalistic perspectives in comparative context and discusses the democratic significance of shifting mediated practices of ritualization. The chapter begins by introducing Hallin's (1986) conceptual distinction between three different spheres of news discourse, the analytical framework used here to compare and contrast different approaches to the legislative opening. After reflecting upon the dissertation's original research questions, the chapter argues, first, that although newspapers have exhibited a century-long consensus regarding the legislative ceremony's relevance in Ontario society, the reasons underlying this consensus are different today than they were between 1900 and the 1940s. Second, the chapter argues that over the past four decades newspapers have greatly expanded the borders around what qualifies as legitimate controversy within the context of the legislative ritual. And finally, while acknowledging the positive implications of growing critical coverage, the chapter develops a three-part critique of the power imbalances sustained by a meta-narrative that symbolically represents journalists as objective arbiters within a public ceremonial of liberal-pluralist democracy.

### **Analytical framework: Hallin's three spheres of news discourse**

Hallin's (1986) work on the three spheres of news discourse provides an especially effective method of comparison because of its ability to identify changes in “the 'linguistic and cultural resources'” used by journalists to encourage newsreaders to accept news coverage “as a realistic portrayal of events and people” (Bishop 2001, 226), while simultaneously acknowledging the more stable ideological elements of news. Hallin argues that “it is useful to imagine the journalist's world as divided into three regions, each of which is governed by different journalistic standards” (116). The first, the Sphere of Consensus, “encompasses those social objects not regarded by the journalists and most of the society as controversial.” This region is

populated by values, assumptions, and ideas so widely shared that they are rarely, if ever, commented upon directly. Second, “The province of objectivity... can be called the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy. This is the region of electoral contests and legislative debate, of issues as such by the major established actors of the... political system. [...] Within this region, objectivity and balance reign as the supreme journalistic virtues” (116). Beyond these two discursive fields lies the Sphere of Deviance: “the realm of those political actors and views which journalists and the political mainstream of the society reject as unworthy of being heard” (117). Objectivity is not the standard here, as journalism “plays the role of exposing, condemning, or excluding from the public agenda those who violate or challenge political consensus. It marks out and defends the limits of acceptable political conflict” (117). Recently, Schudson (2005) has noted that “In the zone of deviance, there is coverage of issues, topics, or groups beyond the reach of normal reportorial obligations of balance and fairness. These may be ridiculed, marginalized, or trivialized, because reporters instinctively realize they are beyond the pale” (125). Thus, although the Sphere of Consensus and that of Deviance are conceptual antonyms, they work in tandem, like bookends, to maintain the boundaries of the region that separates them—the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy.

The main argument that follows is this: the pivotal change in news coverage of the ritual that opens Ontario's Legislative Assembly has been the dramatic expansion of the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy. This is not meant to imply that the ritual was once totally free from bickering and factionalism. There have always been disagreements over matters relating to the Opening of the Legislature, even within the comparatively more congenial atmosphere that prevailed prior to the Second World War. Consensus and deviance mark the borders of all social fora; in Hallin's words, “each 'sphere' has internal gradations, and the boundaries between them are often fuzzy” (117). But generally speaking, the twentieth century has seen both controversial issues and modes of address become more plentiful and more prominent parts of the mass mediated ritual. Between the 1900s and the 1950s stories about the legislative opening adhered to a narrow conception of what constituted legitimate controversy; where controversy existed it was downplayed, if not ignored. By contrast, since the 1960s battles over policy ideas and partisan identities—the representation of rational-critical debates among not only MPPs, but also extra-

parliamentary groups and individuals—have been both central to and symbolic of the entire event.

### **The Sphere of Consensus**

The assumption that the legislative opening is important has always resided in the Sphere of Consensus. Before radio and after television, in wartime and in peacetime, through government dynasties and government change, newspapers have reproduced the sense that the Opening of the Legislature is a special occasion, a ritual—a regularly-occurring, rule-governed, symbolic social performance, through which Ontarians participate in the serious life (cf. Rothenbuhler 1998). By giving prominence to the commencement of a new session of official politics, news flags the smooth functioning of the political regime (Billig 1995), interpreting civic ritual as though it fortifies a latent “confidence in the depth and substantiality, the 'reality', of one's world, and of one's way of living in it” (Geertz 2007, 220). As the tables in chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate, the event is a perennial front-page story. It is covered from varying angles inside the newspaper, depicted in news photographs, and frequently attracts editorial comment. From the turn of the twentieth century to the present, journalists have interpreted this moment in the political cycle as an annual province-wide news story and, through mass mediated publications, have proceeded to make it so. And why not? Section 92 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* gives exclusive power to make law over a range of subjects to the Legislatures of the provinces; and this legislative authority imbues the institution and its doings with unique and time-honoured significance. In addition to being the home of government, the Legislature “is perhaps Ontario's most central political symbol” (White 1997, 71); and “the Legislative Building itself” is held by many to be “the proudest and most beautiful tribute we have to our parliamentary heritage” (Decker 1986, 5).

Nevertheless, although there is an element of truth to the idea that the ritual's longstanding presumed relevance is indicative of some sort of trans-twentieth century Sphere of Consensus, that there is a widespread and enduring understanding that this event is an especially important one, the straightforward historical continuity conjured up by such an observation is thrown into question the moment one inquires into the particular reasons that journalists at different parts of the century have characterized the event as being relevant. Following Bell

(1992, 219), the object of this dissertation has not been to articulate a single definition of what civic ritual in Ontario is, but to examine the role of the press in “the ritualization of activity” surrounding the Opening of the Legislature. When the “logic of composition” (Handelman 1998, 17) giving social meaning to the civic event is located within the sense-making practices of the mainstream newspaper, it becomes clear that for all the policy and party considerations that were, no doubt, a part of the early twentieth century experience, that ceremony was, more than anything else, a performance to be seen—or better yet, experienced. Newspaper stories conveyed the spatial and temporal flow of the ceremony in ways that recall the purpose of those great ceremonial books used to record public rituals in *Ancien Regime* France:

Offering a linearity to the event, these ceremonial books endeavored to typographically reproduce that which was the political rite in situ. The official, ephemeral procession was perpetuated by means of a book, chapter by chapter. In turn, the reader became both the spectator and the privileged actor, who, strolling through the collection, sauntered in the same way by proxy in a civic procession and a monarchical ideal, from one point to the next, by reviving each one of these ritual moments, finally understanding, thanks to the erudition of the authors, the secret intelligence of the rite and its thousand symbolic and scenographic subtleties. (Lardellier 2005, 74)

From the beginning, this dissertation has followed theorists of news narrative and news framing in approaching newspaper coverage as indicative of shared but unstated social knowledge about the meaning of the legislative opening (cf. Taylor 2004, chap. 2). Acknowledging the fact that individual news items focus on particular political experiences, the research questions posed in chapter 1 assume that the symbolic forms that represent politics in Ontario tend to be confined to “previously determined narrative structures” of journalism, interpretive frames that play “a significant role in the formation of public knowledge, contributing in no small way to the widely shared beliefs about public events, places, actors, and so on” (Johnson-Cartee 2005, 148, 159). Identifying patterns in the representation of setting, events, characters, condensation symbols, mode of narration, and other “semantic elements” (Pan and Kosicki 1993, 164) of newspaper coverage, it has become evident that the “symbolic vehicles of meaning” (Swidler 1986, 273) used to portray the essential significance of the legislative opening are different now than they were in 1900. And though, compared to

Lardellier's ceremonial books in France, early twentieth century mediated processes of ritualization of civic ritual in Ontario may have had a few score fewer than one thousand symbolic subtleties, the consensus among journalists of the day, a set of shared assumptions so self-evident that it required no explanation, was that people wanted to know, and on some level needed to know, about the place-time of the ceremony unfolding at the capital. The media ritual was organized around an elaborate set of activities and interactions at Queen's Park. Legislature officials administering House business and spectators bearing witness to the ceremony constituted the focal point of the event, at once a spectacle to be viewed by distant others and, on account of mass media, a way for people away from the Legislature to partake in the celebration narrative, “even though they [did] not share a common spatial-temporal setting” (Thompson 1990, 16).

Nameless observers were as important as the biggest names in Ontario politics because the deferential gaze of the crowd symbolized support for and public interest in activity at the centre-as-centre and because the purpose of the whole event was to perform the social order. In Lardellier's terminology (2005, 71), spectators on the legislative grounds and newsreaders away from Queen's Park became ritual participants, “spect-actors”, through the process of “seeing with” their fellow Ontarians. Based on the tone and the focus of their stories, journalists functioned within a Sphere of Consensus that, despite acknowledging the idiosyncrasies of the pageant, certainly took seriously the aesthetic elements of the ceremony. Recall that between 1900 and 1945 the majority not only of items throughout the newspaper, but also front-page leads, addressed the scene and setting at Queen's Park, as opposed to the contents of the Speech from the Throne. In terms of Burke's (1945) Pentad, the five elements of language used to define the meaning of social situations, the Social Celebration frame referred to the passage of time and the movement of bodies when describing both *the act*—What took place?—and *the scene*—In what context did it occur? Newsreaders were told to take pride in the display at Queen's Park, for “the setting and the proceedings were up to the minute in every particular” (*Globe* 21 February 1935, 4). The event itself was depicted as evoking excitement among the impressive crowd at Queen's Park, pride in the face of such a successful ceremony, and a sense of solidarity across all parts of Ontario and between the banner province in the British Empire and Great Britain itself.

Civic ritual was understood to be an opportunity for both journalists and newsreaders to celebrate the moral structures that Rutherford (1982) dates to the late nineteenth century, but which lasted “well into the coming century”—myths of progress, order, harmony, and sanity, “a vision of Canada as the Victorian commonwealth par excellence, its people enjoying a way of life nowhere surpassed” (189).

By contrast, the consensus view of journalists writing in the past three decades has been that the aesthetic qualities of the opening ceremonies are insignificant. The gender of spectators at Queen's Park was once an established point of interest; today it attracts no comment. The legislative grounds were once central to the occasion; today they are peripheral. It is remarkable, for example, that in 2007 not one of the newspapers analyzed mentioned a single word about the entry of the lieutenant governor. Not only was the November ceremony the first session of a new Legislature, but also it marked the first opening presided over by newly-installed Lieutenant Governor David Onley. A good deal could have been made about the fact that Onley was the first lieutenant governor to enter the Chamber in a wheelchair—a point much discussed in these same newspapers during the days around Onley's appointment (see esp. coverage on 10 July 2007)—and yet this fact was simply not mentioned in any news story. Missing, too, were virtually all other elements of the ritual's scene and ceremony: the string-quartet playing in the press gallery, the school choir that sang *O Canada!* after the Throne Speech, the public galleries filled with observers, these aspects of the opening were not a part of newspaper coverage in 2007. The fact that there continue to be observers in the legislative galleries must be understood in light of the fact that the archetypal Observer of the older ritual has disappeared along with changes in the Sphere of Consensus.

If the modern opening fails to inspire pride or impress spectators, what is it about the event that warrants its ongoing inclusion in the public sphere? The unbroken line of legislative opening coverage that runs from 1900 to the present indicates longstanding consensus that the event deserves to *make the news*. But if consensus no longer counts festive features among the meaningful elements of the story, what does account for the opening's continued newsworthiness? The best way to answer this question is to take what has been learned about the dominant news frame of the past four decades, textual manifestations of the ongoing assumption

that the ritual is newsworthy, and identify the implicit questions to which this type of coverage of the legislative opening is addressed. The approach follows Schudson's (2005) argument that, as a form of culture, news

incorporates assumptions about what matters, what makes sense, what time and place we live in, what range of considerations we should take seriously. A news story is supposed to answer the questions who, what, when, where, and why about its subject, but to understand news as culture requires asking of news writing what categories of person count as a *who*, what kinds of thing pass for facts, or *whats*, what geography and sense of time is inscribed as *where* and *when*, and what counts as an explanation, or *why*. (126, italics in original)

In contrast to the Social Celebration frame, which included all sorts of answers to general questions about what it was like to be at Queen's Park during the opening ceremonies, the Politics as Usual frame addresses a set of questions reflective of a narrower interpretation of the main event: What were the most important policies proposed in the Speech from the Throne? Overall, was the Speech a good one or a bad one? Did it include specific plans, or is it, like most others, too broad to offer clear direction? Did government Speech-writers make any obvious mistakes—factual errors or misleading statements? Can we expect the economy to get better or worse in the wake of these Throne Speech promises? What did the opposition parties have to say about the Speech? What does opposition reaction tell us about the struggle for power among political parties—are there signs that it has changed? What about spokespeople from civic associations most affected by the proposed agenda—the individuals and groups directly connected to the new plan, what did they think? Who are the winners and who are the losers in this proposed legislative vision? There is no way of knowing whether these questions are the ones that citizens would ask were it possible to interview all Ontarians about their interest (or lack thereof) in the Opening of the Legislature (cf. Lewis 2006), but there is no doubting the fact that these are the imagined queries to which modern news coverage responds. As chapter 4 demonstrates, these are the questions that call into being the imagined rational-reader.

