## 1

#### The fractured nature of the subject leaves one oriented around the mastery of a lost object- recognizing the right to strike is an attempt to satisfy this loss with an investment into the notion of dignified work

Barchiesi ‘9

[Franco, THE Ohio State University. 2009. “That Melancholic Object of Desire: Work and Official Discourse before and after Polokwane,” <https://www.academia.edu/421295/THAT_MELANCHOLlC_OBJECT_OF_DESlRE_WORK_AND_OFFlClAL_DlSCOURSE_BEFORE_AND_AFTER_POLOKWANE> brackets are for grammar // sosa

Whereby past proletarian struggles had actively subverted waged work, both through direct refusal or through workers’ unwillingness to confine their claims to productivity requirements, a powerful disciplinary narrative has now emerged to celebrate the “dignity of work” as a disciplinary construct that marginalizes, stigmatizes and criminalizes specific social categories identified as disruptive of wage labour discipline. Now “dignity of work” is a commonly used term in ANC parlance, but the term is of straightforward colonial origins. The first time I have found it used is in Cecil Rhodes’ endorsement of the Glen Grey Act of 1894. Under pre-apartheid segregation governments it was part of what Saul Dubow terms a “South Africanist” ideological discourse where, through hard work for wages, the “native” could become a modern “worker”, possibly even a “citizen”. Under apartheid there was of course no talk of equal citizenship for the “natives”, but the National Party government praised work discipline over resource redistribution for whites and blacks alike. As a normative construct, the imperative to work operated across the board. The South African state imagination of work, before and after 1994, reversed Immanuel Kant’s line that “every thing has either a price or a dignity”, where by dignity he meant a value that precedes and stands above market exchange. In South African official discourse, instead, the labour market and the wage relation stand[s] simultaneously as measure and reward of human dignity.

After apartheid, the revived parlance of “dignity of work” and individual labour market initiative also, as Ivor Chipkin shows in his book Do South Africans Exist?, came to depict a virtuous condition of active citizenship rightfully enabling the full, practical enjoyment of formal, on-paper constitutional rights. As work becomes the normative premise of virtuous citizenship, it provides an epistemic device with which South African society can be “known” as an objective, socially ascertainable hierarchy ordered according to the seemingly natural, immutable laws of the labour market. (This view is clearly expressed in Thabo Mbeki’s “two economies” scenario.) At the pinnacle of such a hierarchical order stands a, by now largely imaginary, patriotic, respectable, hard working, socially moderate, conflict-averse, de-racialized worker as the virtuous citizen of democratic South Africa. Precisely as a creation of official imagination, however, such a subject indicates the practical conducts the poor have to follow, as workersin-waiting, on their path to actual citizenship: avoid complaining, stay away from social conflicts, and actively seek the “employment opportunities” available in poverty-wage schemes of mass precariousness like the Expanded Public Works Programme. A work-centered citizenship discourse also marginalizes and stigmatizes the, conversely, all too real subjectivities that try to navigate their way in conditions of precariousness, social duress, and the systematic violence of market relations: yesterday it was “workshy” township youth, women devoted to “immoral” activities, peasants recalcitrant to the market; today is the “tsotsi” element, the “girls” claiming child support grants, and those who “illegally” reconnect water and electricity.

As Fred Block and Margaret Somers have shown, the connection of state normativity and seemingly unassailable scientific reasoning confers to official discourses of citizenship the material capacity, made almost impervious to empirical counter evidence, to shape attitudes, dispositions and proclivities. It does not really matter for the centrality of work in South WHAT IS LEFT OF THE LEFT? 53 African citizenship discourse that in no way most experiences of work resemble the exalted social condition imagined in governmental pronouncements. What matters is that, by making social conditions, if not what it means to be human, orbit around labour market participation, the citizens of democratic South Africa are educated to position themselves within prevailing social and economic power relations.

In the interviews with workers I have conducted, wage labour clearly emerges as a place of insecurity, exploitation, unfair and racialized treatment, and inadequacy in relation to household needs. More than that, it is a reality of, as Felix Guattari called it, “systematic endangering”, or continuous exposure to unpredictable, potentially catastrophic labour market contingencies. As wage labour’s early promise of liberation and redemption went unfulfilled, workers tended to characterize waged employment as a place that they have to endure, but from which they would happily escape. Escape could be either material or symbolic, most often a combination of both. Sometimes it has to do with fantasies of self-entrepreneurship, often nurtured in the ascending religious language of individual empowerment of born-again Christianity. In this regard, workers may even be available to accept layoffs to cash benefits and buy a bakkie for a transport business, or the tools for a small electric repair shop, even if such money most often goes into the repayment of debts and school fees. Sometimes respondents idealize rural life – despite the grinding poverty many of their relatives’ experience in rural areas – as a symbolic, desirable counterbalance to the chaos and unpredictability of the city as regular employment and male “breadwinning” authority decline and collapse. Ruralism becomes therefore an imagined space where masculine power and age authority continue to structure social life. Another theme surfacing in my interviews are xenophobic feelings of blaming non-South African migrants’ acceptance of low-wage jobs as responsible for turning work from “what it is supposed to be” to “what it is”. Yet, even if they see their actual jobs as “elsewhere” from what they would consider a dignified life, most respondents remain attached to work and “job creation” as the solution to the country’s social problems. Such apparent paradox is reflected in their approach to the ANC, seen simultaneously as cause of the current social crisis and the imagined deliverer from it.

It would, however, be wrong to conclude that, as many conservative commentators and government consultants try to reassure us, despite all odds all South Africa’s poor want is “work, not handouts”. When I probed the meanings of “work” in workers’ discourse of “job creation”, I found that it is not “work” as a mere economic transaction that such narratives are primarily about, and surely not about the work such workers actually have. They are rather about a whole imagined social order ideally premised on an equally imagined idea of respectable work. Work regains its centrality in these narratives not so much for its economic importance, but as the repository of an imaginary that tries to find validation by harking back to the state’s and the unions’ work-centered citizenship discourse. As such, it tends to be a conservative workers’ imaginary too: for most of my respondents, images of decent work, what is left of past promises of redemption of wage labour, are deeply linked with ideas of family respectability, strict gendered division of household tasks, masculine power and national purity, where “disrespectful”, crime-prone youth are kept out of the streets and under control, women are confined to domesticity, reproduction and care, and migrants don’t “steal” national jobs.

If actual work is a place to escape from, such an escape is, however, expressed, in the absence of a political alternative to the hegemonic work-centered citizenship discourse, in conservative, when not overtly reactionary and authoritarian forms of what I call worker melancholia. Contrary to the nostalgic, who yearns for an idealized past, the melancholic yearns for the imagined yet unrealized possibilities. As Ranjana Khanna defines it: “Melancholia is not only a crippling attachment to a past that acts like a drain of energy on the present …. Rather, the melancholic’s critical agency, and its peculiar temporality that drags it back and forth at the same time, acts towards the future”.

What I identify as the emerging politics of worker melancholia provides some insights into the rise of Jacob Zuma and the post-Polokwane phase of ANC rule. Zuma’s rise has a lot to do with the country’s crisis of waged employment, manifested in organized labour’s resentment at Mbeki’s betrayal of the democratic promise of working class power and proletarian redemption. Zuma’s self-consciously masculine persona and his message of family values, social discipline, subservient womanhood, toughness on crime, and border control respond to the anxieties generated by employment precariousness by abetting the melancholic fantasies of a working class embittered by decades of disappointments and by the inadequacies of its putative political representatives. Under such conditions, the continuous glorification of work as the foundation of citizenship is at serious risk of contributing to an authoritarian, chauvinist social order presiding over the continuous brutality of the market.

Three lessons emerge from this discussion. First, precariousness of work is not just produced by labour market dynamics but by the intersection of wage labour transformations, institutional dynamics and official imagination. Claus Offe puts it nicely in defining precariousness as “harmful unpredictability” arising from a condition where work declines as a foundation for a decent, meaningful life and yet it is maintained by the state’s policy discourse as the foundation of the social order. Second, precariousness is not, however, just a condition of domination and disempowerment, but can also open spaces to imagine strategies of liberation from the compulsion to work for wages. The history of proletarian struggles in South Africa and Africa shows that the crises of waged work are the result not only of the unfettered power of capital but also of everyday strategies of refusal, confirming indeed Mario Tronti’s point that “wage labour is the provider of capital; the refusal of wage labour means the destruction of capital”. Finally, social research needs to move beyond a purely normative understanding of citizenship as a desirable ideal of “inclusion” and focus instead on the paradoxes, contradictions and quandaries of what Cruikshank terms citizenship as a “technology” of empowerment based on specific disciplining of conducts and hierarchical stratifications where divides between inclusion and exclusion become blurred and uncertain.

Gilles Deleuze wrote: “If you get caught in someone else’s dreams, you are lost”. Over and over again, before, during, and after apartheid, South Africa’s poor have been caught in the State’s unsettling biopolitical dream of ordering populations according to the hierarchies defined by a labour market that can enable decent lives only for a small minority. To avoid getting lost in the rulers’ dream, maybe it is time, in these crepuscular times of decline of neoliberalism, for everyday desires recalcitrant to wage labour no longer to be seen as harbingers of chaos and ungovernability but as constitutive elements of a new grammar of autonomy and liberation.

#### Hegemony is a paranoid fantasy – the 1AC’s attempt to overcome its obstacles to primacy only externalizes the lack to convince us that the problem lies in Otherness – that creates a feedback loop of insecurity and racialized logics.

Solomon ‘15

Ty Solomon, Lecturer in International Relations, University of Glasglow, “The Politics of Subjectivity in American Foreign Policy Discourses,” University of Michigan Press, Jan 2015, KB rc/pat

Rather than acknowledging the possibility that the ambiguity of subjectivity cannot be overcome, the prospect of American global domination offers a fantasy that channels the desire for subjectivity in a direction that promises a lack of absolutely nothing for “America.” Yet both this image of American global domination and the discursive attempts to pin down what the nation is missing are fantasy objects—partial manifestations of object a that indeed never existed but are posited to have existed and whose presumed absence sparks the desire for the recovery of the enjoyment that they seem to promise.9 While articulating that what America lacks constitutes the potential source of global chaos, other aspects of the discourse soften the impact of this potential source of global disintegration. Whereas Krauthammer emphasized unipolarity for unipolarity’s sake, without giving too much gravity to potential threats or others, Kristol and Kagan’s text is replete with other potential obstacles to enjoyment. Kristol and Kagan offer up a variety of “rogue states” and other entities that join with national weakness to become threats on the horizon. China and Iran, for example, appear frequently as states that likely will not accede to the international rules that the US lays down or adopt American values. “Whether or not the United States continues to grant most-favored-nation status to China is less important” for Kristol and Kagan (1996: 23) “than whether it has an overall strategy for containing, influencing, and ultimately seeking to change the regime in Beijing.”

America should develop a missile defense system capable of “shielding, say, Los Angeles from nuclear intimidation by the Chinese during the next crisis in the Taiwan Strait” (25). The greater defense capabilities the US builds up, the “less chance there is that countries like China or Iran will entertain ambitions of upsetting the present world order”—a world order defined by American principles (26). Spreading American influence abroad “means not just supporting U.S. friends and gently pressuring other nations but actively pursuing policies—in Iran, Cuba, or China, for instance—ultimately intended to bring about a change of regime” (28). And more broadly, Kristol and Kagan fear that given America’s indifference toward foreign affairs, it “may no longer have the wherewithal to defend against threats to America’s vital interests in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, much less to extend America’s current global preeminence well into the future” (24). In one sense, figures such as China and Iran constitute Others against which American “identity” is defined. We are benevolent, while they are aggressive. We spread our universal values to the benefit of all, while they spread fear and threaten peaceful nations. We construct world order, they wantonly seek to undermine it. This illustrates what many IR identity theorists have pointed out—that identity depends on an Other for its definition. Weldes (1999: 220), for example, argues that “identity and difference are mutually constitutive: there is always a politics of identity through which identity and difference are defined in tandem.” In this view, it is perhaps not terribly surprising that Kristol and Kagan’s discourse aided in enhancing neoconservative traction during the later 1990s. Their discourse produces a series of Others against which “American” identity is defined, and consequently these “foreign policy problems allow for the articulation and rearticulation of relations of identity/difference as a means of both constituting and securing state identity” (220).

