## 1

### K

#### 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.

#### Their deployment of debate is an agential fantasy – the affirmative is an investment into subjectivity as a teleological entity dependent on external recognition to satisfy its goals, which is addicting and causes passivity

Lundberg 12 Dr. Christian Lundberg, 2012, “Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric,” The University of Alabama Press, Dr. Lundberg is an associate professor and co-director of the University Program in Cultural Studies at UNC, he has a B.A. from the University of Redlands, a Master of Divinity from Emory University, and a Ph.D. in Communication Studies from Northwestern University, sjbe

“Ego,” then,names the economy of compensatory subjectivization driven by the repetition and refusal of demands. The nascent subject presents wants and needs in the form of the demand, but the role of the demand is not the simple fulfillment of these wants and needs. The demand and its refusal are the fulcrum on which the identity and insularity of the subject are produced: an unformed amalgam of needs and articulated demands is transformed into a subject that negotiates the vicissitudes of life with others. Put in the meta- phor of developmental psychology, an infant lodges the instinctual demands of the id on others but these demands cannot be, and for the sake of develop- ment, must not be fulfilled. Thus, pop psychology observations that the in- cessant demands of children for impermissible objects (“may i have a fourth helping of dessert”) or meanings that culminate in ungroundable authori- tative pronouncements (the game of asking never ending “whys”) are less about satisfaction of a request than the identity-producing effects of the pa- rental “no.” in “The Question of Lay Analysis,” freud argues that “if . . . demands meet with no satisfaction, intolerable conditions arise . . . [and] . . . the ego begins to function. . . . [T]he driving force that sets the vehicle in mo- tion is derived from the id, the ego . . . undertakes the steering. . . . The task of the ego [is] . . . to mediate between the claims of the id and the objections of the external world.”31 Later, in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, and Civilization and Its Discontents, freud relocates the site of the ego’s genesis beyond the parent/child relationship and in the broader social relationships that animate it. Life with others inevitably produces blockages in the indi- vidual’s attempts to fulfill certain desires, since some demands for the fulfill- ment of desires must be frustrated. This blockage produces feelings of guilt, which in turn are sublimated as a general social morality. The frustration of demand is both productive in that it authorizes social moral codes and, by ex- tension, civilization writ large, although it does so at the cost of imposing a contested relationship between desire and social mores.32 Confronted by student calls to join the movement of 1968 Lacan famously quipped: “as hysterics you demand a new master: you will get it!” under- standing the meaning of his response requires a treatment of Lacan’s theory of the demand and its relationship to hysteria as an enabling and constraining political subject position. Lacan’s theory of the demand picks up at freud’s movement outward from the paradigmatic relationships between the parent/ child and individual/civilization toward a more general account of the sub- ject, sociality, and signification. The infrastructure supporting this theoreti- cal movement transposes freud’s comparatively natural and genetic account of development to a set of metaphors for dealing with the subject’s entry into signification. As already noted, the Lacanian aphorism that “the signifier represents a subject for another signifier inverts the conventional wisdom that a pre-given subject uses language as an instrument to communicate its subjective inten- tions.”33 The paradoxical implication of this reversal is that the subject is si- multaneously produced and disfigured by its unavoidable insertion into the space of the Symbolic. An Es assumes an identity as a subject as a way of ac- commodating to the Symbolic’s demands and as a node for producing de- mands on its others or of being recognized as a subject.34 As i have already argued, the demand demonstrates that the enjoyment of one’s own subjec- tivity is useless surplus produced in the gap between the Es (or it) and the ideal i. As a result, there is excess jouissance that remains even after its reduc- tion to hegemony. This remainder may even be logically prior to hegemony, in that it is a useless but ritually repeated retroactive act of naming the self that produces the subject and therefore conditions possibility for investment in an identitarian configuration. The site of this excess, where the subject negotiates the terms of a non- relationship with the Symbolic, is also the primary site differentiating need, demand, and desire. need approximates the position of the freudian id, in that it is a precursor to demand. Demand is the filtering of the need through signification, but as Sheridan notes, “there is no adequation between need and demand.”35 The same type of split that inheres in the freudian demand inheres in the Lacanian demand, although in Lacan’s case it is crucial to no- tice that the split does not derive from the empirical impossibility of ful- filling demands as much as it stems from the impossibility of articulating needs to or receiving a satisfactory response from the other. Thus, the speci- ficity of the demand becomes less relevant than the structural fact that de- mand presupposes the ability of the addressee to fulfill the demand.This im- possibility points to the paradoxical nature of demand: the demand is less a way of addressing need to the other than a call for love and recognition by it. “in this way,” writes Lacan, “demand annuls the particularity of everything that can be granted by transmuting it into a proof of love, and the very sat- isfactions that it obtains for need are reduced to the level of being no more than the crushing of the demand for love.”36 The other cannot, by definition, ever give this gift: the starting presupposition of the mirror stage is the con- stitutive impossibility of comfortably inhabiting the Symbolic. The struc- tural impossibility of fulfilling demands resonates with the freudian de- mand in that the frustration of demand produces the articulation of desire. Thus, Lacan argues that “desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second.”37 This sentiment animates the crucial Lacanian claim for the impossibility of the other giving a gift that it does not have, namely the gift of love: “all demand implies . . . a request for love. . . . Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand becomes separated from need: this margin being that which is opened up by demand, the appeal of which can be unconditional only in regards to the other . . . having no universal satisfaction. . . . it is this whim that introduces the phantom of omnipotence, not of the subject, but of the other in which his demand is installed.”38 This framing of demand reverses the classically liberal presupposition regarding demand and agency. Contemporary and classical liberal democratic theories presume that the demand is a way of exerting agency and, further, that the more firmly the demand is lodged, the greater the production of an agential effect. The Lacanian framing of the demand sees the relationship as exactly the opposite: the more firmly one lodges a demand, the more desperately one clings to the legitimate ability of an institution to fulfill it. Hypothetically, demands ought reach a kind of breaking point where the inability of an in- stitution or order to proffer a response should produce a reevaluation of the economy of demand and desire. in analytic terms, this is the moment of sub- traction, where the manifest content of the demand is stripped away and the desire that underwrites it is laid bare. The result of this “subtraction” is that the subject is in a position to relate to its desire, not as a set of deferrals, avoid- ances, or transposition but rather as an owned political disposition. As Lacan frames it, demanding subjects are either learning to reassert the centrality of their demand or coming to terms with the impotence of the other as a satisfier of demands: “But it is in the dialectic of the demand for love and the test of desire that development is ordered. . . . [T]his test of the desire of the other is decisive not in the sense that the subject learns by it whether or not he has a phallus, but in the sense that he learns that the mother does not have it.”39 The point of this disposition is to bring the subject to a point where they might “recognize and name” their own desire and, as a re- sult, become a political subject in the sense of being able to truly argue for something without being dependent on the other as a support for or orga- nizing principle for political identity. Thus, desire has both a general status and a specific status for each subject. it is not just the mirror that produces the subject and its investments but the desire and sets of proxy objects that cover over this original gap. As Easthope puts it: “Lacan is sure that everyone’s de- sire is somehow different and their own—lack is nevertheless my lack. How can this be if each of us is just lost in language . . . passing through demand into desire, something from the Real, from the individual’s being before lan- guage, is retained as a trace enough to determine that i desire here and there, not anywhere and everywhere. Lacan terms this objet petit a . . . petit a is dif- ferent for everyone; and it can never be in substitutes for it in which i try to refind it.”40 Though individuated, this naming is not about discovering a latently held but hidden interiority, rather it is about naming a practice of thinking the uniqueness of individual subjects as a product of discourses that produce them. Thus, this is an account of political subjectivization that is not solely oriented toward or determined by the locus of the demand but that is also determined by the contingent sets of coping strategies that orient a sub- ject toward others and a political order and serve as the condition of possi- bility for demands.As Lacan argues,this is the point where a subject becomes a kind of new presence or a new political possibility:“That the subject should come to recognize and to name his desire; that is the efficacious action of analysis. But it isn’t a question of recognizing something which would be en- tirely given. . . . in naming it, the subject creates, brings forth, a new presence in the world.”41 Alternatively, subjects can stay fixated on the demand, but in doing so they forfeit their desire, or as fink argues, “an analysis . . . that . . . does not go far enough in constituting the subject as desire leaves him or her stranded at the level of demand . . . unable to truly desire.”42 A politics defined by and exhausted in demands is by definition a hysterical politics. The hysteric is defined by incessant demands on the other at the ex- pense of ever articulating a desire that is theirs. in the Ethics of Psychoanaly- sis, Lacan argues that the hysteric’s demand that the other produce an object is the support of an aversion toward one’s desire: “the behavior of the hys- teric, for example, has as its aim to recreate a state centered on the object, in- sofar as this object . . . is . . . the support of an aversion.”43 This economy of aversion explains the ambivalent relationship between hysterics and their de- mands. on one hand, the hysteric asserts their agency, even authority, over the other.yet, what appears as unfettered agency from the perspective of a discourse of authority is also simultaneously a surrender of desire by enjoy- ing the act of figuring the other as the one with the exclusive capability to satisfy the demand. Thus, “as hysterics you demand a new master: you will get it!” At the register of manifest content, demands are claims for action and seemingly powerful, but at the level of the rhetorical form of the demand or in the reg- ister of enjoyment, demand is a kind of surrender. As a relation of address the hysterical demand is more a demand for recognition and love from an os- tensibly repressive order than a claim for change. The limitation of the stu- dents’ call on Lacan does not lie in the end they sought but in the fact that the hysterical address never quite breaks free from its framing of the master. The fundamental problem of democracy is not articulating resistance over and against hegemony but rather the practices of enjoyment that sustain an addiction to mastery and a deferral of desire. Hysteria is a politically effective subject position in some ways, but it is politically constraining from the perspective of organized political dissent. if not a unidirectional practice of resistance, hysteria is at best a politics of interruption. imagine a world where the state was the perfect and complete embodiment of a hegemonic order, without interruption or remainder, and the discursive system was hermetically closed. Politics would be an impos- sibility: with no site for contest or reappropriation, politics would simply be the automatic extension of structure. Hysteria is a site of interruption, in that hysteria represents a challenge to our hypothetical system, refusing straight- forward incorporation by its symbolic logic. But, stepping outside this hy- pothetical non-polity, on balance, hysteria is politically constraining because the form of the demand, as a way of organizing the field of political enjoy- ment, requires that the system continue to act in certain ways to sustain its logic. Though on the surface it is an act of symbolic dissent, hysteria rep- resents an affirmation of a hegemonic order and is therefore a particularly fraught form of political subjectivization.