On account of the pomp and circumstance and references to British history bound up in coverage of the ritual in earlier parts of the century, one could easily draw the conclusion that the Social Celebration frame is the more “traditional” of the two; but “it is not antiquity that defines tradition” (Calhoun 2007, 21), and it would be a mistake to argue that the questions listed above

are signs that the Politics as Usual view of ritual has been *detraditionalized* (cf. Beck 1992; Giddens 1990; Heelas 1996). Inasmuch as tradition can be said to be “handed down” from previous generations, Williams (1976) points out that it is the actions through which habits are transferred that create the appearance of continuity (269). “As an active process... [tradition] is created afresh at each moment of renewal” (Adam 1996, 137). Therefore, rather than equating tradition with a bygone era, “tradition is better grasped as a mode of reproduction of culture and social practices” (Calhoun 2007, 21), a theoretical proposition that makes it more accurate to conclude that modern mediated processes of ritualization in Ontario have helped to establish new ritual traditions.

Specifically, the new tradition in the postwar period is to respond to implied questions about partisan and policy implications of the Speech from the Throne. In Billig's (1995) terminology, press coverage of the opening has long been a moment in which the subnational nation of Ontario “is continually being flagged” (93), but both the signifiers of provincial community and what they signify has changed. Consistent with the 1960s shift that Igartua (2006) identifies in Canada's public school curricula and editorial coverage of national symbols, the representation of civic ritual in Ontario changed from reflecting “the British definition” of provincial identity that fueled Social Celebration to a “civic definition” emphasizing a diverse citizenry's commitment to “universalistic moral values of equality, rather than common ancestry or shared cultural practices” (224-6). Recalling one of the main arguments of chapter 4, the primary symbol of today's opening is the performance of rationality. Heightened interest in policy proposals, the solicitation of reaction from multiple commentators, lack of attention to the ceremonial aspects of the affair—all of this is evidence of the fact that the Opening of the Legislature is thought to be newsworthy on account of being a unique moment in which (through mass mediated news organizations) the government confronts citizens and, subsequently, initiates an exchange of ideas about how to improve life in the province of Ontario. The event remains an important symbol, but instead of symbolizing the good graces of Ontario's hierarchical social structure, the day now symbolizes the practice of rational policymaking. Returning to Burke's Pentad: *the act* is now the performance of rational-critical policy analysis, and *the scene* is the sphere of political debate among politicians, journalists, and civil society.

To argue that the legislative opening is now ritualized as a meta-policymaking exercise is not to say that news coverage now projects a false image of actually existing provincial politics. Yes, the Opening of the Legislature is now high season for the political theatre of rational performance; but this does not mean that the event is nothing more than an act. No one doubts that policymaking involves an element of rational activity, and the highlights boxes and specialized policy stories that have proliferated in recent decades both reflect instrumental decision-making and have the potential to be used by citizens for instrumental purposes. However, as Elder and Cobb (1983) point out, although processes through which laws and regulations are created tend to be theorized as rational action, deliberative routines consisting of “consistent preferences, logical analysis, and abundant information” (1), in fact, policymaking

is replete with symbolism that conveys reassurance and serves to rationalize the product, whatever it may be. The process represents a very peculiar form of problem solving in that its significance lies as much in the drama that attends it as in its actual output. It is the *making* of policy rather than its execution that the public is most sensitive to. In fact, satisfaction can accrue from the process even if the process fails for one reason or another to produce actual policy outputs. Whatever is produced tends to give symbolic testimony to 'responsibility' being fulfilled. (21-2, italics in original)

In Edelman's (1964) words, “Practically every political act that is controversial or regarded as really important is bound to serve in part as a condensation symbol. It evokes a quiescent or an aroused mass response because it symbolizes a threat or reassurance” (7). Thus, to conclude that the mass mediated *performance of political rationality* reflects the emergent view of the ritual as a province-wide policymaking exercise is not to argue that the whole event is a charade. Rather, the point is to distinguish between historically distinct forms of journalistic consensus about the meaning of the legislative ritual.

There is tension arising from the fact that the social inequality evident in Social Celebration was represented within a meta-story telling of the vibrant, optimistic, benevolent political culture of Ontario, whereas, by contrast, the more egalitarian character of Politics as Usual depicts ritualized action as occurring within an adversarial, if not poisonous, political process. It would be reasonable to expect most people today to view inequality as undesirable and egalitarianism as virtuous, but that perspective does not easily fit with shifting patterns in

newspaper representations of civic ritual in Ontario. In order to better understand these tensions within the Sphere of Consensus, it is necessary to move on and analyze changes in Hallin's second conceptual zone: the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy.

### **The Sphere of Legitimate Controversy**

Prior to the 1950s the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy surrounding the legislative opening was relatively narrow in scope. The most common form of conflicting opinion, both explicit and implied, addressed the enactment of the variety-show itself. Stories declaring the contemporary opening to be “the most brilliant... for many years” (*Globe* 15 February 1900, 5), or expressing concern over the loss of “frills and features and elaborate gowns of former years” (*Star* 9 March 1920, 2), or pointing out that there were “hundreds as usual eager to have a look” (*Telegram* 20 February 1935, 1), suggest the existence of some debate over questions such as: Were the guests as glamorous as in other years? Did the procession show fidelity to British tradition? Was the Chamber too packed with people? Was the spectacle as brilliant as ever? and Could it have been more brilliant? Pronouncements on these sorts of questions evoked at least a hint of controversy—although, they usually concluded without doubt that the most recent ritual was the biggest and best in the history of the province. In other words, despite being contestable claims about the extent of the ceremony's success, it was rare that contest actually occurred over whether the event was as splendid as its predecessors. In this respect, controversy was feigned.

The postured uncertainty that served as a backdrop for commentary on the spectacle at Queen's Park might not qualify as controversy according to the dictionary definition of the term; however, in light of the fact that a successful ceremony tended to be read as a performance of life in Ontario, it stands to reason that apprehensions simmering beneath the outward expression of Social Celebration constituted a type of pseudo-controversy that was every bit as legitimate as fullblown disputes over policy. For example, when the women's page singled out guests in 1900 for being unsuitably dressed for the occasion, it signaled serious concerns about a breach in cultural codes. Similarly, because the ritual was predicated upon the reproduction of parliamentary traditions, Hepburn's 1935 decision to cancel the post-Speech tea-party was truly controversial. Although all three newspapers refer to differences of opinion over the change in

routine, the *Telegram*, with its front-page headline noting that “Opposition Offers Tea to Legislators” (20 February 1935), was especially clear in invoking the deep-seated disappointment in Hepburn's disregard for established social conventions. From a slightly different angle, when the *Globe* in 1910 observed that “Toronto's beauty and fashion graced the Legislature, and constituted authority had to be satisfied with standing room” (26 January, 6), ironic controversy was invoked in order to call attention to the importance of the event. Of course the powerful men of the province did not actually mind being displaced during the Chamber ceremonies; after all, the source of their momentary relocation was popular interest in the goings-on of the House. Another example of ironic controversy: The ritual's “annual joke”, which was funny because new MPPs could not fulfill instructions and take their seats on account of there being women everywhere on the Assembly floor.

In addition to feigned, or ironic (legitimate) controversy, a handful of remarks spread over the opening decades of the century reveal that there were, in fact, differences of opinion on the matter of whether royal pomp and ceremony were appropriate ways of initiating the serious work of common parliamentarians. The belief that the event's festive features were frivolous ornaments on what should have been a more professional gathering is colourfully articulated in a *Globe* editorial from 1915:

There is a discernible repetition of history in the fascinating grandeur of the opening of the Legislature—in the thunder of guns, the parade of scarlet and gold, the airy plumes, the martial music, the impressive and ostentatious ceremonials, and the grand culmination of brilliant social display. Men who stand helpless before the distressing problem of unemployment... celebrate their assembling with a profusion of brilliancy and grandeur Caligula might envy. [...] We laugh at Caligula for having dazzled Rome with the celebration of the idle escapade of his army. It is to be hoped the progress of the near future will give our successors equal grounds for laughing at the opening ceremonies of to-day. (17 February, 6)

In 1900 the *Star* complained that “The ceremonies from year to year are so much alike that they are most ritualistic in their anture [nature]” (14 February, 1). But comments of this sort were rare; moreover they contradicted the sentiment of the bulk of coverage in these same dailies. It is worth noting that the very same page on which that *Star* quotation appeared also carried a gushing account of the event entitled “SCENE OF GAIETY IN THE CHAMBER”. And recall

that within five years of the *Globe's* “Caligula” editorial, that newspaper would praise the UFO Government for choosing not to change the ceremonial opening, and predicted that “it will probably develop that the newer parties are as enthusiastic for [the traditional ceremony] as were their predecessors” (10 March 1920, 1). The point to recognize is that throughout the early decades of the century, the celebratory atmosphere of the legislative opening was such that, unlike the present situation, it was possible to legitimately debate the formal qualities of the event.

Although it too played a part in the Social Celebration narrative, controversy over politics and policy also possessed a flavour that has since been lost. For example, in the midst of a 1905 boundary dispute between Manitoba and Ontario, the *Star* used the Whitney Government's Throne Speech bid for new northern lands to summarily reject the provincial neighbour's point of view: “In this Province,” declared the *Star's* editorial page, “people will not be able to see the injustice that the Winnipeg Telegram complains of” (23 March 1905, 6). Here is controversy over Throne Speech plans that emphasizes the unity of the Ontario polity. Similarly, exemplifying the aggressive character of Ontario under Mitch Hepburn (cf. Ibbitson 2001), much was made of provincial unity in 1940 when, in a controversial move, “Opposition joined Government in the Ontario Legislature yesterday in aiming sharp critical shafts at the Mackenzie King administration's mobilization of Canada's war effort” (*Telegram* 11 January, 12; see also Saywell 1991, 428-47). Policy controversy appeared more frequently in editorials than in other parts of the newspaper, and when controversial policies were reported in hard news stories, this tended to be stated as matters of fact, as opposed to being the source of debate among conflicting perspectives. Schudson (1982) would say that when it came to reporting on the Throne Speech itself, journalists tended to act as “stenographers” as opposed to “interpreters”. For example, after one full column describing the scene and setting at Queen's Park, a *Star* story from 1915 entitled “HON. MR. HENDRIE PREDICTS NEW ONTARIO TAXES” reads, “The Speech from the Throne points out that there is a marked deficit to be met by the Province, and predicts special taxation to meet the situation. Other measures predicted are the Moratorium Act, changes in the Workmen's Compensation Act, amendments to the Liquor License Act, improved boiler inspection, and good roads legislation” (16 February, 2). It is almost impossible to imagine a time

when talk of provincial deficits and taxes came *after* details about the “full State ceremonial” and the “gubernatorial procession”, not to mention a time when the ritual's policy features were unaccompanied by reaction from politicians and extra-parliamentary associations.

It would be misleading to argue that the era of Social Celebration was free from contention altogether. But regardless of the various iterations of controversy in the early part of the century, legitimate debate in these years was very different from the phenomenon which became the central dimension of the modern ritual. Recalling the argument that journalists applying the Social Celebration frame shared consensus about the ritual being a “tension management holiday” (Etzioni 2004)—that is, that the Sphere of Consensus included the assumption that the opening was a break from partisan scripts in order to concentrate on what brought Ontarians together—it is no surprise to learn that the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy was much narrower prior to the end of the Second World War. But throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as the provincial government grew in size and reach, as the population of Ontario became increasingly diverse and urban, as the economy modernized and communication technologies proliferated, and as the ideal of objective journalism was further embedded in Ontario's mediasphere, the repression of controversy in the name of solidarity occurred less and less frequently. By 1970 controversy had replaced cohesion as the dominant mode of participation in the ceremony.

In order to better understand how severely modern news coverage broke with the narrative traditions of the past, modern forms of controversy must be divided into two different categories: controversy *about* issues; and controversy *among* people. In the context of Ontario's constitutive ritual, the Speech from the Throne is the main source of controversy in the modern era; it is the pivotal issue *about which* conflicting opinions take shape. In the estimation of the government, the Throne Speech is always a bold, potentially even brilliant, plan for the future. The premier and other governing party spokespeople may present themselves before journalists with the purpose of extolling the strengths of their proposed legislative agenda and to fend off attacks from people who view their plan as less than impressive, but the Speech is the government's side of the policy debate long before the premier is forced to defend it against opposition MPPs and other critics. By virtue of the fact that it is, in essence, a slate of

government decisions—however detailed or vague, optimistic or bleak, ambitious or reserved—the Throne Speech is the opening volley in the ritual battle. Long has this been true; however, prior to the 1950s only in exceptional cases did enemies of the government rise up and fire back on opening-day.