However, the present analysis demonstrates that this process of Othering is itself made possible and sustained by the movements of lack, desire, and enjoyment—the key factors that are mostly neglected in IR identity frameworks. Beyond the mere construction of “us” and “them,” in a more fundamental sense the incompleteness of the collective subject of Kristol and Kagan’s discourse is projected onto the figures of these states. The key notion here is, again, that the subject is a subject of lack. Subjects are always already decentered and disjointed. The movements of lack and anticipated wholeness—and how the subject is produced as dealing with these ambiguities—are the condition of possibility of Self-Other relations. Lack is dealt with through the fantasy implied in their discourse. In Kristol and Kagan’s discourse, the entire world under America’s protective and benevolent wing would be peaceful and largely free of antagonism, tension, and conflict if not for nonconforming states such as China, Iraq, and Iran. Yet rather than Others whose objective presence is deemed threatening, the figures of China, Iran, and others patch up the contingent fantasy of American global supremacy. The fantasy of American security, which is the fantasy of global conformity to American “universal” values, is, like all fantasies, an impossible project. Fantasy offers a way to deal with this contingency through a discourse that attempts to cover over the incompleteness of subject formation and the perpetual unfulfillment of desire for enjoyment. On one hand, Kristol and Kagan offer a neoconservative vision of American global control, while on the other hand, we have the ontological impossibility of such a social totality. What accounts for this discursive discrepancy? The sole answer offered by the discourse is “rogue states” such as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. Yet, according to the dynamics of desire analyzed here, world order is not prevented by rogue states, but from the impossibility of “fully” constructing such an entity. In other words, the spark of desire stems from the incompleteness of the subject itself, which in turn gives rise to fantasy and Othering:

The point is not that “we” are nothing but the drive to annihilate the antagonistic force that prevents us from achieving our full identity. Rather, the antagonistic force is held responsible for the blockage of our full identity, and this permits the externalization of our constitutive lack as subjects to the negating Other, which thus becomes the positive embodiment of our selfblockage. As a result our political actions will tend to be guided by the illusion that the annihilation of the antagonistic force will permit us to become the fully constituted “we” that we have always sought to be. (Torfing 1999: 128–29)

This balancing act within fantasy drives much of the identification appeal of Kristol and Kagan’s discourse. While they argue that American internal “weakness,” “mood,” “indifference,” and the like must be confronted with appropriate programs of increased militarization and more nationalistic spectacles (signified by “our” need to more fully adhere to “honor,” “exceptionalism,” “national greatness,” and so on), the coherence of the discourse rests on a fantasy in which a localizable set of Others—“rogue states”—constitute the sole obstacles on which the inescapable contingency and incompleteness of American global domination can be projected. It is not the possibility that America’s values may not in fact be universal, nor is it the possibility that the rest of the world may not welcome with open arms American “benevolent hegemony.” It is not that “we,” the subject, are incapable of fully embracing our enjoyment because of the impossibility of its full experience. It is, as the fantasy rationalizes, a relatively small group of Others that impedes American total global hegemony. They pose an obstacle to our wholeness. If not for these Others, the US and the world would reclaim the mythical wholeness of enjoyment. The fantasy in fact presupposes that the subject was unified before the missing object was lost. Again, Kristol and Kagan remember the days when Reagan summoned the full potential of American spiritual and military might, stared down the Soviet Union, and won the Cold War for the side of freedom. They recall even further in the past, when Theodore Roosevelt inspired Americans to embrace their global responsibilities. Together, both of these leaders “celebrated American exceptionalism” (1996: 32). Thus, the fantasy blames others while simultaneously offering the promise of enjoyment as something missing for which to strive.

This double movement within fantasy (an Other to blame and a missing yet promised “sublime object,” both of which are negotiations with lack and incompleteness) is key to tracing the discursive efficacy here. As Yannis Stavrakakis (1999: 82) points out, this “fantasmatic element is crucial for the desirability of all [such] discourses, in other words for the hegemonic appeal.” America is missing something that it had during both Roosevelt’s and Reagan’s times (partially symbolized by terms such as moral clarity, American principles, honor, national greatness, and so on). The fantasy itself retroactively constructs what it says was lost, a unity that never was. The subject’s loss drives the desire for reclaiming that which is perceived to have been lost (the indefinable object a), and Kristol and Kagan offer a neoconservative fantasy that explains what the subject must do to once again reach wholeness.

Through fantasy, we can further draw out some of the key contrasts between Kristol and Kagan’s discourse and Krauthammer’s. As is evident, fantasies are typically constituted through a double movement. On one hand, for an identity to exist, there must be difference. Fantasies usually offer up an Other on which the incompleteness of the subject may be projected. On the other hand, fantasies offer a promise to come—a promise that “we” will recover some “sublime object” that is felt to have been lost (though it never existed). The constitutive dynamics of the first dimension (the frustrations of lack and wholeness that produce a focus a focus on Otherness) and this second dimension (the enticement of a promised enjoyment) are often overlooked in IR identity accounts. In other words, “the stake of social-ideological fantasy is to construct a vision of society which does exist, a society which is not split by an antagonistic division” that will lure subjects to identify with it (Žižek 1989: 126). Krauthammer’s discourse on unipolarity arguably concerned one aspect of fantasy without evoking the other. The unipolarity discourse relied to some extent on its construction of Others for the projection of the collective subject’s lack. Yet the promise it offered actually seemed close to fulfillment—a “unipolar moment” with America on top. The promise of enjoyment fades rather than sparks desire, and this discourse’s relative troubles with resonance may be traced to this aspect. It offered an Other but lacked an appealing promise of enjoyment to come. In contrast, the fantasy implied in Kristol and Kagan’s discourse evokes both dimensions of fantasy.

It offers a series of Others that are constructed as threatening but that function as the sites on which the incompleteness of the discourse’s subject is projected. In conjunction, it also offers the promised recovery of a core part of “us” that is felt to be missing. This discourse keeps the indefinable object a at a proper distance to draw subjects to its promise yet not too close so as to kill desire. Placing the fantasies of these two discourses side by side, therefore, we can see more clearly how fundamental both aspects of fantasy’s double movement are to the differing efficacy of these discourses.

Hegemonic Logic

These elements of fantasy underpinned the neoconservative attempts at discursive hegemony in the late 1990s. Logics of equivalence and difference function here in much the same way as they have in other neoconservative discourses. Boundaries of the collective subject and its Others are constructed through strings of signifiers that attempt to pin down or represent the subject within discourse, and Others are constructed through strings of differences. The Others against which the subject is defined are constructed through different predications that attempt to express who and what they are and what they share against the US. American forces “deter Chinese aggression against democratic Taiwan” in East Asia, help deter a “possible invasion” of South Korea by the North, and help deter “possible aggression by Saddam Hussein or the fundamentalist regime in Iran” in the Persian Gulf (Kristol and Kagan 1996: 20–21). Both “rogue states” such as North Korea and “nuclear intimidation” by the Chinese pose threats to the US mainland (25). China and Iran “entertain ambitions of upsetting the present world order” (26). For Kristol and Kagan, all of these examples illustrate how John Quincy Adams’s warning that the US “ought not go ‘abroad in search of monsters to destroy’” is now outdated (31). “But why not?,” the authors ask, questioning Adams (31). “The alternative is to leave monsters on the loose, ravaging and pillaging to their hearts’ content, as Americans stand by and watch” (31). “Aggression,” “invasion,” “fundamentalist,” “rogue,” “intimidation,” “upsetting,” even “monsters”—these various names and signifiers constitute not just a series of Others (mainly China, Iran, and Iraq) in Kristol and Kagan’s discourse, but all seem to express a common underlying similarity. “Fundamentalists” and “rogues” are almost by definition here “aggressive” and “monsters,” enjoying a combination of “ravaging,” “pillaging,” “aggression,” and “upsetting.” As they are produced in the discourse, the similarities they share may seem to be some “essence” common to such outlaw states. Yet their unfixed definition is passed along this string of signifiers. When one’s definition is interrogated, one must rely on the other signifiers in the chain to fill in the definition. Their meanings, then, both differ and are deferred: they differ to the extent that they are deployable as different signifiers so that one can speak of them as different, yet each of their individual meanings is deferred to the others in the chain.

Similarly, logics of equivalence are at work in the construction of the “American” subject. “Moral clarity,” “American exceptionalism,” “moral confidence,” “American principles,” “American influence,” “patriotic mission,” “spirit,” “remoralization,” “honor,” “national greatness,” “heroic,” “elevated patriotism,” “responsibility,” and “moral and political leadership” all attempt to tie together what “America” and the “United States” mean. While each of these signifiers seems to point to a different quality or characteristic of the subject, they also seem to express a certain underlying similarity. Like the construction of difference in the chains constituting America’s Others, the signifiers constructing “America” seem to share a quality that cannot be expressed by any of them individually. Their meanings thus differ and are deferred; each of the signifiers differs from the others in one sense, yet their meanings within the text are deferred to other signifiers in the chain constructing the subject “America.” Their meanings are blurred to the extent that even though they are viewed as expressing a fundamental “Americanness,” nothing fundamental underlies any of the signifiers or the chain as a whole. The meaning of one is deferred to another without touching an underlying essence of the subject, simply because there is no such essence. The meanings circle around that which underlies the chain, which is simply a place of lack—a void (Laclau 1996: 57). Thus, logics of equivalence and difference are at work in the chains constructing both the American subject and America’s threatening Others.

Desire itself brings together these chains of identification. Desire for full representation, for a signifier that will represent the split subject in a way that its divisions and ambiguities will be healed, moves from object to object. Without lack there is no desire, and without desire there is no subjectivity. Within Kristol and Kagan’s discourse, the desire for subjectivity is constructed along the series of equivalences that construct both “America” and the Other(s). The desire for a signifier that will fully represent the subject and that will heal its divisions and erase its ambiguity shifts along the series of signifiers that attempt to represent it. “Moral clarity,” “American exceptionalism,” “moral confidence,” “national greatness,” and so on offer the promise of wholeness as laid out in the fantasy, yet all fail in their promise to heal the subject’s split. Thus, desire is constantly frustrated and constantly shifts to avoid this frustration, just as desire is frustrated in its inevitable encounter with the signifiers of the Other(s). The two chains are mutually constitutive of each other, and desire is frustrated in the lack of representation in “our” chain and by the Other(s) that are perceived to block our representation (yet actually function as the signifying patches that allow the subject some coherence). The complete subject that they imply is nothing other than the retroactive construction of itself that did not exist before it was presumed by the fantasy. The equivalences attempt to touch this “America” that is/was without division, yet the fantasy implicit in these signifiers merely covers over a lack.

Implicit in these plays of equivalence and difference is the filling and emptying of “universal” and “particular” meanings. The plays of universals and particulars are not just the politics of difference and similarity but are blended with the plays of presence and absence of desire and enjoyment in the discourse. Kristol and Kagan’s discourse is stuffed with universals whose meanings they attempt to fill with particular neoconservative understandings. Most obviously, “America” and the “United States” are nodal points that Kristol and Kagan attempt to give meaning and fantasy. “America” is not by nature an isolationist nation, they argue. Instead, America’s true role is that of the “benevolent” global hegemon (1996: 20). Here, the nation is an ambiguous site of inscription on which Kristol and Kagan write their own understanding of “America.” The United States is a country that, properly understood, actively and aggressively promotes its ideals as those that should define global order. Wrongly understood, it is a country that merely sits on the sidelines to play exemplar for others to follow. Such a policy “of sitting atop a hill and leading by example becomes in practice a policy of cowardice and dishonor,” Kristol and Kagan write scornfully (31).

Other universals function in the same manner. “Moral clarity,” “American exceptionalism,” and “moral confidence” can have a range of plausible meanings. “Moral clarity” is deployed to represent what “America,” properly understood, should be. “American exceptionalism” can and has had a range of plausible meanings, yet for them it means the active promotion of “exceptionalism” to a world that does not have it yet needs it. Global order itself depends on it. “Moral confidence” in itself has no intrinsic content outside of the particular meanings attributed to it through hegemonic contestation, and the authors fill it in here as that particularly “American” quality that the subject must recapture and utilize if it is to fully become itself again. The other prominent signifiers, embedded in the neoconservative fantasy offered, function in the same manner. “Moral confidence,” “American princi- ples,” “American influence,” “patriotic mission,” “spirit,” “remoralization,” “honor,” “national greatness,” “heroic,” “elevated patriotism,” “responsibility,” and “moral and political leadership” are all intrinsically ambiguous “universal” signifiers whose contingent meanings are filled in by the particular neoconservative fantasy offered. These universals, then, are not merely filled in by the particular meanings that Kristol and Kagan construct but are intimately and inextricably bound to the plays of desire and enjoyment that are channeled through the discourse of the text. The particular meanings of these universal notions are bound up with fantasies that promise the construction of a subject that implies an erasure of its ambiguities. These fantasies are tied to images of Others that block our enjoyment. If not for these Others (the subject believes) desire would be satisfied, enjoyment would be achieved, and the subject would no longer feel the frustration of its incompleteness. Yet the removal of these Others would still reveal the subject’s ambiguity and lack, simply because lack is constitutive of subjectivity. The creation of political boundaries and frontiers, then, is inextricably tied with the politics of desire and enjoyment.

#### Economic issues such as poverty and unemployment are structurally inevitable—policy responses will inevitably be managed by the desire for accumulation capitalists and promote violent interventions overseas

Tozzo ‘11

Brandon Tozzo (Queen’s University, Canada). “Can Theories of Empire Explain the American Political Response to the Financial Crisis?” Critical Sociology, 39(1), 9-20, 2011.