#### 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.

## 2

### ESPEC

#### Affirmatives must specify and separately delineate an enforcement mechanism used for a just government to recognize to unconditional right to strike

#### Neg for shiftiness – they can redefine the 1AC’s enforcement mechanism in the 1AR which allows them to recontextualize their enforcement mechanism to wriggle out of DA’s since all DA links are predicated on type of enforcement i.e. international perception das, great power competition da, research da’s that may apply to bilateral bans but not to export controls.

#### b] Fairness – its constitutive to debate as competitive activity that requires objective evaluation. Controls the I/L to education because you don’t learn from an already skewed round.

#### c] DTD – a] deters future abuse b] my strat has already been skewed so it’s the only way to rectify the abuse

#### d] Competing interps – a] reasonability invites arbitrary judge intervention and a race to the bottom of questionable argumentation b] reasonability collapses since brightlines operate on an offense-defense paradigm

#### e] Norming outweighs – a] constitutivism – it’s the intrinsic purpose of theory b] magnitude – it’s the only out of round impact which link turns their arguments because they assume a good model of debate

#### f] No RVIs – a] Forces the 1NC to go all-in on Theory which kills substance education, b] Encourages Baiting since the 1AC will purposely be abusive, and c] Illogical – you shouldn’t win for not being abusive.