Criticism of the government emerged through opportunities made available by a transformation in mediated processes of ritualization. Akin to turn-of-the-century developments in coverage of the State of the Union Address in the United States, postwar journalists in Ontario began to take for granted “the journalist's right and obligation to mediate and simplify, to crystallize and identify the key political elements” in the ceremony of government power (see Schudson 1982, 103). Today there is no shortage of critical commentary on the Throne Speech. Remarking on the painstaking efforts that go into composing a contemporary Speech from the Throne, Gord Evans (2007), a senior civil servant and Throne Speech writer during the Rae years, confirms that the expectation of press criticism is ever-present in the mind of those who compose the Speech. They know that no matter what it says the Speech is likely to be accused of being too broad, too vague, too expensive, too cruel, too lofty... not lofty enough. It will be criticized for the ideas it includes, as well as for those it leaves out. Promises of innovative action are met with demands not to move so fast; promises to stay the course are labelled unoriginal and boring. According to Evans, the most that Speech-writers can hope for is that journalists are unable to find major gaffes in the text.

Of course not every Speech is subject to the gamut of critical assessments. Typically a pattern forms around views about the Speech's strengths and weaknesses. But, as noted in chapter 4, there are times when editorial opinion regarding a single Speech varies widely. For example, in 2007 the *Star's* editorial on the Liberal Throne Speech follows the headline, “Liberals outline ambitious agenda” (30 November, AA6); conversely, the *Globe and Mail's* editorial is entitled, “Waiting for the vision” (30 November, A22). In the words of the *Star*, “Premier Dalton McGuinty has sent a strong signal that he plans to step out from the careful managerial approach that marked his first four years in office and use his second term to tackle some of the province's most pressing problems.” In the *Globe's* opinion, however, the Liberal Speech “gives little indication of such a change in direction. Largely a repackaging of the Liberals' election platform,

[the Throne Speech] suggests a continuation of Mr. McGuinty's low-risk, incremental approach to government.” The two interpretations could hardly be more different. For its part, the *Sun's* editorial board accused McGuinty's plan of lacking focus and lumped the Throne Speech of 2007 together with all similar statements that go around “like cute little puppies, wandering off in all directions, tails wagging, trying to please everyone” (30 November, 20). One Throne Speech, three different interpretations: each one compares the government's plan to what can and should be done to improve life in Ontario, and each one arrives at a different conclusion. In short, there is controversy about the competence of the government and about the best way forward for Ontario.

But this only touches upon the controversy that covers the whole affair today. Editorial opinion is but a single critical voice—a traditional one at that—in what has become a much larger debate. The claim that the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy has expanded throughout the twentieth century rests not on the fact that critical editorials about the Throne Speech have become more common and more vicious in tone, although, this too has occurred. The far more significant discursive expansion is the one relating to the growing range of actors included in Throne Speech debate. In stark contrast to the era of Social Celebration, in which nary a word was spoken by anyone other than the presiding officers in the Chamber, news coverage has altered the ritual in a way that effectively authorizes and publicizes the critical or supportive viewpoint of government and opposition members, interest groups, citizens, and newspaper columnists. In terms of Moore and Myerhoff's (1977, 7) formal characteristics of secular ritual, the non-spontaneous “acting... self-consciously... like a part in a play”, has shifted from the corporeal to the analytical realm. Not only has this development broadened the range of people *among whom* controversy swirls, but also it has opened up new possibilities for raising in the context of Ontario's key civic ritual issues which might not have become part of the event in the absence of newspaper coverage.

Staying with the legislative opening of 2007: John Tory, the Conservative Leader of the Opposition, who, lacking a seat in the House, watched the Throne Speech from his office, told *Globe and Mail* reporters that the Speech was “an unacceptable, complacent approach” to Ontario's problems—“more empty words from a government without a compass” (in Howlett 30

November, A14). The *Sun's* Christina Blizzard announced that Tory “slammed McGuinty for fed-bashing and for constantly squabbling with other levels of government” (30 November, 21). Making good use of that time-honoured opposition platitude, NDP leader Howard Hampton described the Speech as “a repetition of platitudes with no action plan” (Howlett 30 November, A14). Referring to previous unfulfilled Throne Speech promises to close coal plants across Ontario, Hampton, sounding a note of exasperation, said, “Now I have heard a third throne speech that says [the plants] are going to close by 2014, but I still don't see a plan whereby that is going to happen” (in Blizzard, 30 November, 21).

Hours before the Throne Speech, the *Globe* quoted the head of the Canadian Auto Workers Union, Buzz Hargrove, demanding the government use its Speech to help Ontario's floundering manufacturing sector, for, in his words, “We're in death throes as an industry” (Howlett 29 November, A11). The same story also quoted Robert Hattin, the president of Edson Packaging Machinery Ltd., “a small company with 90 employees and annual sales of about \$15 million”, and Derek Burleton, “an economist at Toronto-Dominion Bank”. Even before the lieutenant governor opened his mouth, these three men were shown debating the vitality of Ontario. The key point here, and what distinguishes this dissertation's media history approach from traditional political science interpretations, is that the collective contribution of Hargrove, Hattin, Burleton, and the host of other interest groups and citizens named in chapter 4, must be understood as more than just advice offered in advance of the legislative opening. On the contrary, rational critiques from interested members of civil society are now essential elements of the ritualization process. Because of changes in the narrative form and content of news, interest groups and citizens are now active participants in the policymaking symbols of the ritual. What Roth (1995) calls the ritual's “procedural components” (325) now involve participation from a professionalized and engaged civic community.

It is no longer accurate to conceive of the Speech from the Throne as a one-way message—a statement from X (the government) to Y (the legislature, the public, whomever). By the 1980s and 1990s, feedback from interest groups and citizens was as central to the ritual as women in evening gowns had been in the 1920s and 1930s. If the legislative opening was once a representation of a whole hierarchical social order centred around High Society, it is now

symbolic of the marketplace of competing ideas in an ideal liberal-pluralist society.

Prior to the postwar period, citizens appearing in the ritual—British subjects, really—served as citizen-spect-actors. Citizens rarely said anything, and when they did it was not about legislative politics. Though well-dressed and smiling, with respect to provincial policy the crowd was politically impotent. In this symbolic representation of a less egalitarian tradition of democracy, access to policymaking discourse was restricted to “the members of political elites in parties and in public offices” (Held 2006, 156). To be sure, citizens played an essential role in the earlier ritual, but for all the excitement surrounding the variety-show of Social Celebration, the crowds and gowns, the laughter and pride, it was hardly the case that citizens actually participated in any explicit policymaking activity. The MPP and his representative mission were given some prominence; those at the top of the political ladder were both seen and heard. However, ordinary citizens served as democratic ornaments and did not challenge government plans. Citizen voices, in the rare case that they were heard, were voices of assent: university students issuing “three rousing cheers” before the gubernatorial parade in 1910 (*Globe* 26 January, 3); the “populace... cheer[ing]” the inaugural in 1930 (*Telegram* 6 February, 6); “men in the galleries cheer[ing]” on the premier in 1935 (*Globe* 21 February, 1).

Despite its numerous problems, when the modern ritual is compared to its predecessor in terms of democratic symbolism, one must conclude that the types of civic engagement available have increased and become more critical. In view of the advent of first-person reactions to the Throne Speech, the proliferation of specialized policy stories, and the new pedagogical role assumed by newspaper opinion columnists, the rationalization of the ritual has occurred alongside a growing assumption about the right and capability of the average newsreader to negotiate government policy in the context of the province's key constitutive ritual. This is not to say that newsreaders in earlier parts of the century were barred from participating in the political festivities or presumed to be fools, but it does say something about the expansion of discursive space in which citizens are shown to contribute to debate on legislative affairs. In Held's (2006) terminology, specifically, the model of democracy theorized by the great pluralist thinkers (ex. Dahl 1956; Truman 1951), the civic ritual in Ontario is now a social performance in which “power is contested by numerous groups” (Held 2006, 173). News coverage has transformed the

Throne Speech into a forum for relatively wide-ranging debate and controversy, a process that chapter 4 termed the *citizenization* of the legislative opening. Since the 1970s the media ritual has been the symbolic expression of pluralism.

Media scholars are right to be critical when “the mass media present the illusion of participation” (Everett and Fletcher 2001, 176) and fail to show citizens actually “making forays into a deliberative public sphere” (Lewis, Wahl-Jorgensen, and Inthorn 2004, 160); but it should be highlighted that it is within this same pool of critical ideas that the notion of “symbolic annihilation” is used to argue that “not having representation in the symbolic landscape of the nation means that one simply does not exist” (Jiwani 2006, 41). There can be little doubt that the Social Celebration frame symbolically annihilated the active-citizen, but the ritual as viewed through the Politics as Usual frame is more complex. It would be naïve to say that the image of citizen participation emerging since the 1970s is ideal. But recalling Schudson's (1997) warning against reproducing oversimplified narratives of media “declinism” (471), when viewed in historical context, the ritual has indeed changed in such a way that includes and authorizes a far more diverse network of civic activity. As this chapter discusses more fully below, there are problems with the symbolic expression of pluralism just as there are problems with pluralist theory. But even proponents of what Norris (2000) calls “media malaise” theory (4) will find it difficult to disagree that an installation ritual that includes the rational contribution of (some parts of) Ontario civic society has advantages over one in which citizens and interest groups are either absent or silent about the explicit subjects of legislation.

Opinion columnists have also played an integral part in the expansion of legitimate controversy. In 2007 the signature tone of the dubious columnist is exemplified by the *Globe's* Murray Campbell in his piece, “Old promises, older chestnuts” (30 November, A14). The piece begins:

Even by the faded standards of recent years, the Speech from the Throne that launched Dalton McGuinty's second term in office was a tepid affair.

It looked backward as much as forward, singling out the Liberal government's policies in health, education and other areas.

It dipped freely into syrupy platitudes—'Ontarians care about our planet and we love our country.'

And it was loaded with what only can be called 'Daltonisms'—those

message-track phrases the Premier adores.

The *Star's* Ian Urquhart broke from the traditional tack taken by Campbell and others and praised the Throne Speech for promising to establish a new relationship with Ontario's aboriginal peoples (30 November, A19). But notwithstanding his offer of congratulations, Urquhart reminded readers that the “Liberal regime is not the first Ontario government to target [aboriginal peoples] in a throne speech and make them a priority”, which led him to ask whether “the throne speech may be setting the provincial government up to fail.” Aboriginal issues are nothing if not controversial; Urquhart forecasts controversy. Writing in the *Sun* Blizzard was brutal as ever. Her first line dubbed the Liberal plan “the Peter Pan throne speech”, on the view that “the government is living in Neverland” (30 November, 21). Mocking the Liberal plan to ban trans fat from school cafeterias, Blizzard told kids to “tuck into those fries” before “the long arm of the broccoli cops... grab them sometime soon”. On climate change she said “don't hold your breath waiting” for meaningful action. And she concluded that “if only the government had vision and the courage” to do something about transportation infrastructure, the prospects of the manufacturing sector would not be so bleak. Returning to its original theme the column's coda reads: “When all else fails, blame the feds. That was Peter Pan's problem, too. He never did grow up, did he, Tinkerbell?”

In chapter 4 the emergent adversarial approach to political journalism, a development spurred on throughout the 1960s and 1970s by the growing popularity of television news (Cumming 1977; Fletcher 1981; Hayes 1992; Taras 1990; Rutherford 1990), was noted as a partial explanation for the negative tone of columnists writing about the legislative opening. From a political economy perspective, columnists were charged with the task of adding colour to what often appeared as the monotone world of official politics, for the express purpose of appealing to a market that was moving more and more toward a different product—namely, TV news (Rutherford 1990). The cute metaphors and cheeky prose of Campbell and Blizzard in 2007 are but recent examples of the traditional narrative approach of columnists and they, too, are intended to entertain as much as to inform. But though these devices may serve as effective rhetorical weapons within the heat of political battle, the way in which columnists have pushed back the boundaries of legitimate controversy is not restricted to clever quips. It is true that any

one of the specific issues addressed by columnists tends to be discussed for the very reason that it is deemed to be controversial and columnists delight in painting scenes that show opponents at each other's throats. But rather than limiting the argument that columnists have expanded the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy by pointing to particular cases in which their words have been especially provocative (this, in itself, being a shift in the discursive practice of controversy), it is more fruitful to observe the larger trend through which the field of debate has been broadened.

“Political columnists are particularly influential because they provide interpretations of events that colour the way we view the political process” (Fletcher and Gottlieb 1990, 235). In Tataryn's (1985) words, columnists sit “at the top of the reportorial heap [...] These are the writers read by everyone involved with politics, including reporters” (5-6). Nimmo and Combs' (1992) characterization of the opinion column as “a stylistic dramatization not only of the subject or issue at hand, but also of the pundit's rightful status to speak on it authoritatively” (12) helps to explain why virtually any aspect of politics and culture is fair game in opinion columns about the Opening of the Legislature. It is not necessary for the Throne Speech to mention food-banks for a *Globe and Mail* columnist to call these sorts of charities “an assault on human dignity” and to draw connections between poverty and the government's legislative plan (see Valpy 1990, A11). In a similar vein, no Throne Speech has ever declared itself to be a party document, and yet columnists nearly always read it in this fashion. They may be right to do so; surely the reaction from opposition parties encourages this interpretation. However, the partisanization of the civic ritual has had much more to do with journalists' growing preoccupation with political strategy than with change in the opposition's desire to upset the government. The opposition has always wanted power; only since the 1960s has this desire been a central part of the media ritual.