Introduction The 2008 financial crisis led to the largest and deepest global recession in the USA since the 1930s. What began as a downturn in the American housing market cascaded into a structural economic crisis with banks and investment firms failing, credit markets freezing, and unemployment reaching its highest levels since the early 1980s (US Department of Labour Statistics, 2009: 190). Governments across the globe took unprecedented measures to prevent a global depression: banks were given government loans and recapitalized, major industries were partially nationalized, and stimulus measures were introduced to prevent a deflationary spiral. The Bush administration, which at least rhetorically touted fiscal restraint and free market discipline, introduced the Toxic Asset Relief Program (TARP), a US$700b government intervention in the financial sector. Many neo-liberal economic policies that had been adopted since the 1970s were cast aside in the face of a possible global depression. The crisis demonstrates economic vulnerability in the country often conceptualized by critical scholars as the central network in the global capitalist empire. The financial crisis serves as an event where central assumptions about empire can be empirically evaluated, particularly the response of the US government to a major structural threat to the capitalist system. The purpose of this article will be to evaluate three distinct theories of empire that each differ in the way they conceptualize the relationship between capitalism and the American Government: the first is that described by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the second that of Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, and the third that of David Harvey. I will conclude by arguing that David Harvey’s theory of ‘new imperialism’ offers the most convincing account of the USA’s response to the financial crisis due to the theory’s account of the tensions and contradictions between US politicians and capitalists in the lead up and response to the crisis. I will begin by examining the American Government’s response to the financial crisis, and then I will outline several assumptions of each major theory of empire. Critical theories of empire are methodologically holistic, often examining a wide array of interrelated social phenomena such as production, material and immaterial labor, distribution, and political power. Although each of these is important in the broader theoretical context, it would be beyond the scope of this article to examine the broader theories in detail. Rather, I will place focus on one aspect of empire – the relationship between capitalism as a system and the actions of the US government – though I will at times examine how other factors interrelate. The purpose of this article is not to provide a systematic assessment or rejection, but a critical examination of a key assumption that varies between each theory of empire. The goal of this analysis is not to make a larger generalization about a specific theory of empire, but to elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of a central assumption that differs for each theory when trying to explain the actions of the US government in a time of economic crises. The 2008 Financial Crisis: What Happened? While there is a great deal of debate over the long- and short-term causes of the financial crisis, one of the most important determining factors was the downturn in the American housing market that began in 2007. The long-term causes of the crisis range from the American proclivity towards home ownership and the gradual loosening of regulations over finance and mortgage lending since the 1980s. A key institutional change passed by Congress in 1999, the Financial Services Modernization Act, eliminated the barrier between commercial and investment banks, leading to the securitization of mortgages – bundling together numerous mortgages for investors. The liberalization of mortgage terms led home owners to take out variable-rate interest mortgages in order to finance the purchases of a home; by 2004–5 nearly one third of all homes purchased in the USA had an adjustable-rate mortgage (Bellamy Foster and Magdoff, 2009). The popularity of these loans was mainly due to the availability of cheap credit, the lack of regulation over the term of mortgages and the seemingly endless rise in the value of the housing market. After the dot-com bubble burst in 2001, the American Federal Reserve decided to keep interest rates artificially low in order to prevent a recession, creating a glut of cheap credit. This had a dual effect: it led banks and investment firms to over-leverage, and it created an incentive for individuals to take out mortgages with the knowledge that they would likely be able to sell their home for a substantial profit. However, since profits were so high, it created an incentive for lenders, the government and home owners to expand the housing market by lowering the requirements for a mortgage. These home owners with poor credit were offered mortgages at variable or sub-prime interest rates – that is lending to people who were deemed medium to high risk. In 2002, sub-prime loans made up only 6 percent of overall mortgages; by 2007, nearly 30 percent of mortgages were sub-prime (Economist, 2007). In order to finance these mortgages, banks securitized, or bundled together, mortgages into Collateralized Debt Obligations (CDOs) and sold them to investors. From 2002 to 2006, the general value of houses in the USA increased, allowing everyone involved in the mortgage market to make a substantial profit. Beginning in 2006, an increasing number of foreclosures led to a downturn in the value of the housing market, causing a cascade of problems for the overall economy. The decline in the housing market gained speed in 2007 and began to have significant repercussions on the American and global economy. The initial problems started with the investment firms Bear Sterns, which required a bailout in the spring of 2008 and was eventually sold to JP Morgan. The downturn of the financial industry became even more evident when two government-backed institutions, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which invested heavily in sub-prime loans, required government intervention in September 2008. By the end of 2008, many home owners that took out sub-prime loans had their interest rates rise, which led to greater difficulty in refinancing and selling, placing further downward pressure on the housing market. Those capable of making their mortgage payments were left with negative equity – the value of their homes were worth less than the mortgage, leading to a substantial loss of savings. As foreclosures increased, banks were left with homes that could not be sold and were steadily decreasing in value. Furthermore, many major financial institutions were over-leveraged in order to sell mortgages, making them even more vulnerable to a decline in the housing market. To make matters worse, investors, often afraid of losing money in an already fragile economic climate, were far less likely to invest in banks and institutions that had sold sub-prime mortgages, making liquidity increasingly scarce. These three factors interrelated with each other, leading what may have started as a downtown in the American economy into a global financial crisis. Although the underlying problems in the housing market may have laid the foundations for a downturn in the US economy, the initiating factor for the global financial crisis was the bankruptcy of the investment firm Lehman Brothers. Like many other firms, Lehman Brothers invested heavily in mortgaged-backed securities. By September 2008, Lehman Brothers had $600b worth of sub-prime mortgages. These ‘toxic assets’ led to a decline in stock value, and the inability to secure private sector loans due to over-leveraging – it became increasingly evident Lehman would need a bailout like Bear Sterns and Frannie Mae and Freddie Mac (Walsh, 2008). As I will examine in detail later, the US government made a key decision that had repercussions for the entire global economy – the Treasury and the US Federal Reserve decided to break the precedent of bailing out institutions and let Lehman Brothers declare bankruptcy. The immediate reactions of both domestic and international markets were severe: credit markets froze as the market for commercial paper dried up (Sorkin, 2008). Banks would no longer risk lending to each other. The crisis went global and by the end of October most major stock markets were down by around 30 percent. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2010), by the end of 2009, 34 million people across the globe had lost their jobs due to the recession that followed the crisis (a statistic which does not include those under-employed or already unemployed). The decline in the US housing market after the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers spread to other countries: AIG, a global insurance industry almost went bankrupt due to insuring mortgages with Credit Default Swaps (CDS); Britain’s Northern Rock was nationalized; and the entire country of Iceland had an economic meltdown. These events led Britain’s Economist (2008a) to argue, ‘the world economy is “entering a major downturn” in the face of “the most dangerous shock” to rich-country financial markets since the 1930s.’ The reaction of the US government to the failure of Lehman Brothers and the credit crisis is an important event that will be used to evaluate the explanatory capabilities of the three theories of empire under consideration. Empire and the American Response to the Financial Crisis Though the majority of this analysis will be an assessment of where these theories diverge, the theories of empire under consideration are part of a neo-Marxist epistemological tradition and share many assumptions about capitalism, states, and production. Hardt and Negri, Panitch and Gindin, and Harvey problematize capitalism as an international system of production and accumulation. Capitalism is characterized by an unequal distribution of economic resources that leads to the impoverishment of a vast portion of the world’s population (Callinicos, 2009). Marxist theories of empire recognize there are periodic crises that occur due to the contradictions within capitalism. Imperialism is often used as a way to mitigate crises: to sell excess products on new markets, through the privatization of public goods, and to open up regions for capitalist accumulation (Harvey, 2003). Capitalism requires political force in order to maintain and expand the system; this places pressure on governments to act in the interests of capitalists. At times this can be done through negotiation, as with the opening of China, while at other times it requires the use of military force. This reliance on violence places analytical importance on the USA as central to the global capitalist system. Even Hardt and Negri (2000) who emphasize the deterritorialization of Empire argue ‘the United States certainly occupies a privileged position in the global segmentations and hierarchies of Empire’ (2000: 384). America has been central to the perpetuation of global capitalism throughout the 20th century, using incentives when possible and the US military when necessary to open markets. While there are certain commonalities between each theory, they do differ at how they conceptualize the relationship between the US government and the economic interests of finance capital. As I shall explain, there is sufficient evidence that Harvey’s theory of the new imperialism gives the most insight into the immediate response of the US government to the financial crisis. I will discuss how Harvey’s theory accounts for the initial response to the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, and the introduction of TARP which bought or insured most of the major investment firms. Also, Harvey provides insight into the events since the initial crisis: the conflict over the introduction of the Obama administration’s stimulus package, the underlying economic tension between China and the USA, and the difficulty in instituting international banking reform. While I will elaborate on the strengths of Harvey’s theory in greater detail, I will begin by discussing the deficiencies in alternative theories of empire. Hardt and Negri offer one of the most significant contributions to the critical literature on empire. Their theory of Empire (intentionally capitalized by the authors) brings together Marxism, American constitutionalism, and postmodernism in order to describe the economic and political transformation of states and the capitalist system. The globalization of production has changed the nature of political sovereignty from the nation-state to a transnational juridical-political order. For Hardt and Negri (2000), ‘Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire’s rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire ‘civilized world’’ (2000: xvi). The development of Empire is an inevitable part of human history – a sentiment lauded by almost all empires – and has expanded into new geographic territories. Empire has transcended the nationstate and is a process of accumulation and biopolitical production – in a synthesis of Marxist and Foucauldian thought (2000: xv). Empire regulates human interactions, the labor process and even social life through national and international institutions, laws and norms in order to control and exploit the labor of the global multitude (2000: xv). The significance of their theory is that Empire is no longer territorialized in a single nation-state; Empire exists in a series of network relations that are no longer limited by geographical and political boundaries.

#### This cultivates into a politics of melodrama- threats to the current biopolitical ordering register as wounds on the individual level- that encourages violent redemption and the policing of non-virtuous citizenship

Anker ‘14

[Elizabeth, American Studies at George Washington University. 2014. “Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom.”] KB/spaldwin rc/pat / rc sosa

What I call melodramatic political discourse casts politics, policies, and practices of citizenship within a moral economy that identifies the nation-state as a virtuous and innocent victim of villainous action. It locates goodness in the suffering of the nation, evil in its antagonists, and heroism in sovereign acts of war and global control coded as expressions of virtue. By evoking intense visceral responses to wrenching injustices imposed upon the nation-state, melodramatic discourse solicits affective states of astonishment, sorrow, and pathos through the scenes it shows of persecuted citizens. It suggests that the redemption of virtue obligates state power to exercise heroic retribution on the forces responsible for national injury. Melodrama depicts the United States as both the feminized, virginal victim and the aggressive, masculinized hero in the story of freedom, as the victim-hero of geopolitics. Its national injuries morally legitimate the violence, extensions, and consolidations of state power that melodrama posits as necessary both for healing the nation’s wound and for reestablishing the state’s sovereign freedom. Melodramatic political discourse provides the tableaux and the legitimacy for the late-modern expansion of state power.

Melodrama is often associated with intimate affairs, personal misfortune, and domestic problems within the home, and even scholars who have written most incisively about the political effects of melodrama primarily examine how it attends to social injustices within the nation and finds redress for them in intimate relationships rather than in eff orts to challenge injustice in more directly political ways. Yet as a political discourse, melodrama operates in different registers: the suffering of U.S. subjects that it depicts appears to be caused by something outside the national body; an unjust injury wounds the entire nation, and this transforms melodrama to a more public, national, and state-centered register. The eradication of injustice in melodramatic political discourse is not about finding consolation in the domestic sphere, as it is in many film and literary melodramas; it is about an aggressive performance of strength in the national political sphere. The agency in melodramatic political discourse focuses on global and spectacular displays of power; its sphere of action is public and usually institutional because of the villainy it aims to countermand. In melodramatic political discourse, the nation’s terrible injury becomes the foundational justification for violent and expansive state power.

Orgies of Feeling investigates the history, political strategies, and affective pulls of melodramatic political discourses, with a focus on contemporary U.S. politics. While melodramatic cultural expressions are not limited to the United States—a s the phenomena of Latin American telenovelas, Nigerian “Nollywood” videos, Soviet expressionism, and South Korean fi lm make clear—t his book focuses on American melodrama in order to map its work as a nation- building and state- legitimating discourse.4 Melodrama became an influential political discourse after World War II, gaining popularity with the rise of the cold war and televisual political communication. It circulated throughout the second half of the twentieth century, as its conventions helped to narrate the expansion of U.S. global power and justify the growth of the national- security state. Melodramatic political discourses often legitimated anticommunist international relations and the burgeoning neoliberal political economy (though as I also show, melodrama sometimes worked in different or contradictory ways, and had unintended effects). In the twenty-first century, and especially after the 9 / 11 attacks, melodrama’s popularity exploded in political discourse, in large part because of the nation-state’s realignment against terrorism. Orgies of Feeling examines the rise of melodramatic political discourse after World War II, but pays special attention to melodrama’s operations in the new millennium.

The melodramas that I track in this book often promote a specific type of citizenship, in which the felt experience of being an American comprises not only persecuted innocence and empathic connection with other Americans’ suffering but also the express demand to legitimate state power. In these melodramas, the nation’s unjust suffering proves its virtue, and virtue authorizes dramatic expressions of state action, including war and state surveillance. In contemporary politics, the intensifications of antidemocratic and often violent forms of state power—including military occupation, the exponential growth of the national-security state, the formalization of racial profiling, the narrowing of already minute points of access to political power for nonelite citizens, the criminalization of nonviolent protest, the militarization of police power, and the further abridgements of institutionalized civil liberties—are partly rooted in the melodramatic mobilization of a political subject who legitimates them as an expression of the nation’s virtue.

A paradigmatic example of melodramatic political discourse is President George W. Bush’s speech on the War in Afghanistan at the Pentagon on October 11, 2001. The story that the speech emplotted relied on melodramatic genre conventions— including a narrative of virtue and redemption, heightened affects of pain, detailed explanations of individual suffering, and a sense of overwhelmed victimhood that transmutes virtue into strength— to both unify national identity and authorize a war that had already begun four days prior. He stated,

On September 11th, great sorrow came to our country. And from that sorrow has come great resolve. Today, we are a nation awakened to the evil of terrorism, and determined to destroy it. That work began the moment we were attacked; and it will continue until justice is delivered. . . . The loss was sudden, and hard, and permanent. So difficult to explain. So difficult to accept. Three schoolchildren traveling with their teacher. An Army general. A budget analyst who reported to work h ere for 30 years. A lieutenant commander in the Naval Reserve who left behind a wife, a four-year-old son, and another child on the way. But to all of you who lost someone h ere, I want to say: You are not alone. . . . We know the loneliness you feel in your loss. The entire nation, entire nation, shares in your sadness. . . .

The hijackers were instruments of evil who died in vain. Behind them is a cult of evil which seeks to harm the innocent and thrives on human suffering. Theirs is the worst kind of cruelty, the cruelty that is fed, not weakened, by tears. . . . This week, I have called the Armed Forces into action. One by one, we are eliminating power centers of a regime that harbors al Qaeda terrorists. We gave that regime a choice: Turn over the terrorists, or face your ruin. They chose unwisely. . . . We’re not afraid. Our cause is just and worthy of sacrifice. Our nation is strong of heart, firm of purpose. Inspired by all the courage that has come before, we will meet our moment and we will prevail.5

The speech details the events on September 11, 2001, through melodramatic conventions that emphasize the intense pain the attacks caused to ordinary individuals, and the speech uses that pain to mark the virtue of all Americans who share in the sadness of the people directly injured or killed by terrorism. Bush details the violence of the 9 / 11 events by specifying the people who died as moms and dads, schoolchildren, and neighbors— ordinary people, people just like his listeners. It is as if their travails could be, indeed are, our own. Melodrama confers virtue upon innocent people who unjustly suffer from dominating power, and this is part of the genre’s cultural work; in this deployment of melodrama, all Americans suffer from the attack, and thus all share in the nation’s virtue. The speech connects the children who lost parents with “our country”: the children’s innocence is a metonym for that of the nation, for what it has lost after this terrifying attack. This connection is a binding gesture that brings a nation ordinarily riven and stratified by class, race, immigration status, and sex into a shared unity that circumvents instead of represses stratification. It makes hierarchies of power and identity irrelevant to the experience of being an innocent and injured American in the wake of 9 / 11. The suffering that unifies the nation is suffering from terror. Other political modes of understanding also circulate in this speech to bind people together and mark the legitimacy of war: a deep sense of injustice and fear from the 9 / 11 attacks, American exceptionalism, and masculinist protection.6 Yet melodramatic conventions work here to solicit the sense that war has already been legitimated by the felt sorrow that unifies the nation. Melodrama, in this speech, insists that the affective experience of sorrow is equivalent to the authorization of war.