## Case

#### The affirmation of the right to strike as something to be recognized places the energy that drives class struggle into containment, rendering the right conditional.

Marc Crépon & Micol Bez 19; Marc Crépon is a French philosopher and academic who writes on the subject of languages and communities in the French and German philosophies and contemporary political and moral philosophy. Micol Bez @ CPES (Cycle Pluridisciplinaire d’Études Supérieures) at the University of Paris Sciences and Letters. The Right to Strike and Legal War in Walter Benjamin's “Toward the Critique of Violence”. Critical Times 1 August 2019; 2 (2): 252–260. <https://read.dukeupress.edu/critical-times/article/2/2/252/141479/The-Right-to-Strike-and-Legal-War-in-Walter> brett

In other words, nothing would endanger the law more than the possibility of its authority being contested by a violence over which it has no control. The function of the law would therefore be, first and foremost, to contain violence within its own boundaries. It is in this context that, to demonstrate this surprising hypothesis, Benjamin invokes two examples: the right to strike guaranteed by the state and the law of war.

Let us return to the place that the right to strike occupies within class struggle. To begin with, the very idea of such a struggle implies certain forms of violence. The strike could then be understood as one of the recognizable forms that this violence can take. However, this analytical framework is undermined as soon as this form of violence becomes regulated by a “right to strike,” such as the one recognized by law in France in 1864. What this recognition engages is, in fact, the will of the state to control the possible “violence” of the strike. Thus, the “right” of the right to strike appears as the best, if not the only, way for the state to circumscribe within (and via) the law the relative violence of class struggles. We might consider this to be the perfect illustration of the aforementioned hypothesis. Yet, there are two lines of questioning that destabilize this hypothesis that we would do well to consider

First, is it legitimate to present the strike as a form of violence? Who has a vested interest in such a representation? In other words, how can we trace a clear and unequivocal demarcation between violence and nonviolence? Are we not always bound to find residues of violence, even in those actions that we would be tempted to consider nonviolent? The second line of questioning is just as important and is rooted in the distinction established by Georges Sorel, in his Reflections on Violence, between the “political strike” and the “proletarian general strike,” to which Benjamin dedicates a set of complementary analyses in §13 of his essay. Here, again, we are faced with a question of limits. What is at stake is the possibility for a certain type of strike (the proletarian general strike) to exceed the limits of the right to strike— turning, in other words, the right to strike against the law itself. The phenomenon is that of an autoimmune process, in which the right to strike that is meant to protect the law against the possible violence of class struggles is transformed into a means for the destruction of the law. The difference between the two types of strikes is nevertheless introduced with a condition: “The validity of this statement, however, is not unrestricted because it is not unconditional,” notes Benjamin in §7. We would be mistaken in believing that the right to strike is granted and guaranteed unconditionally. Rather, it is structurally subjected to a conflict of interpretations, those of the workers, on the one hand, and of the state on the other. From the point of view of the state, the partial strike cannot under any circumstance be understood as a right to exercise violence, but rather as the right to extract oneself from a preexisting (and verifiable) violence: that of the employer. In this sense, the partial strike should be considered a nonviolent action, what Benjamin named a “pure means.”