As Schudson (1982, 1986) notes, the narrative qualities of news impose spatial and temporal restrictions on the events being reported. The point here is that the columnist, speaking “directly to the readership in a way that is familiar, habitual, and reliable” (Greenburg 2000, 529), has expanded the borders of both ritual space and time, making it routine to interpret the Throne Speech in relation to space-time contexts that extend far beyond those available during the physical enactment of the ceremony on the legislative grounds. Broadly speaking, in decades after the Second World War, all newspaper journalists covering the opening, not just opinion

columnists, have demonstrated the ability to provide their own interpretive contexts, as opposed to remaining confined to those determined by chronology and social interaction at the Legislature. In light of Kaplan's (2002) "political interpretation of journalism's permutations", in which journalists in the post-partisan press system define themselves as "impartial technical experts... and above the contamination of politics" (2, 16), there is reason to interpret the Politics as Usual frame as the reflection of modern journalism's view of politics as an inherently rational activity, and journalism as society's ultimate rational political pedagogue.<sup>19</sup>

Both Kaplan and McGerr's (1986) work on the United States locate this transformation in press/politics relationships occurring between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. And while the press in Canada also became more professional between the 1880s and 1920s (cf. Allen 2008; Kesterton 1967; Desbarats 1996; Sotiron 1997), this dissertation demonstrates a significant case in which Kaplan's "new professional ideology" (16) did not take hold until after World War II. The findings of this textual analysis support Allen's (2008) central thesis that the de-partisanization and rationalization of Canadian newspapers was not a linear process, as tends to be suggested in traditional explanations. On the contrary, in the case of the legislative opening, an earlier journalistic perspective structured coverage well into the 1940s. Having said that, once the new professional ethic took over as the organizing principle of ritual news, that is, after journalists stopped characterizing the legislative opening as a popular festival that was also a representation of an imagined social whole, newspapers used the ritual to advance an "educational politics" which presumed that "the electorate needed enlightenment—'education'—from more knowledgeable experts" (McGerr 1986, 105). The electorate was presumed to need the newspaper itself, the neutral arbiter of competing ideas among citizens and groups in Ontario.

### **The limits of legitimate controversy: Producing and policing ritual deviance**

Despite being represented by newspapers as though it were a limitless field of competing

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<sup>19</sup> Sharp (1989) suggests that it was not until the late 1980s that the Throne Speech itself assumed a new partisan character, a result of being transformed into a "defence of government policy" (17). A new study would be required to account for all the reasons behind this development; but in light of the fact that what politicians "chose to do and say is with constant reference to the news media" (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989, 174), it is logical that the postwar intensification of mass mediated Throne Speech analysis identified in this dissertation is one crucial factor to consider.

opinions, a rational public sphere open to every stakeholder with something important to say, of course the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy has borders. When Bennett (2007) talks about “the paradox of objective reporting”, he is referring to the fact that

the professional practices embodying journalism norms of independence and objectivity also create conditions that systematically favor the reporting of official perspectives. At the same time, the postures of independence and objectivity created by the use of these professional practices give the impression that the resulting news is the best available representation of reality. In short, professional journalism standards introduce a distorted political perspective into the news yet legitimize that perspective as broad and realistic. (188-9)

The period in which the performance of rationality has become the pivotal means of ritualization has seen expansion in the number of ritual participants, the breadth of subject positions given a voice in the news, the demands placed upon government, and the modes of address available to everyone involved. It has also witnessed a change in the sorts of things that are considered relevant: now no longer Mrs. Gooderham's hat or post-ceremony evening parties at the Young Ladies Association, but now virtually always reaction from spokespeople for extra-parliamentary business and labour associations. It would be dogmatic to interpret these changes as part of an elite plot intended to placate the masses while keeping them in a position of subservience. Media criticism of this kind grossly overestimates whatever effects news coverage could reasonably be expected to impose upon newsreaders (Hartley 1996). Moreover, this dissertation is not of the media effects tradition; rather, the aim here, clearly stated in research questions in chapter 1, is to identify the ways in which newspapers have framed the meaning of the legislative opening and in what ways mediated processes of ritualization have changed over time. Chapter 4 argues that in the second half of the twentieth century, journalists began to portray the ritual as a free and robust exchange of ideas among multiple characters across the province. And now, after acknowledging that journalists are not deliberately attempting to hide information from citizens, the boundaries of legitimate controversy begin to come into clear view.

First, as hinted at in the quotation from Bennett, a journalistic approach that prides itself on representing the conflicting viewpoints of a broad spectrum of opinion reflects specific epistemological and political assumptions about the way in which knowledge is produced and how it ought to be disseminated and debated. The Politics as Usual frame is rooted in the

understanding that civic ritual is a time to air “differences of outlook, disagreement, argument and opposition” about politics in Ontario; however, as tends to be the case regarding the great majority of mediated public debate, confrontation is “understood as taking place within a broader basic framework of agreement... to which everyone subscribes, and within which every dispute, disagreement or conflict of interest can be reconciled by discussion, without recourse to confrontation or violence” (Hall et al. 1978, 56).

To equate political activity with the exchange of ideas among rulers and ruled is so deeply ingrained in liberal-democracies that it is difficult to imagine things being otherwise (cf. Schroder and Phillips 2007). But it is worth highlighting the fact that at the same time as coverage of the legislative opening depicts social conflict, it also draws borders around legitimate types of controversy and those allowed to participate in the debate. Subsequently, it adds support to the view that the sole legitimate form of political activity is limited to the practices involved in what Williams (1975) refers to as “Orthodox politics” (53). It is encouraging that news coverage has changed in such a way as to imbue the ritual with differences of opinion, but the “mediation of representation” over which mainstream news organizations hold a virtual monopoly,

is no less a monopoly when it includes an internally selected balance and differentiation of opinion. This is especially important in that it reinforces tendencies within the orthodox process of political representation, where representatives, between elections, acquire and claim a certain absolute character; if we do not like *them*, and through them their policies, we can change them *at the appointed times*. There is then, in these different ways, a displacement and attenuation of representation which can be felt, at times, as its absence. (52, italics in original)

By associating the Opening of the Legislature with debate among policymakers, civic-interest groups, and citizens, the performance of rationality becomes at once a symbol for what is widely understood to be the natural expression of political behaviour, an image of a healthy democracy, and the threshold dividing legitimate from deviant modes of conduct (cf. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989, chap. 4, esp. 243-58).

The type of conflict in which the Politics as Usual frame is rooted reflects the presumption of cohesion characteristic of liberal democracy. As Hartley (1982) explains, in mainstream news, “non-parliamentary dissent... is characterized as deviant and deviancy is

defined as irrational or criminal. And the parliamentary form of the state is generalized to a 'universal' status" (62). The reactions of *Sun* columnists Blatchford, Blizzard, and Leatherdale to the 1995 protests around the first Throne Speech of Mike Harris' Conservative Government go some distance toward drawing the boundary between legitimate criticism and deviant behaviour in the realm of Ontario politics. Recall that protesters at Queen's Park were called "hooligans" and accused of being "antidemocratic". Leatherdale drew a line between the illegitimate actions of some in the anti-Harris crowd, and the legitimate actions of her group's "tax revolts... when we stormed Queen's Park" to protest the agenda of Bob Rae's Government. More broadly, despite a significant increase in the number of voices included in mediated Throne Speech analysis, the list of the extra-parliamentary associations quoted in the textual sample (see table 4.5) bears out Hackett and Zhao's (1998) observation that objectivity in commercial news tends to restrict political discourse to "a relatively narrow and conservative range of viewpoints" (175; see also Hackett and Gruneau 2000; Herman and Chomsky 1988). The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Teachers' Federation, and the Ontario Hospital Association, for example, are high-profile interest groups whose public authority is rooted in social structures that tend to "protect the racial hierarchy" (Greco Larson 2005, 268; see also Jiwani 2006) and legitimize the type of liberal democracy required to support what Macpherson (1992) calls "capitalist market societies" (see esp. 51-66). "While it is true that effective mass communication is difficult without reference to widely known personalities and ideas, the resulting status quo orientation means that audiences are rarely asked to question society's basic assumptions" (Fletcher and Gottlieb 1990, 239). Therefore, notwithstanding the rise of new critical perspectives within the "common communicative space" of civic ritual in Ontario (see Madianou 2005, 73), statements from, for instance, organizations such as the United Way, modern mediated processes of ritualization virtually guarantee that critical voices do not reflect "the vast pluralistic range of voices which the media are sometimes held to represent, but a range *within certain distinct ideological limits*" (Hall et al. 1978, 61, italics in original).

This is not to deny the reality of pluralist competition, or to suggest that the nature of legislative opening conflict is of a single variety. To be sure: some conflicts are more heated, more complex, more dangerous, even more important than others. But at the same time as the

symbolic performance of rational debate has indeed constituted the emergence of a new form of ritual conflict, it also reinforces shared assumptions about the nature of normal political behaviour. From this perspective, conflict itself serves as an expression of social cohesion in Ontario, just as the previous ritual expressed a different kind of social cohesion. Conflict reflects “the idea of the political consensus” (Hall et al. 1978, 55). A pluralist state is only healthy when it is home to heated and appropriately structured political battle. The point is not that solidarity is magically produced through the ritualization of social conflict. However, it is not difficult to understand how the growing confrontation in news coverage of the legislative opening may also reproduce the discursive bases required to continue imagining Ontario as a cohesive political unit (cf. Fletcher and Gottlieb 1990, 234-9; Franklin 2004, 14-8). The spectacle of rational debate has the potential to rivet disparate minds just as forcefully as spectacles that make use of objects that glitter and shine.

Second, controversy is limited not only in the sense that specific authorities, usually high-profile politicians and spokespeople, are the most prominent participants taking part in debate, but also by the fact that statements from all sides—from politicians and plebes alike—must adhere to the generic forms of news. In practice what this often means is that what is represented as debate ends up being little more than a series of conflicting one-liners, glib expressions of satisfaction and anger counter-posed and presented as dialogue (cf. Fox 1999; Gitlin 1991; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). On the knowledge that they are unlikely to have more than three of their sentences printed in the newspaper, opposition leaders responding to the Throne Speech forgo in-depth analysis in favour of snappy quotations meant to catch journalists' attention. The irony, of course, demonstrated in numerous quotations reproduced in chapter 5, is that the criticism of opposition MPPs ends up being every bit as hackneyed as the Speeches it faults for being hackneyed! Faced with the need to react immediately and the knowledge that only the catchy quotation will make the news, opposition politicians offer little substantive criticism of the proposed policy agenda. Yes, newspaper stories strive to capture some truth about crucial provincial policy debates, “But what can a 10-second sound bite capture the truth of?” (Grossberg et al. 2006, 356). The number of voices heard during the ritual has increased; but the scope of what they are able to say and how they are able to say it remains tightly restricted by

news values and routines governing profit-driven journalism (Bennett 2007; Black 1982; Hartley 1982; Johnson-Cartee 2005, 111-145; Tuchman 1978). Democratic theorists who place “the public deliberation of free and equal citizens [at] the core of legitimate political decision making” (Bohman 1998, 401) would be hard-pressed to find anything encouraging in the proliferation of ritualized soundbites. Brief quotations used to attribute what are often decontextualized and underdeveloped statements from elite individuals can hardly be expected to enrich political discourse (cf. Lewis 2006).

Schudson (1997) argues that the issue of “the shrinking soundbite” is more complex than most media critics are willing to consider (see also Boulton 2000). Criticizing the “decline-and-fall” narrative of journalism history that has replaced “Whiggish progress” as the prevailing perspective among media historians (470), Schudson notes that in Hallin's work on election coverage, the shrinking soundbite is interpreted as “an indicator of the growing professionalism of broadcast journalists. It is an indicator that journalists have gained technical control over their medium and that they actively shape the tales they tell. This has both good and bad effects, in Hallin's view.” Schudson concludes: “The implications of the shrinking soundbite for the quality of journalism and the quality of our political discourse 'are not simple'” (471). It is unnecessary to retract what was said about the limitations of ritualized soundbites in Ontario newspapers in order to appreciate the significance of Schudson's larger point. What he appears to be saying is that although there may be good reasons to criticize ten-second soundbites (as well as good reasons to applaud them), it is not clear that the way to improve political discourse is to push for news-clips that are longer than ten seconds.