This speech cultivates the heightened affects Americans were experiencing by explicating them, naming sorrow, loss, and resolve in a way that turns them into norms for proper feeling and then yokes them together into a narrative trajectory. Sorrow and loss pave the way for “great resolve,” so that the determination to “destroy” evil is positioned as a foregone conclusion that grows organically out of sorrow. The move to destroy terrorism then becomes a moral requirement and a narrative expectation for addressing the nation’s suffering, rather than a contestable political decision.7 In this speech, melodramatic conventions form a nation-building discourse that distinguishes who is and is not American by demarcating proper victimhood in relation to state power: virtuous Americans identify with the suffering of grieving Americans, but they also sanction heroic state action against evil. War is promised to deliver a justice so clear and right that it is “worthy of sacrifice.” The willingness to sacrifice further gestures to the goodness of the nation willing to make itself sacrificial in response to its sorrow, even as it is presupposed that real sacrifice will never be asked of the vast majority of the polity; in other speeches Bush asks Americans to sacrifice for the war effort by hugging their children, going shopping, and traveling by airplane.8 In this melodrama the primary indicators of good citizenship, of what it means to be a real American, consist of a felt suffering from terrorism, plus the resolve to go to war. More than other genres, such as the jeremiad and the impasse (which I will discuss), melodrama offers a reassuring narrative trajectory that bestows innocence and moral authority on the United States, and then authorizes state power as an expression of the nation’s virtue.9

Melodramatic political discourses can mark people who find its depictions unconvincing or wrong, or who actively question the legitimations it enables, as morally bankrupt, as un- American, as villainous, or even as terrorist.10 This is not to say that deployments of melodramatic discourse eliminate dissent, but rather that their depictions cast dissent as both illegible and unbearably cruel to injured victims—to real Americans. Many people, of course, have condemned melodrama’s moral injunctions or refused its legitimations of state power, even if they have not labeled these injunctions or legitimations melodramatic.11 Since the first days after 9 / 11, for instance, marginalized political groups (especially but not limited to those on the left ) resisted the melodramatic assumption that the attack signified American innocence or a virtuous nation, and spoke out against its moral mandate for retributive state violence. But melodrama may still have contributed to the affective responses to the events, even for people who resisted some of its terms. Upon encountering its depictions, one may hate its overt pathos yet cry at the suffering it shows. One might reject melodrama’s depiction of national identity yet find welcome connection in the virtuous community it offers. One might find that melodramatic tenets unacceptably simplify politics yet want to see brutal villains duly punished. Some parts of melodrama are more compelling than others, and melodramatic conventions do not need to be totalizing to have partial effects. Individuals are often moved in inconsistent ways by its depictions. These inconsistencies are part of melodrama’s affective charge. Many people have had to struggle with or against melodramatic conventions in staking their interpretations of the terrorist attacks and their aftermath, indeed in staking what kind of citizens they are or want to be. Even for those people who have responded ambivalently or antagonistically to it, melodrama has become the most powerful genre form of the war on terror.

Orgies of Feeling investigates different forms of melodramatic political discourse, including melodramas of neoliberalism, communism, and capitalism, with particular focus on melodramas of terrorism. Melodramatic political discourses can be found in the news media, political interviews, popular punditry, informal conversation, micro political registers, political theory, and organizing norms, as well as in the formal state rhetoric of presidential addresses: melodramas move through multiple vectors. The use of melodrama is not forced or coordinated across media outlets or political parties; its popularity across two centuries of cultural media make it readily available to multiple sites of power and address for depicting political life. Even though melodrama became a common rhetorical genre of the Bush administration in the first de cade of the new millennium, and the administration certainly seized on melodrama’s popularity to support its policies, melodrama did not originate from the administration or from any single source of authority. Its widespread use came from a much larger and contested historical trajectory that spans fields of power and political affiliation. Given the circulation of melodrama across political registers, I am thus less interested in judging whether melodrama is right or wrong in its depictions of political life— whether melodrama gives a true account or a false one—than in discerning its multiple workings and effects, its different appeals for different sites of power and subjectivity. People are not compelled by melodrama merely by coercive rhetoric or charismatic leaders. Melodramatic depictions of virtuous victimization, and predictions for the heroic overcoming of subjection, work on and through people in ways quite different from and beyond what institutional deployments of melodrama may intend. People who are drawn to melodrama’s conventions, or who welcome its narrative assurances, do not necessarily respond to melodrama in predetermined ways. The processes of melodramatic subjectivity are not identical with the strategic aims of melodramatic political discourse, although they are coextensive. To presuppose that subjectivizing processes are the same as or are exhausted by discursive intent would be to assume that political discourses equal political subjects that discourses determine psychic life, and that melodrama works the same way in different spaces, structures, and institutions.

To ascribe intent by a few elites for the pervasive use of melodrama is to ignore its appeal to a broad segment of the U.S. population, and to miss what melodrama’s popularity reveals about contemporary American political life. The question of who intends for melodrama to happen, or who controls its circulation and employment, is not unimportant, but to answer it by placing responsibility for melodrama’s popularity only on a few bad, powerful apples—rather than by also examining its appeal to a broad citizenry— is to mirror melodrama’s strategy of claiming innocence and virtue for its victimized protagonists while displacing blame only to an all-powerful villain. The interesting question for this book is therefore not “why are citizens duped by the elite’s use of melodrama into legitimating antidemocratic and violent state power?” but “what type of citizens may be compelled by melodramatic political discourse, and what do they imagine the powers it legitimates will do?”

The Promise of Freedom

Melodramas grapple with moral questions and aim to establish “moral legibility,” as Peter Brooks argues in his seminal account of the form.’2 They identify virtuous behavior and postulate that society also recognizes real virtue. In many film and television melodramas, the recognition of virtue is the endpoint of the narrative, and the climax of the story demonstrates the protagonist’s moral goodness. Yet in melodramatic political discourse, moral legibility—the identification of the nation’s virtue—is not the only factor motivating the widespread use of melodrama. There is another, perhaps more compelling, attraction: melodrama promises freedom for those who are virtuous. The moral legibility of melodramatic political discourse is in the service of an expectation that freedom is forthcoming for both injured citizens and the nation-state. The allure of melodramatic political discourse is the promise of emancipation that it offers those who unjustly suffer.

The norm of freedom that circulates in melodramatic political discourse is rooted in particularly liberal and Americanized interpretations of freedom as self-reliance, as unconstrained agency, and as unbound subjectivity. It combines these interpretations together as normative expressions of a sovereign subject, one who obeys no other authority but one’s own, who can determine the future and control the vagaries of contingency through sheer strength of will. Freedom requires the capacity for final authority over the space of the nation and aims to shore up boundaries of territories and bodies to make them impermeable to the influence of others. Freedom as this form of sovereign subjectivity seems to require control or mastery over the external world for its full exercise. Freedom, in this normative definition, is often equated with both individual and state sovereignty. Indeed, melodrama provides a site at which state and individual agency are conflated, as if the achievement of state sovereignty confers personal sovereignty upon every American. The practices of freedom that melodramas depict thus often take shape through an imaginary of freedom as the performance of sovereignty through unilateral action, war, intensified national security, and even as the institutionalization of what Gules Deleuze calls “societies of control:” as all are deployed in the service of controlling the political field and taming risk. This version of sovereignty implies that the state—and by extension the individual citizen—should be not only free from the coercions of others but also free over others. This latter freedom, though seldom explicitly acknowledged, is what ensures the possibility of the former.

The promise of sovereign freedom is present in melodramatic political discourse whether it shapes the cold war argument in the 19505 that the na tion has a moral requirement to eradicate the evil of communism from the world order, or the neoliberal argument in the 198os that welfare must be eliminated because it is a form of oppression that erodes individual freedom. Both melodramas, while organized around different stories and deployed for different purposes, offer the promise of future freedom through state power for virtuous Americans under siege. Neoliberal melodramas might seem to link freedom to limited state power, since economic policies grouped under the term neoliberal claim to facilitate individual freedom by deregulating cor porations and cutting both taxes and welfare. However, they typically limit only certain types of state power, those that hamper corporate profit or provide social services, both of which come to be cast as un-American, as outside the proper national body, and as forms of individual oppression. They increase state powers that expand military might, corporate growth, and surveillance. As Sheldon Wolin notes, neoliberal policies discredit the state’s ability to serve the needs of the people, but they do not weaken state power.’4 Neoliberal melodramas use the language of individual freedom not to retrench state power but to expand securitized and militarized forms of it.’5

Melodrama hearkens a future in which U.S. citizens and the state exercise their rightful entitlement to unconstrained power. As in Bush’s speech announcing the War in Afghanistan, melodramatic political discourses promise that U.S. military and state actions, together with the corporations that work through and as state power, can transform a sense of being over whelmed by power into a scene of triumphant strength and sovereign control. Similarly, Bush’s very first words to the nation describing the 9/11 attacks do not reflect a deep misunderstanding of the events or an empty rhetorical flourish: “Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward. And freedom will be defended.” These words are a precise expression of the promises that melodramatic political discourse offers the un justly injured nation: virtuous victims can gain back their sovereignty from anti-American forces by feats of heroic might.’6

A desire for sovereign freedom is thus a decisive factor in the authorization of state power as it takes shape in melodramatic political discourse. The promise of melodrama is that the American nation, once victimized, will eventually reassert its sovereign freedom through the virtuous acts of heroism it must perform against the cause of its injury. The melodramatic legitimation of violent, expansive, and constraining forms of power is thus paradoxically motivated by a desire to experience unconstrained freedom. This differs from the way that melodramatic genre expectations shape cin ema, theater, and literature, when story lines can end in pathos and tragedy for injured protagonists: an innocent victim may die after his or her virtue is celebrated, as in Uncle Toni’s Cabin or Brokeback iviountain (2005), or a hero will sacrifice his or her own life in order to save another or to uphold justice, as in The Birth of a Nation or Savi ng Private Ryan (1998). But in na tional politics melodramatic story lines that end without securing the universal freedom of their protagonists are generally left outside the expecta tions of the narrative. Freedom is frequently the stated goal of melodramatic initiatives in foreign, domestic, and military policy, and it is crucial to take these myriad and explicit claims for freedom seriously as motivating factors behind expansions of state power. It is no coincidence that the Iraq War’s combat zones were called “the front lines of freedom,” or that the War in Afghanistan was officially titled Operation Enduring Freedom. To be sure, freedom is not the only desire motivating the legitimation of these wars; vengeance, violence, Islamophobia, and an escape from fear coexist along- side freedom.’7 But these other motivations have gained much more schol arly attention at the expense of the study of freedom, and they have over shadowed the ways that a desire for freedom sits beside and even underwrites these more overtly insidious motivations, giving them a legiti mate form of expression.

By positioning melodrama in relationship to freedom, this book emphasizes how contemporary desires for freedom are often constituted and de limited by the very forms in which they are articulated. Taking seriously Saba Mahrnood’s warning not to “tether the meaning of agency to a pre defined teleology of emancipatory politics,” this inquiry asks instead how a desire for sovereign freedom is cultivated out of melodramatic depictions of political events.’8 Mahmood cautions scholars against uncritically accepting that there is an ontological desire for freedom that drives individuals, especially when freedom is imagined as a settled achievement of an abstract liberal subject. She asks instead, “what sort of subject ¡s assumed to be normative within a particular political imaginary?” Rather than using Mahmood’s warning to deny that desires for freedom exist in American political subjects, however, I examine how a desire for freedom is produced within and conditioned by various melodramatic political discourses. I specify the particular content of “freedom” that shapes the very political subjectivity that desires it, and use the study of melodrama to ask: How do unilateral state violence and individual license come to inhabit contempo rary definitions of freedom and agency? How is a teleology of emancipation melodramatically imagined through the legitimation of war and national security? I posit that the melodramatic cultivation of a desire for freedom develops at a moment in which long-standing frustrations of political powerlessness combine with the immediate shock of terrorism to operate on national subjects already constituted by certain expectations of liberal freedom and democratic citizenship.

Melodramatic discourses are so widespread, I argue, because they revive the guarantee of sovereign freedom for both the state and the individual in a neoliberal era when both seem out of reach. This lost guarantee of sovereignty has a long and contested genealogy that I examine more in the book, but one way to unpack it here is to work backward and start from the spectacle of nonsovereignty on September ii. The 9/11 attacks were shocking not only for the violence they committed but for the story of freedom they derailed. They disclosed—in a spectacular and horrifying way—failures of both state and individual sovereignty, and melodramatic conventions promised that both types of sovereignty could be regained. Judith Butler argues that 9/11 entailed “the loss of a certain horizon of experience, a certain sense of the world itself as a national entitlement,” and melodrama became appealing in the post-9 i n era because it seemed to reestablish that sense of entitlement.20 The loss of “the world itself as a national entitlement” was a loss of unconstrained freedom for the nation-state, a loss of its seeming capacity to protect itself, monopolize the use of force, and steer geopolitics. Enacted by “faceless” cowards—inconspicuous agents whose weapons of mass destruction were ordinary objects like box cutters and commercial airplanes, and who seíf-destructed upon their own “victory” (doers that did not exceed the deed)—the attacks appeared to be the effect of invisible forces rather than identifiable state actors, their agents easily eluding state apparatuses of surveillance and militarized border systems.