The interpretations diverge on two main points. The first clearly depends on the alleged “violence of the employer,” a predicate that begs the question: Who might have the authority to recognize such violence? Evidently it is not the employer. The danger is that the state would similarly lack the incentive to make such a judgment call. It is nearly impossible, in fact, to find a single instance of a strike in which this recognition of violence was not subject to considerable controversy. The political game is thus the following: the state legislated the right to strike in order to contain class struggles, with the condition that workers must have “good reason” to strike. However, it is unlikely that a state systematically allied with (and accomplice to) employers will ever recognize reasons as good, and, as a consequence, it will deem any invocation of the right to strike as illegitimate. Workers will therefore be seen as abusing a right granted by the state, and in so doing transforming it into a violent means. On this point, Benjamin’s analyses remain extremely pertinent and profoundly contemporary. They unveil the enduring strategy of governments confronted with a strike (in education, transportation, or healthcare, for example) who, after claiming to understand the reasons for the protest and the grievances of the workers, deny that the arguments constitute sufficient reason for a strike that will likely paralyze this or that sector of the economy. They deny, in other words, that the conditions denounced by the workers display an intrinsic violence that justifies the strike. Let us note here a point that Benjamin does not mention, but that is part of Sorel’s reflections: this denial inevitably contaminates the (socialist) left once it gains power. What might previously have seemed a good reason to strike when it was the opposition is deemed an insufficient one once it is the ruling party. In the face of popular protest, it always invokes a lack of sufficient rationale, allowing it to avoid recognizing the intrinsic violence of a given social or economic situation, or of a new policy. And it is because it refuses to see this violence and to take responsibility for it that the left regularly loses workers’ support.

The second conflict of interpretation concerns what is at stake in the strike. For the state, the strike implies a withdrawal or act of defiance vis-à-vis the employer, while for the workers it is a means of pressuring, if not of blackmail or even of “hostage taking.” The diference is thus between an act of suspension (which can be considered nonviolent) and one of extortion (which includes violence). Does this mean that “pure means” are not free of ambiguity, and that there can be no nonviolent action that does not include a residue of violence? It is not clear that Benjamin’s text allows us to go this far. Nevertheless, the problem of pure means, approached through the notion of the right to strike, raises the following question: Could it be that the text “Zur Kritik der Gewalt,” which we are accustomed to reading as a text on violence, deals in fact with the possibility and ambiguity of nonviolence?

The opposition between the aforementioned conflicts of interpretation manifests itself in Benjamin’s excursus on the revolutionary strike, and specifically in the opposition between the political strike and the proletarian general strike, and in the meaning we should attribute to the latter. As previously discussed, the state will never admit that the right to strike is a right to violence. Its interpretative strategy consists in denying, as much as possible, the effective exercise of the right that it theoretically grants. Under these conditions, the function of the revolutionary strike is to return the strike to its true meaning; in other words, to return it to its own violence. In this context, the imperative is to move beyond idle words: a call to strike is a call to violence. This is the reason why such a call is regularly met with a violent reaction from the state, because trade unions force the state to recognize what it is trying to ignore, what it pretends to have solved by recognizing the right to strike: the irreducible violence of class struggles. This means that the previously discussed alternative between “suspension” and “extortion” is valid only for the political strike—in other words, for a strike whose primary vocation is not, contrary to that of the proletarian general strike, to revolt against the law itself. Essentially, the idea of a proletarian general strike, its myth (to borrow Sorel’s words), is to escape from this dichotomous alternative that inevitably reproduces and perpetuates the violence of domination.

### 1NC – Semiotics

#### The 1AC’s call for unionization and strikes might have worked a century ago, but post digital semiotics, they’ve misdiagnosed the problem

**Berardi 11** [Franco Berardi, Italian communist theorist and activist in the autonomist tradition, whose work mainly focuses on the role of the media and information technology within post-industrial capitalism “Chapter 4 Exhastion and Subjectivity.” After the Future, by Franco Bifo Berardi et al., AK Press, 2011. P. 107-108 // LEX JB]