Rather, discomfort around soundbites points to a more fundamental issue that concerns underlying conceptions of citizenship and politics and the concern that “politics has become debased in the popular imagination” (Hackett and Zhao 1998, 173). More helpful than pointing to the familiar case of the soundbite, in which a single form of news shapes a single political utterance, is to recall Kaplan's (2002) idea that the professionalization of journalism occurring alongside the rise to dominance of objectivity reflected journalists' assertion of their own role as the ultimate interpreters of social meaning. As chapter 4 argues, the press in Ontario began to demonstrate new types of specialized critical knowledge within the context of civic ritual during

decades in which “the hallowed authority of cabinet, party, and Parliament over the political process was apparently threatened” by aggressive television journalists (Rutherford 1990, 402). More and more, newspapers used a ceremony originally intended to mark the authority of the Legislature to, instead, mark themselves as dominant authorities in debate about provincial politics. Recall Becker's (1995) observation that “media play a role in constituting public events as rituals, first, by marking them as set apart from everyday life and second, by contributing to the internal structure of the ritual through recognizable patterns of activities involved in selecting and recording particular aspects of the events” (629). The “internal structure” of the legislative opening, once organized around expressions of communal identity is now fixed within “journalism's adversarial ethos” (Hackett and Gruneau 2000, 29). Today, “the pressure political elites feel to stage-manage their media images is constant and unrelenting” (Meyer 2002, 141). Thus the expanded Sphere of Legitimate Controversy is limited not only by particular forms of news, such as the soundbite, but by the fact that the elite and powerful social position that journalists have carved out for themselves has meant that political “actions and discourses... conform most strictly to the codes of mainstream media, as if they were functioning as the only determinants for the audiences' reading and subsequent political behavior” (Meyer 2002, xi).

Third, the Politics as Usual frame limits the range of emotions and the “strategies of action” (Swidler 1986, 276-7) available to everyone involved in the ritual. There is simply no opportunity to express, for example, confusion, humour, patience—some of humanity's most common states of being. Optimism, forgiveness, and nonpartisanship are also in short supply. The adversarial approach has grown to the point where the image of solidarity itself has become deviant. Divisiveness, conflict, intrigue, insults—a controversial perspective is required in order for comments to be taken seriously. This is one observation that inspires reflections on whether some parts of Social Celebration were actually preferable to the situation of today. It cannot be denied that the ritual has been democratized in numerous ways. However, it would be narrow-minded to ignore the possibility that while becoming more serious, more critical, and more inclusive, the ritual has also lost desirable qualities.

For example, despite all that has been said about the more realistic expression of social conflict given life through the frame of Politics as Usual, there is good reason to regret the loss of

a partisan truce at the heart of the legislative calendar. The roots of this sentiment extend beyond John Lennon-style imagining (then again, a compelling case could be made for the world needing more of that, too). Rather, political and philosophical theories of all different shades take very seriously the need for public expressions of social cohesion. Buddhism is but one of the world's most popular philosophies that emphasizes the importance of thinking and acting with the interests of the social whole in mind. A similar sentiment runs through Rousseau's famous concept of the general will. Writing in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Wingo (2006) argues that the solidarity fostered in one of his community's traditional festivals is important not only for the warmth created in the ritual moment, but because the “moment of joy also creates solidarity to be drawn upon in political affairs, and the recognition of fallibility fosters a tolerance that transcends the festive moments and infects the daily lives of individuals” (191-2). Wingo's personal narrative lends empirical support to Geertz's (1973) theoretical assertion that with the “ritual ended” and the participant “returned again to the common-sense world”, that person “is... changed” (122). Political theorists attempting to renew the notion of civic republicanism argue for more meaningful opportunities to express civic unity (see Miller 2000); and even critical cultural scholars such as Calhoun (2007) acknowledge the positive contributions made by nationalistic expressions of social solidarity.

In Canada, where the practice of politics is continually criticized for adding to growing levels of public cynicism (Ellis and MacIvor 2008; Gidengil et al. 2004; Nadeau and Giasson 2003; Stoker 2006; Taras 1990), legislative proceedings are said to be especially destructive displays of feigned outrage. In reference to the national scene, one *Globe* columnist jokes that compared to “parliaments elsewhere, ours still ranks as tops, for students of zoology, on the preferred list of field trips” (Martin 31 January 2008, A17). A small sub-genre has appeared within newspaper letters to the editor, in which those who watch legislative debate (especially angry elementary school teachers who take their classes to see Assembly proceedings) complain about the vindictive style, bad behaviour, really, among elected representatives (most recently, see *Globe and Mail* 1 February 2008, A22). The widespread understanding that legislative discourse is a bloodsport is reflected in an advertisement for the Canadian Parliamentary Affairs Channel that warns viewers of “scenes of bare knuckles and hardball”. Every new Speaker

promises and then fails to restore civility to House debate (cf. Martin). In light of widespread frustration with adversarial political culture, it is regrettable that good-humoured play and congenial political discourse have been all but extinguished from one of the central symbols of politics in Ontario.

Note that Edelman's (1988) highly respected book on political journalism concludes with the idea that “art is worth attention as an antidote to political mystification because works of art depend for their power upon properties that contrast revealingly with the characteristics of political language” (126). To be sure, the kind of art to which Edelman refers is more in the tradition of Dostoevsky's *Crime and punishment* and Rabelaisian folk festivals—explicitly subversive creative work—as opposed to the art of parliamentary symbolism and legislative tea-parties. Nevertheless, his belief that “political language focuses attention upon a particular fear or a hope, [whereas] art evokes many concurrent levels of significance” (126-7) can be used to criticize the rationalization of the modern ritual.

Inasmuch as shifting patterns of news coverage have expanded the ceremony to the point where it now includes a broader range of commentators and more in-depth analysis, at the same time the meaning of the event, and of democracy, and of social order, has been narrowed on account of being more and more confined to the professionalized sphere of legislative business. The problem is that although legislative politics are obviously very much bound up in legislative activity, by no means are they confined to House proceedings. On the contrary, by nature of their law-making function, legislative activities affect all parts of life in Ontario; they establish the boundaries within which lawful lives can be lived, and as such, they forge a powerful connection among every person in the province. Moreover, despite the fact that their tone is present-minded and forward-looking, these ways of doing politics are expressions of a history of governing that goes back to the first parliament in England, if not back to ancient theories of democracy. Is this to say, then, that Ontario's ideal civic ritual would be a Renaissance fair? Is the present line of thought moving toward the idea that newspapers ought to publish an annual special section comparing Aristotle's critique of mob-rule with Rousseau's general will with Burke's delegate democracy?

With Milner's (2002) call for “civic literacy” in mind, the latter possibility is not quite as

ridiculous as it may have seemed at first glance. Nevertheless, drawing attention to the historical significance and contemporary reach of legislative politics is not done as a way of suggesting that contemporary readers ought to bend low and honour one or another historical narrative.

However, when a ritual of political authority is viewed as the symbolic expression of the dominant conception of politics, as “a model system of a particular way of engaging the real, of worlding the world” (Geertz 2007, 222), then there is reason to be concerned about the symbolic shift from self-conscious celebration of the notion of society as a whole, to a ceremony in which politics and political activity is defined more narrowly, as though politics constituted a discrete sphere of action consisting exclusively of technical disputes about party competition and provincial policy.

In spite of the ways in which the Social Celebration frame tended to legitimize social hierarchy and symbolically annihilate specific parts of the community—serious democratic infractions, each of them—with the vanishing of that form of ritualization has also gone a mode of political expression that the ritual sorely lacks today. Perhaps the particular kind of social space created through news coverage of the pre-1950 legislative opening does not appeal to today's critical citizen or scholar. But in an era in which the press uses the central symbol of government to mark itself as the universal political subject, both the educator and the voice of the expert citizen, it is reasonable to read Social Celebration as a case in which mediated processes of ritualization transformed legislative place-time into place-time used to explore and celebrate broader conceptions of politics, the historical and playful contributions of politicians, citizens, *and* journalists, and the common plight of the broader political community.

Helping to drive the shift from Social Celebration to Politics as Usual, journalists replaced a celebration of communal identity with their own professional expertise. Similar to the way in which the burgeoning “independent journalism” movement in the American north hastened the decline of spectacular political pageantry and the rise of “educational politics” by separating “reportage and editorial, fact and opinion, thought and emotion” (McGerr 1986, 135), the more policy-oriented, aggressive brand of journalism used to make sense of the postwar opening in Ontario narrowed the meaning of a key civic ceremony. The postwar expansion in the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy occurred alongside a reduction in “the journalist's structure of

narrative expectations” (Johnson-Cartee 2005, 160). Turning away from the physical and temporal aspects of activity at Queen's Park and embedding the event within the newspaper's more familiar narratives of legislative politics, in a sense, a ceremony of government authority became a moment in which journalists would now celebrate their own elite interpretive role. In light of what this dissertation assumes about the power of news in producing “the definition of the [political] situation” (Thomas 1923, 70), such changes constitute no minor readjustment in emphasis, but a fundamental redefinition of the meaning of the legislative opening. Since the 1970s the dominant framework of interpretation journalists use to understand civic ritual privileges the performance of political rationality over all other aspects of the event; in Burke's (1965) seminal phrase, “different frameworks of interpretations will lead to different conclusions as to what reality is” (35).

## **Conclusion**

Using Hallin's framework to compare discursive boundary maintenance has brought a good deal of conceptual order to the most glaring differences in twentieth century newspaper coverage. Most important, it has provided the theoretical latitude necessary for arguing both that legislative opening has been depicted as a special occasion for more than one hundred years, and that the nature of its “specialness” has been transformed over time. Neither the *Constitution Act, 1867*, nor the standard political science textbook give the impression that the Opening of the Legislature has much to do with the average citizen; however, newspaper coverage suggests that the people of Ontario have long been both active within and interested in reading about the centrepiece of the parliamentary calendar. In fact, as the foregoing discussion demonstrates, throughout the twentieth century Ontario society has figured prominently in the mass mediated ritual—and in ways that have been neglected by the academic literature on politics and media. What Hallin's spheres have helped to clarify, however, is that the type of society and the type of ritual being represented have changed considerably.

Part of the ongoing shift in the appearance of the ritual in the news can be explained by material changes at Queen's Park. For example, the reason that lieutenant governors are no longer pictured wearing the Windsor uniform is because no lieutenant governor since MacDonald has

donned the traditional costume. That said, analyzing coverage with the help of Hallin's concepts has shown that the evolution in ritualization has occurred largely as a result of an evolution in journalistic narratives. In order to be sustained, both dominant news frames of the century required their own type of journalist—first the celebrant, then the sleuth. The spectacle of the early twentieth century needed journalistic cheerleaders. If journalists had made different choices and published cynical quotations and ignored crowd fashions and picked apart the Throne Speech and pooh poohed the whole festive atmosphere, it would not have mattered what went on at Queen's Park, the legislative opening would not have been a Social Celebration of the kind that it was said to be. Regardless of the fact that they depicted themselves as objective observers, the stories of journalist-celebrants were instrumental in representing the event as a Social Celebration. Similarly, the journalist-sleuths of the modern period have been responsible for sustaining the conceptual link between the legislative opening and public debates about the Speech from the Throne and related political issues. Without journalist-sleuths to interview interested parties, write pithy summaries, and make projections about the legislative future, the opening would lack the character of the annual media event into which it has grown over the past forty years. Thompson (1995) writes that prior to the age of mass media,

the public event was a spectacle which, for those relatively few individuals who happened to be present at its occurrence, could be seen, heard, perhaps even smelled or felt in some way. [...] With the advent of print, however, the link between publicness and sense perception was transformed. An action or event could now acquire a public status for others who were not present at the place of its occurrence, and who were not able to see or hear it. [...] But the link between publicness and visibility, while significantly attenuated, was not eliminated: it was projected through the prism of print. (125-9)

In Ontario, the Opening of the Legislature, like the bulk of political activity, acquires meaning in the realm of what Thompson calls “mediated publicness” (126). Although their stories have changed, journalists have been responsible not only for defining for citizens the unique significance of each individual legislative opening, but also the meaning of the ritual in general and its relationship to Ontario society.

## **Chapter 6: Summarizing main empirical and theoretical contributions**

### **Introduction**

The contributions of this dissertation are the product of an interdisciplinary approach to politics. Building on theoretical orientations and research methods from political science, sociology, anthropology, history, and media and cultural studies, the dissertation has examined twentieth century newspaper coverage of a key civic ritual in order to learn more about the evolution of political symbolism in Ontario. At the same time as it has shed new light upon the development of popular conceptions of a ceremony marking legislative authority, the study also demonstrates the potential of research on politics in Canada that theorizes news media as constitutive of social knowledge. Interpreting the legislative opening exclusively in terms of its parliamentary functions, or in accordance with ahistorical assumptions about the meaning of political symbols, political science in Canada has overlooked the fact that social knowledge about political institutions can change. The interpretive practices of journalists and citizens are historically, geographically, and socially embedded; this study treats them as such. What the dissertation shows is that since 1900 the meaning of the legislative opening has changed a great deal and, furthermore, that the twentieth century development in mediated processes of ritualization is suggestive of deeper shifts in the nature of political legitimacy in Ontario.

The final chapter serves two purposes: It draws the foregoing discussion to a close by highlighting and summarizing the dissertation's main empirical findings and theoretical contributions, and it reflects upon the strengths and weaknesses of this project and points toward the potential of new research that takes a cultural approach to politics.