They performed, as the collective Retort argues, “the sheer visible happening of defeat.”2’ In effortlessly penetrating national borders, the attackers upended two beliefs: that America was invulnerable to serious attack by foreigners and that geopolitical boundaries could demarcate state sovereignty. Indeed, if the state is defined through Max Webers classic definition as that which has “the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence,” a defini tion in which state power is ipso facto sovereign, then the 9/11 events challenged the very workings of the state by revealing its nonsovereignty.2 The loss of the world as a national entitlement traversed individual and state agency.23 The attacks created a loss for individuals in their presumed capacity under reigning norms of liberal individualism to be self-reliant and sovereign over their own bodies. By indiscriminately murdering un known and unsuspecting individuals, the attacks challenged the monadic premises of individual self-reliance, what Sharon Krause calls the long standing liberal belief that “the individual is understood to be the master of her own domain’24 The mass violence shed light on the intense social vul nerability of individual bodies, revealing how individuals are always, as Butler argues, “exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that expo sure”25 The terrorist attacks thus violently upended the sovereign freedom story that entwines states and subjects. Whether sovereignty is defined as having the ultimate power or authority to make decisions about life and death (as in Carl Schmitt or Giorgio Agamben), the capacity to authorita tively reign over a defined geographic or bodily space (as in Thomas Hobbes or Jean Bodin), or the right of self-determination and self-making against the dominations of others (as in Jean-Jacques Rousseau), the 9/11 events revealed contracted possibilities of sovereign power.26 In highlighting the vulnerabilities and dependencies of contemporary life, the attacks challenged sovereignty as the grounding presupposition of both individual agency and international relations.

Melodrama’s narrative teleology of freedom responds by revitalizing norms of sovereignty for both individuals and states, and this is part of its widespread appeal. Melodrama’s affective and narrative forms aim to rese cure the nation’s virtue and reestablish its sovereign power. Melodrama becomes more potent after 9/ ii’s radical destabilization of national narratives about freedom and power because the genre’s emplotment of a familiar nar rative trajectory—injury then redemption—seems to restabilize the promise of sovereignty. Bonnie Honig writes that melodramas thematize “the sense of being overwhelmed by outside forces”; melodramas depict individual protagonists as vulnerable to and powerless against the violence and cruelty of the outside world. This makes melodrama well suited for depicting situations of overwhelming vulnerability. But in political discourse melodrama goes further, as it also promises that overwhelmed subjects can overcome their vulnerability by dramatic counter-acts of force, acts that melodrama equates with the achievement of freedom. In promising that freedom is forthcoming for virtuous sufferers1, melodrama implies that complex global vulnerability and interdependence can be overcome by expressions of state power reasserting U.S. global might, which will then reflect back to American individuals their own sovereignty.

Vote negative to refuse of mastering the lost object in favor of embracing its death. Accepting the non-existence of sovereignty is the first step toward ending a cycle of repetitious destruction.

Anker ‘12

[Elizabeth, American Studies at George Washington University. 2012. “Heroic Identifications: Or, ‘You Can Love Me Too – I am so Like the State,’” <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/469324/summary>] // sosa

The identification with mastery is then, at its outset, an attempt to challenge the loss sense of autonomy, the feeling of regulation and exclusion, to recapture the capacity for freedom. Animated by the loss of what it desires but cannot have, state identification idealizes what the subject “should have been” – sovereign, self-making – and what it now desires to be “like.”38 Once state power is differentiated from the self, it is then set up internally as an ideal. Through the subject that salves its loss by imagining itself like state power, identification operates to fortify the very terms of American liberal individualism that contribute to loss: insisting that subjects can master contingency, and can exercise heroic overcoming of their dependence. Perhaps because of its very unattainability, the ideal of ontological narcissism always produces loss as its effect. It creates a bind in which the type of freedom that individualism recognizes as desirable is always already unattainable.

The subject’s initial awareness of a discrepancy between oneself and one’s ideal leads not to broader recognition of why this discrepancy exists, or perhaps to a revaluation of the object it desires, but instead to its re-idealization in new form. Post-9/11 identification with the state thus illustrates subjects’ incipient awareness that the possibility for **sovereignty is not possible**, that the capacity for heroic mastery over self and the world is fictive. However it reinstates the lost object as an internal ideal and subsequently represses this recognition, while embedding the operations of impinging and regulatory power ever deeper into subjects. It refigures awareness of power’s expansions back into the terms of individual heroism, and deflates the possibility for a more productive critical engagement. It actually hinders the fight against forms of power that sustain domination, unfreedom, and war.

After 9/11, a de-cathexis with the state did eventually happen, but only after the slow realization that the “Mission Accomplished” of the War on Terror did not actually accomplish its mission, and after the Abu Ghraib images were uncovered. The Abu Ghraib images had a profound effect on the identification with state power. This was due, of course, to the affective horror they produced in revealing acts of torture and cruelty. Yet part of their horror, too, was their revelation of the squalidness of military power: the images uncovered a form of state violence normally shielded from public view. They did not depict smart bombs targeting a hidden enemy outpost, or a cutting-edge air force jet shooting faceless evildoers from above. Instead, they revealed the small, individualized, even routinized aspects of violence, suffering, and death in war. They countered the antiseptic images of “shock and awe” with the literal and metaphoric filth of bodily torture, demanding an acknowledgment of the misery and cruelty that the pursuit of unbound mastery can inflict on other humans, the distinct lack of strength required to overpower and harm another person in situations of domination. The pictures directly countered the claims of American military justice as clear, or American strength as based on superior moral and technological capacity. In deglorifying the pursuit of mastery, they showed the personal and daily mundanities of brutality behind the curtain of smart bomb coverage. The slow failure of “Mission Accomplished,” combined with the immediacy of the Abu Ghraib revelations, weakened the idealization of American state mastery, and re-exposed larger experiences of global interdependence and individual constraint.

The weakening of state identification, however, could have taken different forms, and the desire for freedom could have been expressed in many alternative ways. What possibilities could have arisen from reconceiving freedom outside of heroic autonomy? If the motive for identification with state power is, at its core, the desire for freedom, then subjects might capitalize on their nebulous experiences of unfreedom to question more deeply what contributes to their production. They might use these experiences as an initial starting point to interrogate the complexities of the present, or to question a model of freedom that leaves these complexities unintelligible. How could a more 10 critical engagement with the specific, frightening, and exploitative forms of contemporary politics work to challenge them? Could it examine the ways one can be, at once, both subject to oppressive power and the legitimator of widespread violence?

Attempts to challenge experiences of unfreedom would seem more effective if instead, as a first step, they work to examine the precise forms of power that contribute to experiences of unfreedom, and aim to scrutinize geopolitical realignments. They might develop collective practices of freedom that are undergirded by acknowledgements of interdependence, practices that take account of differentiated forms of exploitation, violence, and social vulnerability. Peter Fitzpatrick argues that the post-9/11 moment requires reconceiving freedom to entail responsibility for others as a necessary precondition.39 A more critical engagement in this vein might begin by drawing upon the animating impulses of individualism – resisting dominating power upon the self – yet refigure its legitimating function by sustaining recognition that, as Sharon Krause notes, freedom does not entail sovereignty even as it demands individual and collective accountability for political life.40 This recognition opens the space for new modes of political agency that are more collective and interdependent in their work to challenge material and structural experiences of unfreedom. It can enable tools for pushing more resourcefully against encumbrances of power, instead of rehabilitating the lost, dead object of individual mastery. As Judith Butler, Jill Bennett and many other feminist thinkers have suggested, by acknowledging lived conditions of interdependence in a post-9/11 era, challenges to structural unfreedom might draw more deeply upon the resources of collective life for establishing conditions of social justice, freedom, and human equality, using interdependence as a source of strength that works with collective resources rather than against them. This might also assist the crucial work of distinguishing foundational social interdependence from the increasing binds of regulatory, violent, and governmentalizing powers.

Other possibilities include sustaining the acknowledgement that loss engenders: that **the object of desire is gone**, that one’s ideal is no longer tenable and perhaps was never viable. For Freud, this involves a mourning process that concludes by rerouting desire to a new, more tenable, more live object. This process is not clearly delineable or fully predictable; the desire to contain contingency and garner complete knowledge of the future is itself a derivation of ontological narcissism, of the desire for mastery, its satisfaction clearly impossible. The rerouting of desire can never be predicted in advance – and this is part of its necessary danger. Yet static predetermined ideas of freedom are also insufficient to develop its practice. Freedom entails not just a static or binary condition, in which one is or is not free, or in which the settled terms of freedom’s experience are laid out in advance of its pursuit. Part of the practice of freedom is a keen responsiveness to the specific experiences of constraint and regulation one wishes to change.

While post-9/11 political subjects who legitimated war and increases in the national security state were partly motivated by a desire to resist the intense and rapidly intensifying regulations of power, it remains to be seen whether those desires could be transformed into a more productive challenge that responds to the specific conditions they aim to change, or whether they can nourish new conceptions of agency and freedom outside those that sustain the damages and unfreedom of current politics. Only by actively grappling with the impossibility of mastery, and the reckoning with power’s complex operations in contemporary life, might political subjects collectively engage with the political powerlessness, constraining norms, and structural unfreedoms that shape contemporary experience. This experience includes the 9/11 events but certainly is not limited to them, and it includes reckoning with ways subjects are imbricated or complicit in the exploitation and powerlessness of others. The predicament of the post-9/11 political subject is that in order to maintain the claim that sovereignty is possible, it transforms its desire to resist impinging power into a legitimation of what it resists. The predicament is thus not a subject that remains blind to its experiences, or even reflexively desires subjection, but a subject whose impulse for resistance is refigured by the very methods it draws upon in its effort. By way of desiring opposition to contemporary power, post-9/11 subjects end up authorizing one of its most imposing forms, repudiating the possibility for a more rigorous critique of their conditions, perpetuating their burdens, and justifying violence and war.

#### The Role of the Judge is to be an analyst – psychoanalysis is a science of rhetoric at the level of rhetorical tropes – that allows us to theorize the empirical life of desire.

Lundberg ‘12

[Christian, rhetoric at UNC-Chapel Hill. 20120. “Lacan in Public.”] pat // rc sosa

Lacan’s claims to the “science” of rhetoric respond to a number of critics who had framed psychoanalysis as an alchemical mix of unfounded theories, intuitions and inherited practices. Borrowing from Karl Popper’s philosophy of science, such critiques of psychoanalysis argued that analytic practice was non-falsifiable, resting on the idea that no empirical evidence could be mustered to refute it. Any claim to evidence to the contrary of Freudian theories could always be elided by generating another explanation with dubious empirical grounding to account for potential exceptions. In drawing on rhetoric as a systematic mode for theorizing the nature of the sign, representation, and the logic and social functions of discourse, Lacan rescues Freudian categories from non-falsifiability. Rhetoric, which is so squarely rooted in “art,” became one of Lacan’s most powerful allies in articulating psychoanalysis as a science, providing a vocabulary for attending to the repeatable elements of signification that might be held up to empirical verification.

Lacan vacillated at different points in his career on psychoanalysis’s status as a science, arguing at points that it was clearly a science, at others that it was not, and at others that it was a special kind of science. Generally, Lacan’s early career embodied the strongest claim for the scientific status of psychoanalysis, while in his later career he became less invested in the idea, arguing that it need not attempt to assume scientific status to validate itself. What is most interesting about the ambivalence toward science in Lacan’s thought is that at each instance where the relationship between psychoanalysis and science is at stake, the question of rhetoric is never far from the conversation. For example, in The Psychoses and The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Lacan argues that psychoanalysis is a science on the basis of its attention to a set of repeatable logical forms, specifically to trope as a way of specifying the possible connections underwriting discursive and representational practices. Other accounts read Lacan as eventually giving up on the idea that psychoanalysis is a science, but do so, once again, with explicit reference to rhetoric. For example, Stuart Schneiderman argues that by 1977 Lacan had given up the quest to prove psychoanalysis as a science, that “after having posed the question of the scientific status of psychoanalysis for so many years, he had come to the conclusion that it was not a science. The reason was one offered by Karl Popper, namely that psychoanalysis was ‘irrefutable.’ Lacan said that analysis was closest to rhetoric. . . . Thus analysis seeks to persuade but not convince, to persuade the analysand to recognize things that he knows [they know] already and to act on his [their] desire.” Of course, one might take issue with the account of rhetoric that is implicit in this claim, particularly on the grounds that the framing of rhetoric in Schneiderman’s account affirms an understanding of rhetoric exclusively through reference to persuasion, contingency, and probability—a conception that is, as I have been arguing, at odds with Lacan’s understanding of the work of rhetoric. More accurately, rhetoric affords Lacanian psychoanalysis a status as a special kind of science by providing it with a set of techniques for paying attention to the mathematical qualities of discourse. Regardless of how one understands the moniker “science,” rhetoric drives psychoanalysis toward a systematic account of the possible modes of connection that animate actually existing discourses, and toward an observation of the concrete functions of trope in the social life of the subject.

Lacan derives this understanding of psychoanalysis as the systematic science of attending to discourse from Freud. For example, in The Interpretation of Dreams Freud argues for a practice of reading dreams that revised received methods for interpreting dreams. Prior to Freud’s intervention there was a long-standing tradition that held that an image in a dream correlated with an unconscious meaning in much the same way that a word in a dictionary correlates with a definition. In order to found his mode of dream interpretation, Freud dissents from a definitional understanding of dreams by distinguishing between manifest “dream content” and the underlying logic of a dream, or the “dream-thought.” Although the manifest content of a dream may seem utterly random, it is driven by the dream-thought expressed in it, investing the specific contents of the dream with a meaning dependent on the thought that articulates it. For Freud there is no universal protocol for the expression and interpretation of dream contents, but rather a set of associations unique to an individual which, although not uniform in content, are bound by a more universal logic of expression.