The financial cycle is bleeding the social environment dry: sucking energies, resources, and the future. And giving nothing back. Recovery of the financial process of valorization of capital is totally separated from the cycle of material production and social demand. Financial capitalism has obtained autonomy from social life. Let’s consider the political side of the same problem: once upon a time when society was suffering the blows of recession, workers reacted with strikes, struggle and political organization, and forced state intervention in order to increase demand. Industrial growth needed mass consumption and social stability. What is impressive in the ongoing crisis, on the contrary, is the widespread passivity of the workers, their inability to unionize. The political trend in Europe is the meltdown of leftist parties and the labor movement. In the US, Obama is daily attacked by racist and populist mobs, but no progressive social movement is emerging. 1.2 million people have had their mortgages foreclosed upon and lost their houses following the sub-prime swindle, but no organized reaction has surfaced. People suffer and cry alone. In the old time of industrial capitalism, the working class could fight against a target that was precisely identified: the boss, the entrepreneur who was the owner of material things like the factory, and of the product of his laborers. Nowadays the boss has vanished. He is fragmented into billions of financial segments, and disseminated into millions of financial agents scattered all around the world. The workers themselves are part of recombinant financial capital. They are expecting future revenues from their pension fund investments. They own stock options in the enterprise exploiting their labor. They are hooked up, like a fly in a spider web, and if they move, they get strangled, but if they don’t move, the spider will suck their life from them. Society may rot, fall apart, agonize. It is not going to affect the political and economic stability of capitalism. What is called economic recovery is a new round of social devastation. So the recession is over, capitalism is recovering. Nonetheless, unemployment is rising and misery is spreading. This means that financial capitalism is autonomous from society. Capitalism doesn’t need workers: it just needs cellular fractals of labor, underpaid, precarious, de-personalised. Fragments of impersonal nervous energy, recombined by the network. The crisis is going to push forward technological change, and the substitution of human labor with machines. The employment rate is not going to rise in the future, and productivity will increase. A shrinking number of workers will be forced to produce more and more, and to work overtime. The real bubble is the work bubble. We have been working too much; we are still working too much. The human race does not need more goods, it needs a redistribution of existing goods, an intelligent application of technology and a worldwide cut in the lifetime dedicated to labor. Social energies have to be freed from labor dependence, and returned to the field of social affection, education, and therapy. We should take seriously the concept of autonomy. In the present condition autonomy means exodus from the domain of economic law: Out-onomy, abandonment of the field of economic exchange, self-organization of knowledge and of production in a sphere of social life which is no longer dependent on economic culture and expectations – barter, free exchange of time and of competence, food self reliance, occupation of territories in the cities, organization of self-defense.

### Adv

#### STRIKES ARE HIGH NOW AND MORE ARE COMING- PROVES NO UNIQUENESS OR REASON WHY THE AFF IS KEY

Romero 10-21 Dani Romero (REPORTER, yahoo finance) 10/21/21, ‘Strikes are contagious’: Wave of labor unrest signals crisis in tight job market, <https://news.yahoo.com/strikes-are-contagious-wave-of-labor-unrest-signals-crisis-in-tight-jobs-market-135052770.html>

As employers of all sizes grapple with an acute worker shortage amid what’s being called the pandemic era’s Great Resignation, it’s become increasingly clear that people with jobs aren’t all that happy, either. At an ever-lengthening list of workplaces around the country, workers this year have been getting loud about the state of wages, working hours and conditions. From healthcare to entertainment, nearly 100,000 U.S. workers are either striking or preparing to strike in a bid to improve working conditions. New data signals that worker unrest is growing: a Cornell Labor Action Tracker shows that more than 180 strikes have been recorded this year, and over 24,000 workers have walked off the job this month. This all plays out against a backdrop of an economy bouncing back from an economic shutdown during the pandemic. More than 10,000 John Deere workers went on strike Thursday, the first major walkout at the agricultural machinery giant in more than three decades. “We have noticed a bit of an uptick in late September into early October, for example, we've already documented 39 strikes on the month of October,” Johnnie Kallas, a Ph.D. student at Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations, or ILR, who tracks labor actions across the country, said in an interview. “Those numbers are already the largest of any month in 2021,” he added. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, which records only large work stoppages, has documented 12 strikes involving 1,000 or more workers. That represents a big jump from when the pandemic started over 19 months ago. “What will happen is you'll see more workers going on strike,” Kate Bronfenbrenner, director of labor education research and senior lecturer at Cornell school of industrial and labor relations, told Yahoo Finance. “Each time there's a ripple effect with each one of those, if the John Deere strike isn’t settled, you're going to see another big group go out,” she said. “If companies don't move, you're going to see this spread from one group to another. Strikes are contagious,” Bronfenbrenner added.