### **Citizenization: Of civic ritual, of legislative politics**

Using narrative and framing analysis to examine a century of newspaper coverage of the legislative opening in Ontario, the dissertation's main empirical finding is that journalists have defined the basic social significance of the ritual in different ways at different times. Despite there being no change in the ceremony's constitutional functions, newspaper coverage suggests that, at the level of culture, the event means something different today than it did at the turn of the twentieth century. Between 1900 and the 1940s, the event was depicted as a popular festival

at Queen's Park, a Social Celebration; by contrast, from the 1950s into the first decade of the twenty-first century, the event was depicted as a wide-ranging debate about partisan politics and provincial policy, the symbolic expression of liberal-pluralist Politics as Usual.

Chapter 2 invoked research that draws attention to the endless contingencies of human existence by making the culturally and historically distant appear familiar and logical, while making the culturally and historically nearby appear foreign and strange. Positioning itself in this tradition this thesis has attempted to understand the meaning of constitutive ritual in Ontario as it has been approached and defined by dominant sense-makers of different eras. As demonstrated in chapter 3, when measured against the political and cultural norms of today, the legislative opening in the decades prior to World War II was very strange indeed. But to confront historical texts without reminding oneself of the cultural peculiarities of the time and place in which those texts were initially intended to operate is to risk falling into the trap of present-mindedness. As Doctorow's (2007) nineteenth century narrator reminds his twenty-first century reader: "You may think you are living in modern times, here and now, but that is the necessary illusion of every age. We did not conduct ourselves as if we were preparatory to your time. There was nothing quaint or colorful about us" (11).

It would be pressing the point too far to argue that the architects of the Social Celebration frame saw nothing quaint or colourful in their ceremony. The humour, tone, and topics of early twentieth century news coverage suggest that the affair was largely understood to be a spectacle of the quaint and colourful. The point that needs to be emphasized is that despite lacking rational-critical forms of debate, the event was not seen to be lacking significance in the eyes of contemporaries—at least not according to the perspective of the dominant sense-makers of the day. In 1920, when the only newspaper quotation from the leader of the opposition Liberals was a pun referring to the new Speaker, Nelson Parliament, there would have been no way of knowing that by century's end, the Opening of the Legislature would be a ritual in which the opposition leader would be expected to be nothing but cynical about the prospects of the coming political session. When "political opponents vie[d] for courteous phrases" (*Star* 21 February 1935, 1) at the opening, they did so without knowledge of the partisan battleground that would soon replace the smoother rhetorical soil in which the ritual was traditionally planted. Newspaper

representations of Social Celebration appear strange today because they differ from modern modes of ritualization. But there is little reason to assume that, within the context of constitutive ritual, performances of British traditionalism, social hierarchy, and provincial prosperity would have seemed any odder in earlier times than performances of pluralist rationality do in our own.

Thus, as much as the dissertation reveals historically distinct, unexplored performances of political legitimacy in Ontario's past, it also throws light upon historically distinct present performances of legitimacy—textual manifestations of social knowledge so pervasive as to appear natural in today's political-cultural milieu. The aim of the preceding chapters will have been met if the surprise of confronting Social Celebration makes confronting Politics as Usual something of a surprise. In other words, that the earlier ritual was concerned with the spatial/temporal flow of bodies and social interaction, that it was virtually without partisan bickering, and that citizens and interest groups simply did not factor into analysis of provincial policy, will no doubt come as a surprise to most readers today. But rather than focus exclusively upon what these strange news narratives suggest about an earlier era, this dissertation's hope is that it has also provoked some critical thought about what media coverage of today's legislative opening suggests about politics in contemporary Ontario. From the perspective of the newsreader in 1905, to say nothing of the women on the floor of the House, it would likely be surprising to learn that today's ritual is not represented as a ceremony at the Legislature, but as a rational-critical debate among politicians, journalists, interest groups, and citizens. Newspaper coverage suggests that the roles and responsibilities of ritual participants have changed. Most important, participants with no legislative authority have become high-profile interpreters of, and commentators on, provincial politics and policy.

Chapter 4 notes that citizens and interest groups became Throne Speech policy analysts in the newspaper during decades that also saw the rise of anti-state ideologies such as neoliberalism and the politics of identity. It is worth adding that the general process referred to here as the citizenization of the legislative opening also intersects with a burgeoning political vision that Smith (2007) has termed “electoral democracy” (51-71). In contrast to parliamentary or constitutional models of democracy, in which ultimate authority is seen to reside in the Crown or the courts, the model of electoral democracy promises “to democratize politics, to hand it back to

the people” (60). Calls for greater citizen participation in the legislative sphere; the public presence and power of the National Citizens' Coalition; the rise of a national political party describing Parliament as “a debating society whose deliberations were irrelevant to the citizen” (17); the rhetoric of parliamentary accountability, backed by the growing power of Officers of Parliament; both the appetite for electoral reforms intended to more accurately reflect the popular vote, as well as the so-called citizens' assemblies that have studied and proposed new electoral systems in British Columbia and Ontario—all of this, according to Smith, is symptomatic of “a complex challenge to existing understandings of government” in Canada (59). Quoting Blais and Gidengil's contribution to the 1991 *Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing*, Smith argues that over the past several decades,

Canadian politics has changed, for reasons supporters of electoral democracy correctly identify: the gap between people and constituted authority has widened with the arrival of the charter and the 'phenomenon of “constitutional minoritarianism” [which] reflects the new constitutional status and identities that the Charter has conferred on racial minorities, women, official language minorities and other minority groups.' (59)

Clearly, to point out late twentieth century incursions of the citizen into the sphere of legislative politics is not without precedent. What is new, however, is the way in which this dissertation identifies a shift in the balance of power between citizen and Legislature occurring within the symbolic realm of mass mediated civic ritual. Recalling Thompson's work on multiple forms of publicness, it should be acknowledged that social interaction does occur outside of mass media representations; but in this case, it is news discourse that has effectively legitimized a new political subject. The role of the citizen at the symbolic centre of legislative politics in Ontario has been transformed through changes in news content and news narratives. The proliferation of both specialized Throne Speech analysis and citizen-centric rhetoric of government and opposition MPPs, reaction from expert stakeholders and ordinary citizens, the rational-citizen called into being through the performance of professionalized journalistic techniques, all of this is symbolic of changing conceptions regarding the rightful role of citizens at the heart of Ontario politics.

An informal survey of online press releases posted in the hours following the 2007

legislative opening adds weight to the interpretation that extra-parliamentary organizations now feel entitled in the role of rational-critical Throne Speech analyst. Between 5:00 and 10:00 PM on 29 November, well over a dozen press releases were issued through the CNW Group website alone (formerly Canada News Wire). In a style that is typical of groups representing relatively narrow interests, messages tended to identify the single most important issue of the group and, subsequently, whether the group supported or condemned the Throne Speech. For example, as stated in its press release, “The Council of Ontario Universities welcomed the Ontario Government's Throne Speech and its... initiatives designed to achieve” higher quality education (Genest 2007). Expressing a contrasting point of view, the title of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations' press release claimed that the “Throne Speech ignores threat[s] to quality university education” (Mandelbaum 2007). Grand Council Chief John Beaucage “applauded the initiative of the new Liberal government as something the Anishinabek [First] Nation could support and work with” (Goulais 2007); and Karen Philip, a senior representative from the Canadian Diabetes Association “applauded the Government of Ontario's commitment to tackle diabetes” (Brace 2007).

Leaving for a different research project questions about the internet's impact on the legislative opening, not to mention what it has done to political journalism more generally (cf. Bennett 2007, chap. 8; Compton 2004, chap. 4; McNair 2002), the anecdote about online press releases from 2007 is relevant in this study because it demonstrates the pervasiveness of modern assumptions that perceive the legitimacy of extra-parliamentary ritual participants as being rational and critical in nature. To be sure, citizens and citizen groups have played central roles in the ritual throughout the twentieth century. Standard journalistic narratives prior to the 1950s organized themselves around idealized images of the citizen-celebrant: adoring crowds on the lawn and in the House; Society women on the floor; representatives of church, state, and civil society in the galleries; distant citizen-spectators. But these newspaper scripts cast citizens and interest groups in non-speaking roles. Journalists interpreted citizen participation as a visual act moving in two directions: citizens were to see and be seen.

By contrast, as demonstrated by the profusion of online press releases in the hours after the Throne Speech of 2007, the ritual role of civil society now consists of contributions to

provincial policymaking. The assumption that the legislative opening marks a special moment in which it is normal for citizens across Ontario to make public statements about the long-term plans of elected representatives is manifested in a new form: namely, the online press release. However, the social knowledge motivating extra-parliamentary statements on the worldwide web can be traced back to the postwar period and the professionalization of the civic ritual as represented in the increasingly professionalized newspaper coverage of the 1960s and 1970s. By definition, press releases are written by people hoping that some parts of their public statement will be picked up by journalists and reproduced in the news (Nesbitt-Larking 2007). Thus, emergent ritualized performances of extra-parliamentary participants are enacted on the basis of shared social knowledge about the mutually reinforcing political legitimacy of interest group spokespeople and newspaper reporters (cf. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989; Kaplan 2002). Of course, to restate a point made in chapter 5, the irony of the media's facilitation of more inclusive debates about politicking and policy is that the sovereignty of the Legislature is now challenged during the very ritual that marks legislative sovereignty.

It is reasonable, therefore, to interpret the evolution of mediated ritual in Ontario as a response to Smith's (2007) question about whether “the media privilege one democratic model or rhetoric over another, that is, parliamentary, or constitutional, or electoral” (133). Twentieth century trends in newspaper coverage of the Opening of the Legislature suggest that the press functions in ways that increasingly promote a model of (Smith's “electoral”) democracy in which extra-parliamentary groups compete with one another, with journalists, and with parliamentarians, in an expanded sphere of legislative politics. Identifying the emergence of new types of political subjects and new modes of interaction within the mediation of civic ritual offers grounds to expand upon McNairn's (1998) argument that the appearance of press coverage of parliamentary debate in the early 1800s meant that “private citizens with access to newspapers were being informed” in new ways (54). The image of the legislative sphere as constructed in modern coverage of the legislative opening is one in which extra-parliamentary participants are not only informed by news, but appear as active informants within it. But which groups? And what citizens? Who is included, and who is excluded in news coverage of legislative politics? What are the discursive conditions of possibility governing political journalism in Ontario, and

what types of extra-parliamentary participation are they likely to produce?

Some of these issues were addressed in chapter 5, where it was concluded that coverage of the legislative opening tends to give prominence to and therefore legitimize the voices and concerns of powerful business groups, trade unions, and local governments, extra-parliamentary actors that both reflect and reinforce, and in some respects call into question, inequality along lines of race, class, and gender. But more research is needed to identify more clearly the power dynamics at play in the symbolic representation of democracy in Ontario. In order to gain a broader understanding of how the trends identified in this study operate throughout the political sphere, we need more empirical research that examines the representation of civic society in different iterations of legislative news, as well as in different media rituals. We need to map the capabilities and limitations of newly legitimized citizens and interest groups, and to identify the power dynamics at play within and among extra-parliamentary participants. Also of prime concern are the silences maintained through mediated boundary maintenance of the legislative sphere (cf. Foucault 1990). Finally, future research should further analyze the symbolic power of the Legislature itself—power that has not been extinguished, but certainly appears to have been altered.

In addition to casting light upon the evolution of a single political ritual, the citizenization of the legislative opening in Ontario also brings into relief two significant tensions relating to larger issues about the role of ritual in late capitalist, multicultural society. The first involves the fact that the case study reveals a prominent symbol of politics becoming less spectacular and more policy-oriented, less aesthetic and more rational, during a period in which both conventional and scholarly wisdom suggests that politics is becoming de-politicized (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989), aestheticized (Compton 2004; Corner and Pels 2003), and sensationalized (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Street 1997). In light of how often it is said that political journalism “emphasizes image over substance” (Streich 2000, 51); that news practices have moved “image management” to the centre of the public sphere (Compton 2004, 153); that “excessive mediatization” of politics has forced citizens “to become consumers and spectators” of civic affairs (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, 259); that news coverage of politics is “superficial... incomplete... [and] overly dramatic” (Page 1996, 6); and that journalists must “accept more

responsibility for trying to stimulate and raise the quality of public deliberation” (Lambeth 1998, 29), it is intriguing that, over the past fifty years, the particular political symbol examined in this study has, in fact, been *de-sensationalized*—indeed, the ritual has been rationalized in significant ways. In this case, changes in the representation of politics are more complex than what is allowed by prevailing theories of “spectacularization.” Bearing in mind postwar cultural changes noted in chapter 4, it would be absurd to express shock at the fact that lieutenant governors have not become bigger and bigger celebrities since 1900, or that the legislative opening is no longer viewed as ladies' day at Queen's Park. Rather, the postwar rationalization of the opening is interesting, not so much because today's ceremony is no longer what it once was, but because of what exactly the ceremony has become. The discovery that demands further consideration is that this symbol of legislative politics has become more politically sophisticated, more policy-oriented, more interested in engaging citizens' overtly political identities, during an era in which political journalism is frequently accused of “dumbing down” civic life (cf. Fox 1999; Franklin 1996; Lambeth 1998; Mosley 2000; Seaton 1998).