It is tempting to see in Freud’s presentation of the interpretation of dreams a cognitive semiotics that verges on a proto-presentation of Saussure’s conception of differential signification, albeit sixteen years prior to the publication of the Course in General Linguistics. Each element in a dream means something not because it has an intrinsic referent, but rather because it is defined by a relationship of difference to other elements in the dream content, and cumulatively the structure of differentially related signs allows for an interpretation of the underlying dream-thought. Naturally, this is the reading of Lacan’s employment of Freud’s Interpretation of Dreams by those who see Lacanian psychoanalysis as an integration of Freud’s unconscious and the insights of Saussure. The difficulty arises when one tries to determine what exactly Lacan is attempting to do by reading the regularities of structure that animate dreams and, by extension, discourse. On one account, this reading produces a logic of dreams and discourse that emphasizes structure at the expense of the empirical. But a second account replaces the structuralist poetic account with a rhetorical conception of trope, inventing a science of rhetoric that forces attention to the interchange between form and its empirical manifestations. To instantiate a rhetorical relation between the logics and manifestation of dream contents, Lacan turns to a science of oratory that drives analytic labor toward the empirical life of discourses.

“What specifies a science,” writes Lacan,” “is having an object.” To say that a science must have an object elicits an objection that specifying an “object” presumes a science engages something given in advance as opposed to contingently made. But approaching an object requires equal parts analytic rigor and prudence: “we must be very prudent, because this object changes . . . as the science develops. . . . [W]e cannot say that the object of modern physics is the same now as at its birth.” Attention to a changing object implies a relationship of mutual determination between the mode of inquiry and the objects that such a mode takes up. A science is not a general theory to be mapped onto reality because sciences are parasitic on the specific. As Lacan argues, science always begins with the particular: “To be sure, analysis as a science is always a science of the particular. The coming to fruition of an analysis is always a unique case, even if the unique cases lend themselves . . . to some generality. . . . [A]nalysis is an experience of the particular.”

But what is the particular object around which a science of oratory might emerge? The answer is the economy of trope and enjoyment. Claiming that Freud drew attention to a “fundamental” opposition between metaphor and metonymy in “mechanisms of dreams,” Lacan argues that “what Freud calls condensation is what in rhetoric one calls metaphor, what one calls displacement is metonymy.” That this reference to a rhetoric of trope frames Lacan’s application of the vocabulary of structural linguistics is clear from the concluding sentence of this paragraph: “It’s for this reason that in focusing attention back onto the signifier we are doing nothing other than returning to the starting point of the Freudian discovery.”

In “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” Lacan argues that the core insight of The Interpretation of Dreams might be fruitfully applied to more than just unpacking dreams. The logic that inheres in dream work is the same logic that underwrites the function of speech generally. If, following Lacan’s reading of Interpretation of Dreams, one is inclined to agree that speech serves as a synecdoche for rhetorical processes generally; by extension one might conclude that speech offers privileged insight into the functioning of everyday discourses. Thus it is no surprise that Lacan recommends instruction in rhetoric as an indispensable component of analytic practice. According to Lacan, this realization should compel attention to the function of “rhetoric . . . ellipsis and pleonasm, hyperbaton or syllepsis, regression, repetition, apposition—these are the syntactical displacements; metaphor, catachresis, antonomasis, allegory, metonymy, and synecdoche— these are the semantic condensations in which Freud teaches us to read the intentions . . . out of which the subject modulates his oneiric discourse.” This extension of Freud’s dream work to speech by means of a globalization of trope founds the possibility of psychoanalysis as a science, via recourse to the scientific properties of oratory:

At the bottom of the Freudian mechanism one rediscovers these old figures of rhetoric which over time have come to lose their sense for us but which for centuries elicited a prodigious degree of interest. Rhetoric, or the art of oration, was a science and not just an art. We now wonder, as if at an enigma, why these exercises could have captivated whole groups of men for such a long time. If this is an anomaly it’s analogous to the existence of psychoanalysis, and it’s perhaps the same anomaly that’s involved in man’s relationships to language, returning over the course of history, recurrently, with different ramifications and now presenting itself to us from a scientific angle in Freud’s discovery.

Why wonder at the “enigma” of a science of oratory and the “exercises” that constituted it? The “exercises” that Lacan is most likely referring to were the progymnasmata—the graduated sequence of somewhat formulaic pedagogical practices that introduced the student of oratory to the inventional moves one might make in composing and/or delivering a speech. This attention to form, embodied in both a theory of arrangement and delivery, attuned the budding orator to the regularities in speech that render inventional moves not only intelligible, but potentially eloquent. Oratorical practice had foreseen and, long in advance of contemporary linguistics, “discovered” the formal properties animating discursive practice.

There are two senses of the word “formal” for Lacan: one that relies on quantification and another that relies, if not on math as we typically understand it, then on the mathematizable, or that which can be symbolically rendered as a repeatable relation. A science is defined by mathematization, as opposed to quantification: “what is distinctive about positive science, modern science, isn’t quantification but mathematization and specifically combinatory, that is to say linguistic, mathematization which includes series and iteration.” The oratorical tradition discovered that rhetorical invention was scientific: in discovering the progymnasmata, the tradition articulated a conception of inventio (invention) as the discovery of repeatable symbolic forms. Lacan prefers the first sense of “formal” because it comports with oratorical pedagogy’s insight that language is mathematizable (amenable to a description of its repeatable formal properties), which is the condition of possibility for a science of oratory. The science of oratory discovers a mode of knowing that would eventually make “linguistics the most advanced of the human sciences” by specifying that which is formally repeatable in the life of the subject and its discourses.

This understanding of rhetoric moves it from a prudential “art” of the intuitive intersubjective judgments to the symbolic science of forms. For Lacan, an art premised on the disciplining of critical intuition does not move beyond the Imaginary because “everything intuitive is far closer to the Imaginary than the Symbolic.” In place of the art of intersubjectively grounded intuition, Lacan calls for attention to the trans-subjective apparatus of the Symbolic: “the important thing here is to realize that the chain of possible combinations of the encounter can be studied as such, as an order which subsists in rigor, independently of all subjectivity. . . . [T]he symbol is embodied in an apparatus—with which it is not to be confused, the apparatus being just its support. And it is embodied in a literally trans-subjective way.” This understanding of rhetoric as science does not abandon the subject; rather, it decenters the subject as a taken-for-granted interpretive maxim, replacing attention to what goes on between subjects with the formal movement of tropes, a movement that is mathematizable, and therefore amenable to a formal scientific account of its effects:

In as much as he is committed to a play of [the Symbolic], to a symbolic world . . . man is a decentered subject. Well, it is with this same play, this same world, that the machine is built. The most complicated machines are made only with words.

Speech is first and foremost that object of exchange whereby we are reorganized. . . . That is how the circulation of speech begins, and it swells to the point of the symbol which makes algebraic calculations possible. The machine is the structure detached from the activity of the subject. The symbolic world is the world of the machine.

The world of the symbolic is machinic in a very specific way: only insofar as it relies on the set of regularized, logically possible connections between words and other words. In other words, the Symbolic is machinic because it is tropologically constituted. But because the Symbolic is tropologically constituted, its machinic nature is premised on the various failures in unicity that invite the trope as a compensatory function. Thus, if the Symbolic is a machine, it is a machine that fails. In the next chapter, I take up the paradox of the failing machine by suggesting the metaphor of economy as a way of parsing the relationship between the machinic (or automatic) and its failure in the life of the Symbolic.

## Case

#### No 1ar theory

#### 1~ Responses to my counter interp will be new which means 1ar theory necessitates intervention—-outweighs because it makes the decision arbitrary

#### 2~ Deters the 1NC from checking abuse out of fear for 1AR meta-theory, which destroys me since it's also preclusive. Turns their infinite abuse args.

### Advantage

#### Unions’ demands for higher wages causes an inflationary spiral.

Guida 6-4 Victoria Guida [an economics reporter covering the Federal Reserve, the Treasury Department and the broader economy. She has spent her Washington career writing about bank regulations, monetary policy and trade negotiations.

A Dallas native, she graduated from the University of Missouri with a double major in journalism and political science.] , 6-4-2021, "Biden’s back door to wage hikes," POLITICO, https://www.politico.com/news/2021/06/04/bidens-back-door-to-wage-hikes-491911

“The ‘shortages’ we are seeing in lower-wage jobs and the accompanying wage pressures are an early sign of success” for the president's agenda, said Julia Coronado, founder of MacroPolicy Perspectives. That success may be short-lived. Higher wages could be among the biggest factors in pressuring the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates if clear signs of an inflation spike appear. They also risk slowing hiring for those who will increasingly seek to return to the workforce as the pandemic subsides, as companies try to keep costs down. That’s why workers’ pay was a major focus for Fed officials in Friday's U.S. employment report for May. They want to see wage gains for the workforce — but what’s behind those raises matters. Wage growth “is positive if it reduces hardship, reduces inequality and is not eaten away or reversed by higher inflation,” said Tim Duy, an economics professor at the University of Oregon and a former U.S. Treasury economist. “But we should be cognizant of the possibility that we’re inducing more inflation.” Income growth has been relatively strong, particularly in the last couple of months, despite disappointing overall job growth. Wages were up about 2 percent in May compared to the year before, and that number likely underestimates the real amount of income growth for technical reasons; lower-wage workers disproportionately lost jobs last year, making the overall average for those who kept their positions look higher then, and the opposite effect is now occurring as Americans return to the labor market. "Anyone looking at the 2.0% increase in yr/yr wages is missing the story," Jason Furman, a Harvard professor and former top economic adviser to President Barack Obama, said in a tweet. "Nominal wages up 1.2% in April/May. That is a 7.4% annual rate. That is huge." The pressure to do more to attract employees could continue to grow in certain public-facing industries. According to the Labor Department‘s jobs report, about 2.5 million people are still being held back from looking for work because of the pandemic. Wages for non-managerial leisure and hospitality workers grew 1.3 percent last month and are up 3.7 percent compared to May 2020. At the heart of the fight for higher pay is a desire for workers to share in a greater portion of the nation's economic rewards after decades of sluggish wage growth — the result of the weakening of labor unions, companies shifting production overseas and increased use of job-displacing automation. This would ideally show up as bigger raises as the economy expands faster. But if higher wages are instead passed along to customers at higher prices, that can create an inflationary cycle, as opposed to the one-time price increases that many experts believe the economy can absorb as people’s behavior, and global supply chains, return to normal. “In the near term, I wouldn’t say this is necessarily a dangerous situation if we’re just raising wages for a group of people who have been traditionally disadvantaged,” Duy said. But the longer there are shortages that make employers feel more comfortable raising prices as well as wages, “that’s where you get into this potential shift in the psychology where the wage gains and the price gains become linked.” Heidi Shierholz, director of policy at the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute and a former chief economist at the Labor Department, said Americans are not seeing the type of widespread shortage-induced wage increases that would be cause for concern. “Things are re-normalizing; it’s not like things are out of whack,” she said, adding that some of the wage increases for leisure and hospitality workers might have come from a return to normal tipping practices as restaurants reopened. “I have longer-run concerns,” she added. “The wages were too low in that sector before Covid hit, so re-normalizing is not exactly where we want to be.” For its part, the Fed is pursuing a state of “full employment,” where wages rise because most people have jobs, and the central bank has said it’s willing to tolerate inflation above its 2 percent target to get there. But the hesitance by some workers to return to the labor force is only creating the illusion of that dynamic, said Adam Ozimek, chief economist at Upwork. “If employers are raising wages right now due to temporary shortages, then that risks slowing job growth when those temporary shortages are gone,” with millions still out of work, Ozimek said. “If we were at full employment, and we were seeing inflationary pressures, that wouldn’t concern me at all,” he added. “You’re getting it because of good and sustainable reasons. That’s not the same thing as inflation due to temporary supply shortages.”

#### That collapses the economy.

Colombo 18 [Jesse Colombo is an economic analyst and Forbes contributor who warns about bubbles and future financial crises], “How Interest Rate Hikes Will Trigger The Next Financial Crisis”, Forbes, 9-27-18, https://www.forbes.com/sites/jessecolombo/2018/09/27/how-interest-rate-hikes-will-trigger-the-next-financial-crisis/?sh=5401bf966717

On Wednesday, the U.S. Federal Reserve hiked its benchmark interest rate by a quarter-percentage point to 2% - 2.25%, which is the highest level since April 2008. As rates continue to climb off their post-Great Recession record lows, market participants and commentators are showing almost no signs of fear as the stock market is hitting records again and complacency abounds. Unfortunately, "soft landings" after rate hike cycles are as rare as unicorns and virtually all modern rate hike cycles have resulted in a recession, financial, or banking crisis. There is no reason to believe that this time will be any different. As I've explained in the past, periods of low interest rates help to create credit and asset booms in the following ways: By encouraging more borrowing by consumers, businesses, and governments By discouraging the holding of cash versus spending and speculating in riskier assets & endeavors Investors can borrow cheaply to speculate in assets (ex: cheap mortgages for property speculation and low margin costs for trading stocks) By making it cheaper to borrow to conduct share buybacks, dividend increases, and mergers & acquisitions By encouraging higher rates of inflation, which helps to support assets like stocks and real estate When central banks set interest rates and hold them at low levels in order to create an economic boom after a recession (as our Federal Reserve does), they interfere with the organic functioning of the economy and financial markets, which has serious consequences including the creation of distortions and imbalances. By holding interest rates at artificially low levels, the Fed creates "false signals" that encourage the undertaking of businesses and other endeavors that would not be profitable or viable in a normal interest rate environment. The businesses or other investments that are made due to artificial credit conditions are known as "malinvestments" and typically fail once interest rates rise to normal levels again. Some examples of malinvestments are dot-com companies in the late-1990s tech bubble, failed housing developments during the mid-2000s U.S. housing bubble, and unfinished skyscrapers in Dubai and other emerging markets after the global financial crisis. Though it can be difficult to tell precisely which investments or businesses are malinvestments in a central bank-distorted economy, a quote by Warren Buffett is extremely applicable: "only when the tide goes out do you learn who's been swimming naked." For the purpose of this discussion, "the tide going out" refers to rising interest rates. The mass failure of malinvestments in an economy as interest rates rise typically results in recessions or banking/financial crises. The chart below shows how recessions or financial crises have occurred after historic interest rate hike cycles: Here is a list of historic recessions, banking, and financial crises that have occurred after interest rate hike cycles (this list corresponds with the chart above): Late-1970s/early-1980s rate hike cycle: 1980 recession: A 6-month recession that concentrated in housing, manufacturing, and the automotive industry. 1981 - 1982 recession: A 16-month recession in which 2.9 million jobs were lost. U.S. savings and loans crisis: 1,043 out of the 3,234 savings and loan associations failed as the interest rate at which they could borrow rose above the fixed interest rates on the loans that they had issued. In addition, savings and loan institutions were limited by interest rate ceilings, which caused them to lose deposits to higher-earning commercial bank accounts. U.S. housing market bust: Mortgage rates surged as high as 18%, which caused housing affordability to sink. As a result, existing-home sales fell by 50% from 1978 to 1981, affecting the whole industry - including mortgage lenders, real estate agents, construction workers, etc. Automotive industry crisis: Similar to the situation in housing, higher interest rates made automobile financing much more expensive. As a result, automobile sales plunged, causing 310,000 jobs (or one-third) in the industry to be cut. Latin American debt crisis: Rising interest rates made it harder for heavily-indebted Latin American countries to pay back their debts. Mid-1980s rate hike cycle: Continental Illinois bank failure: In 1984, Continental Illinois became the largest bank failure in U.S. history (until Washington Mutual's failure in 2008). Rising interest rates and bad loans to Texas and Oklahoma oil & gas producers strongly contributed to the bank's demise. Late-1980s rate hike cycle: Early-1990s recession: An 8-month recession in which 1.623 million jobs were lost. U.S. savings and loans crisis: Higher interest rates and the U.S. real estate downturn caused a continuation of the savings and loans crisis that began in the early-1980s. U.S. real estate downturn: Rising interest rates caused a downturn in both commercial and residential real estate. Mid-1990s rate hike cycle: Emerging markets crisis/Mexican peso crisis: Low U.S. interest rates in the early-1990s made higher-yielding emerging markets assets more attractive to investors. As U.S. interest rates rose, Mexico and other emerging economies experienced painful readjustments and currency devaluations. Orange County, California bankruptcy: Bad bets on highly leveraged interest rate derivatives bankrupted the county as interest rates rose. Early-2000s rate hike cycle: Early-2000s recession: An 8-month recession in which 1.59 million jobs were lost after the tech bubble burst. Tech bubble bust: Higher interest rates helped burst the late-1990s tech bubble that was centered around internet-related companies, dot-coms, the telecom industry, etc. Mid-2000s rate hike cycle: Great Recession: An 18-month recession in which 8.8 million jobs were lost after the U.S. housing and credit bubble burst. U.S. housing bubble bust/credit crunch: Low interest rates after the early-2000s tech bust led to the formation of a bubble in housing and credit. When interest rates rose again in the mid-2000s, housing prices and mortgage-backed securities plunged. The Current Rate Hike Cycle Won't End Any Differently All of the modern interest rate hike cycles we have examined resulted in recessions or financial crisis, and the current one will be no different. This time around, it will be the "Everything Bubble" that bursts. "Everything Bubble” is a term that I’ve coined to describe a dangerous bubble that has been inflating in a wide variety of countries, industries, and assets – please visit my website to learn more. After nearly a decade of ultra-low interest rates, the U.S. and global economy are saturated with bubbles and other distortions that will only be revealed by rising interest rates. Because of our record debt burden, interest rates do not have to rise nearly as high as in prior cycles to cause a recession or financial crisis this time around. Here are some examples of interest rate-sensitive sectors that I believe are experiencing bubbles that will burst as interest rates rise: Emerging markets: Ultra-low interest rates and quantitative easing in the U.S. and Europe after the Great Recession caused trillions of dollars worth of "hot money" to flow into emerging economies, which led to the development of credit and asset bubbles in those countries. Emerging market debt nearly tripled to $60 trillion in the past decade. Turkey, South Africa, and many other emerging markets are being roiled as U.S. interest rates and the dollar rise. U.S. corporate debt bubble: The low interest rate[s] environment after the Great Recession has encouraged public corporations to borrow heavily in the bond market. Total outstanding non-financial corporate debt has increased by over $2.5 trillion or 40% since its 2008 high. U.S. corporate debt is now at an all-time high of over 45% of GDP (see chart below), which is even worse than the levels reached during the dot-com bubble and U.S. housing and credit bubble. Read my corporate debt bubble warning on Forbes to learn more. U.S. shale energy boom/energy junk bonds: This boom/bubble is closely related to the corporate debt bubble discussed above. Extracting oil and gas from shale via fracking is extremely capital-intensive and would not be feasible in a normal interest rate environment. Thanks to the artificially low interest rate environment since the Great Recession, the shale energy industry’s net debt surged to $200 billion in 2015 - a 300% increase from 2005. Rising interest rates and the bursting of the corporate debt/junk bond bubble will cause a major bust in the shale energy industry. U.S. auto loans: Low interest rates after the Great Recession made financing and leasing automobiles much cheaper, which has resulted in an automobile sales boom. Total outstanding auto loans increased 36% to $1.118 trillion in the past decade. Rising interest rates will cause monthly auto loan payments to be more expensive, which will result in lower sales and a bust in the automotive industry. U.S. commercial real estate: Commercial real estate is a very interest rate-sensitive arena that has levitated due to low interest rates after the Great Recession. According to Green Street Advisors, U.S. commercial real estate prices have more than doubled since 2009. U.S. residential real estate: As I've recently explained in Forbes, U.S. housing prices now exceed their housing bubble peak and are up 50% from their low point in 2012 thanks to ultra-low mortgage rates. Mortgage rates did not reach such low levels on their own, but due to intervention by the Fed in the form of quantitative easing. The Fed is now reversing its quantitative easing program by $40 billion per month and, unsurprisingly, mortgage rates just hit a seven-year high and the housing market is decelerating. U.S. stock market investors are dangerously exposed to coming busts in interest rate-sensitive sectors, which will spill over into the highly-inflated stock market. Please read my U.S. stock market bubble report in Forbes for more information. The S&P 500 has risen over 300% since March 2009 due to the Federal Reserve's market manipulation: Many valuation measures show that the U.S. stock market is more overvalued than it was at major generational market peaks, which means that another sharp bear market is inevitable. According to the U.S. stock market capitalization-to-GDP ratio (also known as Warren Buffett’s "favorite indicator"), the market is more overvalued than it was during even the dot-com bubble: The current interest rate hike cycle won't end any differently than the others discussed in this piece - if anything, it will likely end in an even worse manner because interest rates were held at record low levels for a record period of time. The coming recession, crisis, and bear market will be proportionate to the unprecedented imbalances and distortions that have built up in our economy.

#### Heg unsustainable

Dyer-Witheford and Matviyenko ‘19

[Nick Dyer-Witheford, Information and Media Studies at University of Western Ontario, and Svitlana Matviyenko, Critical Media Analysis in the School of Communication (SFU). 2019. “Cyberwar and Revolution: Digital Subterfuge in Global Capitalism.”] pat – ~~language~~ [modified]

As we have argued, from 1945 on, the hegemonic status of the United States, as the world’s chief capitalist power, was intrinsically related to the development of computers and networks. The role of digital systems in its military–industrial complex, initially tightly coupled with nuclear weapons, spread through other aspects of its war-making system as well as through the general economy. In both aspects, it contributed to the United States’s eventual Cold War victory. In the aftermath of that victory, the United States continued to develop its digital military capacities into the ever more direct weaponization of network, creating the technological–human assemblages of what is today referred to as cyberwar. The scope of NSA global surveillance and sabotage programs and the sophistication of the Stuxnet nuclear centrifuge-destroying malware are only the most manifest instances of this process, which is today an integral part of a wider upgrade of U.S. military capacities that ties together a nuclear primacy with the militarization of space and drone warfare. Accompanying and spurring on this process is the additional dynamic of cyberwar adoption by the forces antagonistic to the global dominance of the United States and its allies. These antagonists include the defeated socialist powers, Russia and China, now paradoxically resurrected as capitalist competitors in the world market, or, in the case of North Korea, surviving in a macabre afterlife of state socialism. They also include the forces of militant Islamic jihadism, beckoned into existence by the West as an anticommunist ally, only to become its opponent in the long war on terror. All these actors converge on the militarization of digital networks. Many observers today see a moment that recapitulates the decline of previous imperial hegemons within the global capitalist system—Spain, Holland, Britain—and parallels the moments of extreme instability as old powers and new contenders confront each other. The rise of cyberwar is part of this tumult and quite possibly a precursor and preparation for widening and intensifying conflict. Schematically, we can envisage three potentially intertwining trajectories such a process might take:

1. Network degradation. Alexander Klimburg (2017) outlines the possibility of a “darkening web” characterized by persistent and gradually intensifying cyberwar between states and between states and terrorist movements conducted in a variety of registers. Security breaches, aggressive malware, and botnet attacks proliferate. Digital industrial sabotage and critical infrastructure attacks begin to multiply, as do the accidental runaway effects of cyberweapons. Networks are deeply and chronically infected with computational propaganda, fake news, and viral mis-and disinformation. In response to adversarial incursions, states intensify algorithmic surveillance, censorship, and preemptive virtual policing. Cybersecurity provisions become increasingly mandatory and elaborate. Attribution problems, falsification of evidence, and the overlap between military and intelligence forces and criminal networks create a chaotic digital twilight of hacking and trolling, botnets and viruses, malware, surveillance, and bugs, shutdowns, blocking, and filtering, in which uncertainties exacerbate suspicions and hostilities, altogether making the internet increasingly impossible to use. In short, the “darkening web” is what already exists now, only more so. One of the cofounders of Twitter, Evan Williams, offered his diagnosis, suggesting that “the Internet is broken” (Streitfeld 2017). But maybe it’s not. Maybe the internet is finally what it was always meant to be. Maybe it is perfect, but not for us, the excommunicated user-subjects. For cyberwar.

2. Hybrid escalations. Similarly rooted in the present is the likelihood that the simultaneous virtual and kinetic conflicts, such as the Syrian civil war, the fighting in Donbas, and the many branches of the war on terror, continue and break out in new regions, bringing ever higher levels and varieties of cyberweapons, deployed for purposes ranging from intelligence gathering, battlefield surveillance, and munitions delivery to sabotage of enemies’ domestic and military resources. The use of drones and other semi-or fully automated weapons systems expands and takes new directions, such as the development of swarms of small autonomous vehicles—“ slaughterbots” (Economist 2017a)—for house-to-house fighting in ruined cities. The biometric and networked tracking of refugees created by such conflicts, and the control and interdiction of their entry to affluent fortressed homelands, becomes a major activity of the nation-state security apparatus. Because present hybrid wars are also in large part proxy wars, where local battlefield actors are directly or indirectly supported by major powers, they are charged with the possibility of abrupt collisions between the most powerful militaries on the planet.

3. “Thermonuclear cyberwar.” We borrow this phrase from Erik Gartzke and Jon Lindsay (2017), who are among several authors currently pointing to a renewed and dangerous rendezvous between cyber-and nuclear weaponry. The last decade of debates between defense intellectuals about cyberwar has split those who see digital attacks a new equivalent of nuclear weapons, capable of disabling whole societies through critical infrastructure attacks, and skeptics who deride such anxieties as hyperbolic and implausible. But “cyber” and “nuke” are not separate. As we have seen, they were twinned at the moment of conception, with the development of each dependent on the other. And the connection is not just historical; it is current. Now cyberwar weaponry is part of a new approach to nuclear war fighting, the left-of-launch approach. Early ventures in antiballistic missile defense, such as Reagan’s “Star Wars” strategic defense initiative, depended on shooting down swarms of missiles as they plunged through the atmosphere toward their target. Left of launch, in contrast, aims to “strike an enemy missile before liftoff or during the first seconds of flight,” using “cyber strikes, electronic warfare and other exotic forms of sabotage” (Broad and Sanger 2017). This doctrine was incubated during the Obama administration and inherited by the Trump presidency. Advocates of the left-of- launch nuclear strategy present it as a defensive measure. However, the doctrine destabilizes basic premises of deterrence that have, since 1945, restrained nuclear weapon use (Cimbala 2017). Deterrence depends on a dread faith by all parties that both their own and their enemies’ nuclear weapons will work. The possibility that nuclear weapons systems might be secretly ~~disabled~~ [nullified] raises prospects both of overconfidence (trusting one can sabotage an opponent’s system) or panicked preemption (fearing left-of-launch attacks on one’s own nukes and falling into a “use ’em or lose ’em” mind-set). More generally, control and command of nuclear weapons depend on communication systems whose collapse in a crisis situation could have catastrophic results. The origin of the internet lay in the U.S. attempt to ensure continuance of such systems in the event of nuclear war; now the weaponization of the internet itself constitutes a possible cause of nuclear war.

#### Hegemony never failing, strangely enough, makes its failure inevitable.

Grove ‘20

[Jarius, polisci at University of Hawai’i. 12/03/2020. Seminar hosted/sponsored by the University of Michigan Debate Team. “Dr. Jarius Grove on CJR, Debate and ‘Savage Ecology,’” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-Gcwj_rg_0>] pat – transcription is from ~21:40-29:00, removed “uhs” and other verbal tics.

And in part, this is from a theory which I borrowed from an old social scientist – and I’m probably gonna skip ahead a little bit and take some questions – but this guy named Carl Deutsch developed this theory, “the pathology of power,” which is sort of throughout the book. I think this is a really interesting theory. It’s a reason why it puts, sort of, Nietzsche to the policy table, which is that, unfortunately, strength prevents learning. So, in cybernetics, we tend to think that learning comes from failure and the ability to remember or incorporate failure. The problem with the Eurocene and the way geopolitics work is it amassed so much material power, so much capability was drawn through it’s chance encounter with technology that it was able to just basically eliminate dissent. It was able to eliminate those who rebelled or pointed failure out. And as a result, it made large institutions incredibly stupid.