The second tension: Notwithstanding what has been said about the rationalization and citizenization of the modern ritual—in short, the fact that the opening is now more pluralist and more concerned about the policy preferences and political reactions of extra-parliamentary participants—these developments are occurring against the backdrop of widespread concern that Canada is in the midst of some sort of “democratic malaise” (Gidengil et al. 2004; Nadeau and Giasson 2003). In the opening years of the twenty-first century, the Opening of the Legislature is all about citizen knowledge, interest group advocacy, public policy stakeholder preferences, and robust civic debate; and yet students of politics assert that the citizenry itself is increasingly less interested in, less knowledgeable about, and less respectful of, parliamentary politics. For example, the recent Canadian Democratic Audit on civic engagement

provides little cause for celebrating the state of democratic citizenship in Canada. Turnout in federal elections is low by international standards and has plummeted in the three most recent elections. Few Canadians take an active part in election campaigns and their numbers appear to be dwindling. Canadians are skeptical about the value of joining political parties and relatively few have ever been party members. Even fewer have ever belonged to an interest group. (Gidengil et al. 2004, 141)

In sum, many Canadians from “every walk of life... know little or nothing about what is happening politically, and they do not even bother to vote” (172). On the one hand, citizens appear to be less and less interested in traditional political institutions (cf. Nevitte 1996), but on the other, citizen interest and citizen participation—citizen assent—are hallmarks of the modern legislative opening.

In view of this dissertation's specific research interests and its corresponding body of evidence, it is clear that the two paradoxes referred to above raise questions that, if they are to receive adequate answers, require new research projects. It is not within the mandate of this study to pronounce judgment upon precisely why these phenomena are occurring, where else the same tensions may be located, or what broader implications the trends may have regarding the role of common rituals in advanced industrial societies. Having said that, the dissertation's rich empirical insights and the queries that they produce do provide a powerful push for new research into the dilemma of creating ritualized representations of shared values in a late capitalist, multicultural society. Ideally this research would transcend traditional academic boundaries and draw upon a range of theories and approaches. An interdisciplinary perspective is crucial because the concern at hand is with fundamental questions about the complex processes of *living together*—questions about how individuals *live themselves* as part of a group, and how groups *live through* their members—questions, that is, about how all of us, sharing space, time, and resources, if not always the same ideological viewpoints and political aspirations, develop a sense of belonging (or fail to feel to belong).

At the risk of causing consternation among those who hear an assimilationist rat running through all favourable talk of symbolic expressions of shared values, there is no question that recent social and technological developments demand new thinking about how collective identity can be meaningfully expressed in the years ahead. Media fragmentation and increasing cultural pluralism have greatly enriched Canadian society and have the potential to strengthen it further (Beaty and Sullivan 2007). But as common media experiences become less common in an era of narrowcasting, on the one hand, and the vastness of the worldwide web, on the other (Taras 2007), and as the fabric of society becomes ever richer and more diverse (Gidengil et al. 2004;

Ibbitson 2005; Nevitte 1996), it ought to be said that if we are to avoid the worst consequences of both harmful individualism and inter-cultural conflict, “we must still try to find a way to continue to build shared experience in a fragmented environment” (Goldstein 2007, 19).

Neither Social Celebration nor Politics as Usual is an ideal model for the type of civic ritual that would help to re-engage, re-politicize, and ultimately rejuvenate the Canadian citizenry. The two dominant symbols examined above draw discursive boundaries, they include and exclude certain parts of the citizenry, in ways that deserve criticism and, indeed, have been criticized in the preceding chapters. In fact, in light of its being a mechanism of the official bureaucratic state, the Opening of the Legislature itself may be interpreted by some critics as an inherently oppressive symbol, one that ought to be condemned and dismissed with minimal discussion, on account of its helping to sustain unequal power relations. But bearing in mind the long history of parliamentary government in Canada, to say nothing of the fact that the present political system does not appear to be on the cusp of monumental change, it would be disappointing if people claiming to fight for social justice took a principled stand to ignore the way in which mainstream institutions function. As social animals we need certain commonly agreed upon ways of doing things; and (like it or not) nowhere is this work done more explicitly than in legislatures. Legislative politics deserve our attention because they are clear manifestations of the ways in which people establish social rules. Symbols of legislative politics are symbols of life as we live it.

Nevertheless, the reason for pointing out that a robust practical politics, in addition to dealing in imagined futures, must also engage the status quo, is not to force one final argument for the relevance of research on Ontario's opening. Instead, let this section conclude by evoking the pressing questions that this dissertation is unable to answer, as a way of moving beyond the confines of the case study and into possibilities for new research. In what ways do we want to see political legitimacy symbolically expressed—if not Social Celebration or Politics as Usual, then what? Is it possible to imagine civic rituals that celebrate common values while more equitably reflecting the diversity of life in late capitalist society? In light of what is known about the current democratic malaise and the imperatives and tendencies of contemporary mass media, what are the prospects for developing more egalitarian and more engaging political rituals? And

if these questions appear maudlin or naïve and, therefore, impermissible, then what is there to say about the future of democracy in Canada? And what is to be done by people who want to live in a world where genuine symbolic expressions of shared values are not only imaginable, but broadly desirable?

### **The ritualization of civic ritual**

Because it examines newspaper coverage as a way of identifying historically specific interpretations of the meaning of a particular civic ritual, the dissertation contributes to ongoing theoretical debates in media anthropology. By way of drawing attention to its use of both functionalist and process-oriented ritual theory, the dissertation has described itself as a study of the ritualization of civic ritual. In light of the topicality of this theoretical endeavour—it bears repeating that since 2006 the journal *Media, Culture & Society* has housed an especially heated exchange between three well-known theorists in the field—it is logical to say a few final words about the strength of this study's contribution. Little would be added by simply restating the fact that on one hand, the legislative opening itself has been defined as a constitutive ritual, while on the other, the object of study has been mass mediated processes of ritualization. A better way to assess the merits of this theoretical configuration is to articulate potential criticism from colleagues in the field of media anthropology, then respond to these hypothetical charges. For the sake of argument, let us assume that the critique is devastating: it advances the position that whatever this dissertation does, it does not analyze “media ritual” as that concept has been discussed in the media studies literature. The hypothetical critique consists of three points.

First, it argues that the dissertation is wrong to apply the media ritual perspective to a social performance that, even in its non-mediated form, has been dubbed civic ritual. The critic argues that to use a term from functionalist sociology to define the legislative opening itself as “constitutive ritual” (Goodin 1978) runs contrary to the intentions of research aiming to identify instances in which ritual is called into being by media (cf. Couldry 2005). Subsequently, second, the dissertation is criticized for harbouring the assumption that the legislative opening is inherently meaningful (cf. Bell 1992). To assume that the event's constitutional function makes it socially significant precedes empirical analysis of newspapers and contrasts, therefore, with what

scholars of media ritual ought to do, which is to examine the role of the media in producing those exceptional, powerful mediated phenomena that rivet the attention of large numbers of people (cf. Cottle 2008). And third, the critic argues that newspaper coverage of the legislative opening is not exceptional enough to be considered among mediated processes of ritualization. The newspaper stories examined above are not the pervasive, sensational, live, reverential, unique, and powerful media events that qualify as media ritual (cf. Dayan and Katz 1992).

In responding to these charges, it is helpful to begin by conceding that this study has never claimed to replicate the analytical approach of any particular strand of media ritual theory. The dissertation's interdisciplinary character is the deliberate product of the desire to use insights from a range of scholarly perspectives in order to generate new questions and understandings about relationships among political institutions, journalists, and citizens. As such, it could have been expected that the literature on media ritual would be used as a way of expanding conceptual views of political legitimacy in Ontario, not limiting analytical possibilities in order to avoid upsetting self-appointed protectors of one or another wing of media ritual research. Moreover, bearing in mind the chronic uncertainty that is one of the few certain things in the burgeoning field of media anthropology, any critique of the present project that finds itself on the premise that this study has contravened theoretical or empirical norms of media ritual theory opens itself to criticism for ascribing to the research area a consensus of vision that simply is not borne out in the literature. There are weaknesses to Cottle's (2006) articulation of "mediatized ritual" (see Couldry and Rothenbuhler 2007), but Cottle (2008) is right about one thing: "the idea of 'ritual', like that of 'discourse' and 'ideology', has become an essentially contested concept and looks set to remain so given the differing theoretical, disciplinary and political standpoints that now lay claim to it" (137). But even without clear conceptual borders within and around the field, and despite acknowledging the idiosyncrasies of this dissertation (which are, in any case, hardly more idiosyncratic than those of any other empirical analysis), this study rejects the charges made above and argues that this analysis does make an important contribution to debates among theorists of media ritual.

In response to the first point, that is, that the analysis falters when it identifies the legislative opening as a constitutive ritual, it must be acknowledged that this element of the

dissertation does indeed rely upon a more traditional, neo-Durkheimian understanding of ritual, as opposed to more recent process-oriented perspectives. However, by no means is this perspective without precedent in the media studies literature. Shils and Young (1953), Chaney (1983), Dayan and Katz (1992), and Rothenbuhler (1998, 2005) are among but the best-known neo-Durkheimian students of media ritual. Works by lesser-known scholars that analyze media representations of royal ceremonies (Wardle and West 2006), independence-day celebrations (Kook 2005), and deaths of political leaders (Sumiala-Seppanen and Stocchetti 2007), articulate similar theoretical claims about the social significance of high political holidays (see Etzioni 2004).

To argue that ritual expresses and reproduces forms of social integration through the collective imagining of community by invoking the power of “an overarching parahuman authority, such as a deity, the state, or an institution such as a university” (Santino 2005, 364) troubles scholars like Couldry (2005), who argue that “it is precisely this association of ritual with social integration and with the standard integrationist reading of Durkheim that we need to challenge” (61). Yet, although this dissertation draws on Couldry himself in order to problematize traditional methods of analyzing civic ritual, it does not entirely reject the established neo-Durkheimian approach, which views ritual as a regularly occurring, symbolic, social, and integrative “act of commemoration” (Mizruchi 2000). The dissertation follows Rothenbuhler (1998), Couldry's sometime collaborator, in arguing that “the ideas celebrated by inaugurations and other state and political events... are a model of a better world, and their periodic celebration draws attention to the possibilities” of Good politics (92), while at the same time conducting analysis in accordance with the assumption that civic ceremonies “can have social functions only via their communicative capacities” (104). The functionalist hue colouring the object of study, civic ritual, is nothing new. But what *is* original about this study is the way in which it uses media history—longitudinal empirical analysis—in order to theorize and analyze the legislative opening as a civic ritual that acquires social meaning through processes of mass mediation. Similar to the way in which longitudinal analysis has been neglected by students of news framing (Atwood Gailey 1999, 2003) and, more broadly, political journalism (Curran 2006; Tunstall 2002), so media history has been neglected by students of media ritual.

Thus, in response to the second point, although it is true that the dissertation takes it for granted that the legislative opening is inherently significant, a proposition that some would say smacks of functionalist social science and runs counter to scholarship focused on the constitutive power of mass media, recall that the dissertation does not follow functionalists in assuming that ritual, by nature, is only ever expressive or productive of social unity. The study acknowledges the role of the legislative opening in maintaining the authority of the Legislature, yes; but it does not claim to have found a causal link between the performance of the legislative opening and the achievement of social cohesion in Ontario. In fact, the dissertation's assumption about the enduring social significance of the legislative opening is predicated as much on the fact that the event has been continuously treated as such by journalists, as it is upon the dictates of the Constitution. And here we arrive at the intersection between functionalist and process-oriented perspectives.

On one hand, it cannot be denied that the event and coverage of the event have grown out of the demands of parliamentary democracy. The ritual does operate in the service of parliamentary government; it imposes a centripetal force—creates the centre-as-centre—inasmuch as it reproduces the power of the House to make law. Whether depicted as a festival of Ontario Society or a platform for debate among Ontario society, the *eventness* of the event is, in the first instance, a product of the legislative calendar. But on the other hand, though the critic would be right to point out that the dissertation takes for granted the social significance of the ritual (tied as it is to unique juridical functions) the analysis is conducted in a way that is expressly intended to inquire into the local and historical meaning attributed to the event, as opposed to presuming that the meaning of the ritual is transhistorical. The media history approach allows for interpretive latitude in attempting to understand how the ritual is made meaningful among citizens of Ontario. When the political is defined as “no more than the way we organize our social life together, and the power-relations which this involves” (Eagleton 1996, 169), then the symbolic aspects of a ceremony at the Legislature must be considered significant, regardless of where the event ranks in terms of its popularity in comparison to other social spectacles. But again, the key point is that the longitudinal media analysis conducted here is not restricted by preconceived notions regarding the ceremony's administrative, legislative, or

symbolic character; on the contrary, it offers a way of viewing different historical iterations of ritualized social significance. It observes a single ritual being ritualized in different ways.

Third, in light of the fact that the term ritual has been applied to the act of doing laundry (MacDonald 2001), responding to terrorist attacks (Grimes 2006), and telling a story about a dead baseball player (Prakash 2004), there is reason to doubt the theoretical grounds upon which the critic accuses news coverage of the Opening of the Legislature as not being exceptional enough to qualify as media ritual. Nevertheless, Cottle's (2008) assertion that “a single newspaper report would not meet my stated criteria of 'exceptional'” (138) suggests that quantity and repetition play at least some (typically ill-defined) role in theorizing the topic at hand. The notion that ritual is “a way of acting that distinguishes itself from other ways of acting in the very way it does what it does” (Bell 1997, 81) points to the fact that possession of a special quality also figures into the criterion that ritual is exceptional.

One way to respond to the charge that news coverage of the legislative opening is not exceptional is to point out that there exists, in fact, quite a large amount of coverage. Year after year after year, newspapers publish reports on the event. At various points since 1900 a single newspaper has carried upwards of sixty items relating to the opening, but regardless of the fact that the number of items published in a given year goes up and down, when viewed longitudinally, the opening has attracted a mountain of newspaper reports. Quantitatively, it is a big and recurring deal in the culture of legislative politics in Ontario. A second way of responding would be to assess the criterion of exceptionality in the context of typical legislative news. Unlike routine legislative business, the special character of the event is evident in the way it is variously constructed in big, bold front-page headlines, in (first social, then opinion) columns, in editorials, highlights boxes, special-pages and photo-collages.

The most compelling response, however, goes back to the constitutional functions of the event, and notes that the ritual is continually flagged by journalists as a special day in the political life of Ontario. It would be hyperbolic to say, as Cottle (2008, 136) says of “mediatized ritual”, that news reports about the legislative opening “periodically crash through normal news agendas” (Cottle 2008, 136); but, in the language of Dayan and Katz (1992), there is no question that coverage marks an *interruption* of the routine of news about legislative politics. The

adjectival “ritualization” has been used as a way of emphasizing the power of political news to define the meaning of the event. The term helps to “signal the performative agency of media in staging, enacting and propelling certain events and processes forward” (Cottle 2008, 138). Yes, the legislative opening is exceptional in terms of its parliamentary functions, but it is the press that has made it into a particular type of exceptional event throughout Ontario's public sphere. Without the press it would only ever have been a gathering of people at the capital. News raises the event to a place of prominence in the sphere of “mediated publicness” (Thompson 1995, 126). True, journalistic expressions of ritual exceptionalism have changed. Compared to when it was a colourful festival, the event today can easily seem routine. But, as Billig (1995) says of displays of banal nationalism, “the significance of the ceremony is not diminished if it is treated as routine, rather than as an intense experience” (51). Whether as a spectacular celebration of Ontario society and culture, or a cerebral facilitation of rational-critical debate on long-term provincial policy, viewed through the eyes of newspaper reporters and, by extension, the newsreading public, the legislative opening has been exceptional throughout the twentieth century.

Building on the notion that “ritual is always a performance for someone” (Rothenbuhler 1998, 9), many scholars have stopped treating rituals as though they “followed scripts” and have taken, instead, a “performance-centred approach” to public ceremony (Burke 2005, 47). Assuming that “ritual is a *form of action*” (Couldry and Rothenbuhler 2007, 692, italics in original), the concept of ritualization has become a popular analytical tool in mapping “the practice of these events” (Handelman 1998, xi). As a process-oriented inquiry into political ritual, this dissertation focuses on “those ceremonial practices that specially construct, display and promote the power of political institutions” (Bell 1997, 128). However, while acknowledging that from one perspective the Opening of the Legislature is indeed a ceremony of co-presence that takes place on the legislative grounds, this dissertation has located the “ceremonial practices” that give public expression to the event within the pages of mainstream newspapers. Studying news coverage as a way of learning more about the ritualization of civic ritual is not intended to provide evidence about the social effects of one or another depiction of political legitimacy. But it has proven to be an effective means of understanding more about the ways in

which political legitimacy is symbolically represented in dominant social narratives. Both media anthropology and the study of politics in Canada would benefit from research that asks to what extent and through what means different symbolic expressions of representative democracy, for example, elections, budget speeches, first ministers conferences, and leadership conventions, have been ritualized by mainstream news.

### **Interdisciplinary research on politics in Canada**

Finally, as the dissertation draws to a close, more than one hundred years and two hundred pages past the first legislative opening of the twentieth century, readers could be forgiven for momentarily forgetting that this study began with questions about the epistemological potential of a mediated approach to political institutions. It would be correct to say that this dissertation has focused narrowly upon, among other things, a single civic ceremony; political journalism in four Ontario newspapers; numerous historical figures, activities, relationships, and events; and debates within media anthropology. But at root the theoretical problem that originally inspired this study of mass mediated political ritual concerns the production of scholarly knowledge about politics.

On numerous occasions the dissertation has criticized political science in Canada for failing to analyze the role played by mass media in reflecting and defining fundamental social assumptions about representative democracy in particular historical contexts. Are we moving, then, toward the conclusion that the discipline of political science must become more interdisciplinary? The argument may be worth discussing in a different conversation, but it is not the ultimate aim of the present study. Rather, one theoretical contribution of this dissertation is its way of showing the value and potential of an interdisciplinary approach to politics. It is widely taken for granted that the Legislature is the political institution *par excellence*: it is the only place where laws are both debated and created, and it stands as “the central symbol of Ontario democracy” (White 1997, 71). But despite being significant “both as an important part of the machinery of democratic government and as a symbol of our system of government” (Whittington and Van Loon 1996, 507), rarely is the Legislature analyzed as a political symbol.

In contrast to traditional institutional analysis in political science, and in response to the

oft-repeated claim that scholarship on legislatures in Canada “has never been highly theoretical” (Atkinson and Thomas 1993, 424; see also Malloy 2002; Sproule-Jones 1984), the empirical analysis conducted here is founded upon the theoretical perspective that regards news media as constitutive of “a symbolic world, that has a kind of priority, a certification of legitimate importance” (Schudson 1995, 33). The efforts of a handful of scholars in Canada, particularly those of Edwin Black, Fred Fletcher, Robert Hackett, Jonathan Rose, David Taras, and more recently, Paul Nesbitt-Larking, have given prominence to the idea that “the mass media form the stage upon which the most visible aspects of Canadian politics are played out” (Everett and Fletcher 2001, 165). However, in Canada, there remains a paucity of research exploring news coverage of legislative politics from a cultural perspective. This is not meant to dismiss the importance of continuing inquires into the values and routines of political journalists (Miljan and Cooper 2003; Pritchard, Brewer, and Sauvageau 2005), the effects of media corporatization and conglomeration (Hackett and Gruneau 2000; Winter 2002); or the effects of political advertising during a particular election campaign (Blais et al. 1999; Soderland 1995). But in the effort to identify social “scripts” within the world of politics, the “culturally shared, conventional knowledge representations about well-known” political institutions and practices (van Dijk 1991, 117), this dissertation demonstrates the potential of an interdisciplinary, media history approach to news coverage of parliament.

As such, it encourages new investigations into the discursive construction of political reality within and through mass media. On account of their increasing prevalence and profile, political talk-shows such as CBC Newsworld's *Politics*, TVO's *The Agenda*, Global's *Focus Ontario*, and CTV's *Question Period*, would be a fruitful and underexplored place to begin. On a more ambitious note, the schism between scholarly and journalistic interpretations of the legislative opening points to the need for discursive analysis that maps the various interpretations and uses of the very term *politics*, not only within the academy, but also within media and citizen discourses (cf. Schroder and Phillips 2007).

By comparing and contrasting the legislature-centric, ahistorical political science interpretations of civic ritual, to the citizen-centred, historically-embedded interpretations found in mainstream newspapers, this dissertation advocates cultural approaches to politics that use

innovative ways to better understand the production and circulation of social knowledge. It is not that traditional interpretations of the meaning of the legislative opening are wrong. But by analyzing the centrepiece of the parliamentary calendar as it has been made meaningful in mainstream news coverage, this dissertation lends empirical support to the theoretical claim that, in the eyes of the majority of citizens, politics is what happens in the news.

### Appendix A: Textual corpus

Date of newspaper editions analyzed (Day of Throne Speech and day after)	Number of relevant newspaper items published over two-day period
<b>14 &amp; 15 February 1900</b> 9th Legislature, 3d session Premier: G.W. Ross (Lib.)	Toronto <i>Globe</i> : 6 Toronto <i>Daily Star</i> : 4 Toronto <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 2 Total: 12
<b>22 &amp; 23 March 1905</b> 11th Legislature, 1st session Premier: J.P. Whitney (Con.)	<i>Globe</i> : 11 <i>Daily Star</i> : 8 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 8 Total: 27
<b>25 &amp; 26 January 1910</b> 12th Legislature, 2d session Premier: J.P. Whitney (Con.)	<i>Globe</i> : 6 <i>Daily Star</i> : 3 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 2 Total: 11
<b>16 &amp; 17 February 1915</b> 14th Legislature, 1st session Premier: W.H. Hearst (Con.)	<i>Globe</i> : 11 <i>Daily Star</i> : 2 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 6 Total: 19
<b>9 &amp; 10 March 1920</b> 15th Legislature, 1st session Premier: E.C. Drury (UF)	<i>Globe</i> : 7 <i>Daily Star</i> : 6 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 8 Total: 21
<b>10 &amp; 11 February 1925</b> 16 Legislature, 2d session Premier: G.H. Ferguson (Con.)	<i>Globe</i> : 12 <i>Daily Star</i> : 24 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 11 Total: 47
<b>5 &amp; 6 February 1930</b> 18th Legislature, 1st session Premier: G.H. Ferguson (Con.)	<i>Globe</i> : 7 <i>Daily Star</i> : 8 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 13 Total: 28
<b>20 &amp; 21 February 1935</b> 19th Legislature, 1st session Premier: M.F. Hepburn (Lib.)	<i>Globe</i> : 14 <i>Daily Star</i> : 14 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 14 Total: 42
<b>10 &amp; 11 January 1940</b> 20th Legislature, 5th session Premier: M.F. Hepburn (Lib.)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 4 <i>Daily Star</i> : 3 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 5 Total: 12
<b>15 &amp; 16 February 1945</b> 21st Legislature, 2d session Premier: G.A. Drew (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 5 <i>Daily Star</i> : 4 <i>Evening Telegram</i> : 7

	Total: 16
<b>16 &amp; 17 February 1950</b> 23d Legislature, 2d session Premier: L.M. Frost (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 8 <i>Daily Star</i> : 4 <i>Telegram</i> : 8 Total: 20
<b>8 &amp; 9 February 1955</b> 24th Legislature, 5th session Premier: L.M. Frost (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 7 <i>Daily Star</i> : 5 <i>Telegram</i> : 4 Total: 16
<b>26 &amp; 27 January 1960</b> 26 Legislature, 1st session Premier: L.M. Frost (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 11 <i>Daily Star</i> : 7 <i>Telegram</i> : 11 Total: 29
<b>20 &amp; 21 January 1965</b> 27th Legislature, 3d session Premier: J.P. Robarts (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 11 <i>Daily Star</i> : 13 <i>Telegram</i> : 8 Total: 32
<b>24 &amp; 25 February 1970</b> 28th Legislature, 3d session Premier: J.P. Robarts (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 8 <i>Daily Star</i> : 12 <i>Telegram</i> : 11 Total: 31
<b>11 &amp; 12 March 1975</b> 29th Legislature, 5th session Premier: W.G. Davis (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 15 <i>Star</i> : 9 <i>Sun</i> : 10 Total: 34
<b>11 &amp; 12 March 1980</b> 31st Legislature, 4th session Premier: W.G. Davis (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 15 <i>Star</i> : 18 <i>Sun</i> : 17 Total: 50
<b>4 &amp; 5 June 1985</b> 33d Legislature, 1st session Premier: F.S. Miller (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 8 <i>Star</i> : 28 <i>Sun</i> : 16 Total: 52
<b>20 &amp; 21 November 1990</b> 35th Legislature, 1st session Premier: R.K. Rae (NDP)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 13 <i>Star</i> : 28 <i>Sun</i> : 19 Total: 60
<b>27 &amp; 28 November 1995</b> 36th Legislature, 1st session Premier: M.D. Harris (PC)	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 12 <i>Star</i> : 19 <i>Sun</i> : 26 Total: 57
<b>19 &amp; 20 April 2001</b> 37th Legislature, 2d session	<i>Globe and Mail</i> : 5 <i>Star</i> : 14

Premier: M.D. Harris (PC)	<i>Sun: 7</i> Total: 26
<b>29 &amp; 30 November 2007</b> 39th Legislature, 1st session Premier: D. McGuinty (Lib.)	<i>Globe and Mail: 6</i> <i>Star: 6</i> <i>Sun: 6</i> Total: 18

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