When you can leverage power as a way not to learn – meaning, when you make mistakes, you destroy the capability to have the failure follow you home – your system doesn’t learn. And I think maybe one of the best examples of this is the difference between the first Gulf War and the second Gulf War. The first Gulf War is declared an immense success, we take all the data from it, Elliot Cohen takes that data and tries to build this big dataset out of it so we can define how airpower works. We use that dataset and say “Oh! We can go back into Iraq and have exactly the same success.” The reality is that the first Iraqi conflict was not a success. In fact, it strengthened Saddam Hussein’s hold, it limited the rebellions that were against him, it nearly wiped out the Kurds, and it left hundreds of thousands of Iraqis starving as a result of sanctions. But we didn’t learn that lesson, because none of those lessons came to American shores. And so, we had a level of confidence and hubris going into the second war which made us think that the Iraq war would end very quickly. And that time we didn’t quite have the overwhelming authority or overwhelming resolve to eliminate failure, as it were, and as a result we were starting to see already, even now, more than a decade after, the long-term consequences of those kinds of failure.

So that’s kind of a core theme or concept – I mean, that’s the link argument for debate – which is the pathology of power, the degree to which actually strengthening hegemony caused the state to corrode. It caused leadership in democratic institutions to corrode. Order and security reinforces stupidity. When you can’t learn from your mistakes because you try to pretend they don’t exist, or you destroy them, or you vaporize them you get very stupid. And so as a result we’ve ended up in a kind of slow-motion catastrophe where, while the people most privileged in institutions haven’t borne the brunt of the last 500 years of failure, they are starting to come home. Right? They’re starting to show up in the forms of things like climate change, in the inability to negotiate international order in a way that would be more just or humane, in the incapacity to move towards trying to address things like indigenous genocide or slavery. Those incapacities – which really aren’t technical problems, they’re first and foremost political problems – are reaching the state of apocalypse, catastrophe, precisely because of the inability to learn.

So I need to skip a couple of things… and get to the end. So, the end of the book, I say that’s because we’ve been so invested trying to make the world what we want rather than believing in this world, is how Gilles Deleuze put it. The thing that’s most important we can do is believe in this world. So, in the book, I say that it’s more important to think about how we should live than if we live, and that this, sort of, attempt to get out of a world where the future is what disciplines the present, and how to think about that as a crisis of meaning rather than a crisis of technology or politics. We have a crisis of meaning! We don’t know even why we want hegemony anymore. And you see that, I mean… I wouldn’t have thought it in debate a million years ago, but I spend as much or more time with generals and members of NATO and the joint forces in South Korea than I do with the people who read the kind of French philosophy that I like to do when there’s nothing else to do. But it’s still even a crisis of meaning for them; they’re not sure what NATO’s for anymore, they’re not sure what we wanna build hegemony for. We’re not even really sure what kind of wars we want anymore. And I think that speaks a lot to the fact that there’s not a clear vision of what kind of order we’d even want if we could have it.

So, the book kind of ends with this idea that extinction is inevitable – like, the sun will burn out, humans will evolve into something else – but nihilism isn’t. Nihilism is a problem we can actually do something about. We can think about how to make more meaningful lives and less cruel lives even if those lives are not going to go on forever. So, in old-school debate terms – I have no idea if these apply anymore at all – that’s as close to an alternative as the book presents, which is how to formulate craft, practice, habits, forms of life which are not dependent upon homogenization or liquidation of other forms of life. How to, basically, find some joy in this world rather than investing all of our efforts in transforming the world into something which now we’re not even sure we want anymore. And certainly through a process of transformation that looks like it may kill the species.

So, that’s where it ends. It’s sort of an affirmative note, but I wouldn’t say a particularly happy note. And it ends with a question: if that’s the ethical move to make the world less cruel, then we have to ask the question “What if this future isn’t ours?” Right? What if humanity isn’t the punchline to the cosmic joke? What if there’s something else? What comes next? And maybe we should rethink who gets to decide what comes next, rather than presuming that those who are already in power, that already maintain the geopolitical institutions which currently define the agenda for planetary politics, who’ve done a lot of harm… maybe they should take a step back. And I think that’s the thing that makes people the most uncomfortable. People are willing to think about being critical, people are willing to think about incorporating climate change into security, people are willing to think about even incorporating human security or indigenous rights into a security framework. What they’re often not willing to do is to give up the sovereignty to decide what is included and what isn’t. And for me, that’s the most important thing for us to do, in positions of incredible privilege and incredibly destructive power, to be willing to put faith in those people we’ve basically tormented for 500 years and see what other kind of planet could be made. And that’s a big gamble, but I think that’s kind of where we are as a species.

#### Revisionism is BS -- Chinese sources

Liu 20, Feng. "The recalibration of Chinese assertiveness: China's responses to the Indo-Pacific challenge." International Affairs 96.1 (2020): 9-27. (Professor and the vice chair of International Relations at Nankai University)//Elmer

However, against a background of intensified US–China strategic competition, some Chinese scholars indicate that China needs to calmly reformulate its overall strategy. Between 2012 and 2017, China showed a strong tendency to attempt to realize preferred objectives in excess of its capability, usually by promoting Sino-centric initiatives and coercing its neighbours. These proactive tactics successfully conveyed China's image as a ‘stronger’ power; however, they also resulted in a series of sharp quarrels with its neighbours, including **Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore and India**, among others. Whether explicitly or implicitly, America was a relevant party in some cases because its allies and security partners were involved. But in that period, the Obama administration continued to declare its intention to maintain the stability of bilateral relations with China, stressing cooperation on bilateral and multilateral issues. As the administration's final National Security Strategy report stated, America ‘welcomes the rise of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous China … While there will be competition, we reject the inevitability of confrontation.’57 By contrast, President Trump has effected a disruptive change in America's China policy, adopting highly confrontational tactics ranging from bullying to bluffing and threatening. It would be gravely detrimental to China to encounter **containment** from America coupled with widespread **balancing** from its neighbours. Some experts have expressed their concern about such a worst-case scenario. As early as 2015, Chinese academics were discussing the problem of ‘**strategic overstretch’** in Chinese diplomacy. For example, Renmin University Professor Shi Yinhong warned that China had become overstretched by undertaking too many concurrent initiatives and projects in Asia and beyond.58 He suggested that China needed to **maintain a balance between two ‘priorities’**: Sino-American relations and its neighbourhood diplomacy.59 This idea triggered a debate among Chinese scholars on whether China was truly experiencing strategic overstretch or not.60 According to another prominent academic, Yan Xuetong, it is more accurate to describe a rising China's potential predicament as ‘strategic rash advance’, overstretch being a phenomenon typically associated with hegemonic powers.61 Whether ‘strategic overstretch’ or ‘rash advance’ is the better description, the very discussion shows that some scholars are worried about the rapidity of China's expansion of its global influence, which will lead to a lack of resources internally and counterbalancing externally. Some scholars go so far as to suggest that China should return to its ‘keeping a low profile’ strategy.62 As the next section will show, this debate on China's strategic posture does not stop at the academic level; it has been **transmitted into policy-making channels** and contributes to the **current adjustment** of China's foreign policy. A moderation of Chinese assertiveness The Chinese leadership's perceptions of its external environment are among the primary determinants of China's overall external strategy. Undoubtedly, America's shifting strategic presence and influence in its neighbourhood play a significant role in shaping those perceptions. In response to the Trump administration's ‘Indo-Pacific strategy’ generally, and to its changing policies towards China in particular, we can identify some important shifts in China's regional policies. In general, Beijing has recently begun to **moderate its assertive policies** in order to sustain its rise and alleviate external pressures imposed by the Indo-Pacific strategy. It should be noted that China's subtle change in policy since 2017 has been prompted not solely by America's efforts to promote that strategy, but more substantially by the Trump administration's overall China policy. However, the two policy agendas are closely interrelated and interact with one another. Given that the Indo-Pacific strategy has underlined an apparent US intention to counter China's growing regional influence, this section focuses on Beijing's shifting strategic behaviour at the regional level. Reverting to prudence and restraint Between 2012 and 2016, China displayed a strong tendency to exaggerate its capability to achieve its preferred objectives by promoting Sino-centric initiatives and coercing its neighbours. Chinese official discourse, diplomatic actions and academic discussions in this period all reveal a high degree of self-confidence.63 However, this new strategic posture in Asia and beyond prompted negative feedback from a growing number of detractors. In recent years, China has had to deal with deteriorating relations with many neighbouring countries, including Japan, South Korea, India and some south-east Asian countries, but the most serious challenge clearly comes in the form of its relations with America. Washington's present perception of China is generally negative. The consensus within the administration is that America has misjudged the direction of China's development since the establishment of US–China diplomatic relations. It has not developed in accordance with US expectations over the past four decades, that is, through gradual integration into the US-led international system. The focal point of the Trump administration's China policy is that America must abandon its illusions, realistically face the challenges that now exist, and adopt practical measures to balance against China's rise. Trump's tariff wars have been perceived as attempts to suppress China's technological development, and thereby stifle its long-term economic growth. Such an aggressive US stance has highlighted the vulnerability associated with China's heavy reliance on US high-tech imports and has consequently sparked discussion among scholars about the gradual decoupling of the two economies.64 The continuing trade disputes with America indicate the weaknesses of China's economy and its apparent inability to decouple itself from America without damaging its domestic development. In recent months, Chinese academics, think-tanks and media have continued to emphasize the importance of managing the mixed cooperative–competitive relationship with America and altering the position of passivity in which China has found itself since Trump's trade war was launched. Taking into account China's military and economic inferiority to America, direct confrontation would be costly and even harmful for Chinese long-term economic development. Many senior Chinese experts suggest that China must strive to strengthen relations with US elites and business circles to stabilize bilateral relations.65 According to Yuan Peng, a senior researcher in a government think-tank, ‘China should guard against arrogance and rashness’, given the persistence of ‘considerable strength gaps’.66 Faced with various **pressures from America**, China has not taken the tough approach it would have formerly done in dealing with external conflicts. Since late 2017, Beijing has been sending a clear signal that it is toning down the domestic rhetoric of exaggerating China's capability and achievements. In the media, official sources quickly put an end to extravagant domestic claims of China's strength.67 The slogan ‘Made in China 2025’ is now rarely mentioned in official statements. When faced with US sanctions on Chinese science and technology giants ZTE and Huawei, Beijing did not follow the traditional route of adopting political means to suppress US enterprises operating in China to the same extent; nor did it mobilize nationalist tools to rouse anti-American sentiment in China as it had done in Japan, South Korea, Canada and other countries. This low-key diplomacy contrasts sharply with China's hard-line diplomacy before 2017. The BRI is considered to be the most obvious embodiment of China's ‘strategic overstretch’ or ‘rash advance’ in diplomacy. Some BRI projects are attracting a great deal of criticism in heavily indebted countries such as Sri Lanka, Djibouti and Myanmar (Burma), with detractors accusing China of obtaining financial and diplomatic influence over these countries via a ‘debt trap’.68 Recently, there have been shifts in the way China promotes the BRI, with Chinese leaders repeatedly stressing the need for refinements in BRI construction projects over the next few years. In particular, there needs to be a greater emphasis on developing high-quality and high-standard infrastructure projects to enhance the actual effects, and a greater focus on risk management and control of cooperative projects, both to strengthen the sustainability of financing and to enhance the openness and transparency of international cooperation.69 At the same time, Beijing has begun attaching significance to the financing risks of BRI projects, the Chinese ministry of finance approving ‘BRI Financing Guidelines’ jointly with the finance ministries of 26 countries. Concurrently, China has also begun to establish third-party market cooperation with some developed economies, including some EU member states, Japan and America. Transnational corporations from these developed countries have already been heavily involved in China's projects in south-east Asia, Africa and central Asia. A wedging strategy towards the Quad The security dimension of the Indo-Pacific strategy relies primarily on Australia, India and Japan (the Quad members); and there are elements in the security dialogue among these countries that are targeted at China. For example, the joint ministerial statement released by the Australia–Japan–US Trilateral Strategic Dialogue in August 2018 expressed ‘serious concerns about developments in the South China Sea’.70 Thus, if China were to drive a wedge between America and its allies and its partners in the region, the pressure from this coalition would be reduced. The use of bilateral means to disrupt relations between these nations is regarded by China as an efficient way of undermining the Indo-Pacific strategy. In order to divide and disrupt US alliances and partnerships in the region, China actively adopts both coercive and reassuring tactics against specific countries.71 The previous section noted the belief among some Chinese scholars that even though India is embracing the ‘Indo-Pacific’ framework, it is not willing to change its own established tradition of balanced diplomacy. Beijing has thus its best to maintain a relatively benign relationship with New Delhi. In the summer of 2017, the Chinese and Indian armies faced off at the Doklam plateau, bringing to a head a border dispute between the two Asian giants that had lasted for several decades. The Doklam standoff ended in August 2017 after the two sides agreed to disengage. The peaceful ending of this crisis could be attributed to the imminence of the BRICS summit involving Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, hosted by China; however, it appears that Beijing and New Delhi decided to restore their relationship after an informal summit between Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi in April 2018. Since the Doklam confrontation, China **has taken measures to appease India**, including condemning terrorist attacks in Pakistan at the 2017 Xiamen BRICS summit, resuming the provision of hydrological information in the upstream section of the Yaluzangbu river to India, and agreeing to reopen the Nathu La route for the annual Indian pilgrimage to Tibet. However, even though negotiations on border disputes between the two states have resumed, these issues continue to undermine China–Indian relations. For instance, India maintains that it will not take part in the BRI as long as the road from China to Pakistan's Gwadar Port passes through territory disputed by India and Pakistan. However, India's policy of maintaining a balanced approach to the Great Powers poses less of a threat to China than a policy choice to side definitively with the United States. Similarly, China has already **begun to mend its relations with Japan** after years of strained bilateral relations owing to the escalating confrontation over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands